

Institutionen för pedagogik, kommunikation och lärande

Hoppet om en framtidsplats

Asylsökande barn i den svenska skolan

av

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Abstract

Title: Hoping for a future home. Asylum-seeking children attending Swedish school

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The thesis explores how accompanied refugee and asylum-seeking children experience everyday life in Sweden. During the asylum process, as part of a policy for promoting 'normal life', these children have the same right to education as permanently resident children. An ethnographic approach brought out data from combining interviews with participant observation and visual material produced by children. Methodological inspiration was sought in the new sociology of childhood and in its potential to make an eclectic analysis of the empirical data.

Study I explores how spatial and temporal dimensions theoretically may guide dialogue with refugee children and interpretation of their visual material. The findings point to how children negotiate opportunities for the future where everyday life takes place, and how conditions for education are perceived in relation to their future prospects. Inquiring into the meaning of school, Study II explores the sense of possibility as perceived by asylum-seeking children, and shows how school is a social place that provides structure, a sense of belonging and a learning environment. Paradoxically, schools' limited attention to the children's predicament risked accentuating the ambivalent social position of being an asylum seeker and thus weakening the benefits of their right to education. Study III examines the challenges teachers face, as street-level bureaucrats, in catering to the needs of asylum-seeking pupils and demonstrates how conflicting goals of education policy and asylum policy conditioned teachers' work and risked undermining the compensatory pedagogical task.

In sum, through analyses that encompass how an unsecured residence permit does not prevent children aspiring to their futures, as envisioned in the present, creating a home can be understood in terms of hope. While the asylum process conditions ideas of the future, the thesis contributes to an understanding of how it also shapes how children and teachers, as social actors, construct what is considered to be 'normal life' during the asylum process.