
Treball Fi de Màster

*Perceptions of place within paradoxes of inclusion and exclusion:
the case of unaccompanied youth migrants in Sweden*

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MASTER THESIS

PERCEPTIONS OF PLACE WITHIN
PARADOXES OF INCLUSION AND
EXCLUSION

The case of Unaccompanied Youth
Migrants in Sweden

2019/2020 Academic Year

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Master of International Cooperation in Sustainable Emergency Architecture

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Date presented: 29/05/2020

Acknowledgments

I would first and foremost like to thank my supervisor Apen Ruiz for shaping my topic of interest into the research paper that is now. Your knowledge and constant guidance have been greatly valued. Thank you for always keeping yourself available.

My family who is and always will be the reason for my achievements. Nothing would have been accomplished without your prayers and support.

My MICSEA friends, especially Gad and Prachi. Also my two constants, Varsha and Anju. Thank you for taking the time to listen and criticize my work. And most importantly, for keeping my spirits uplifted and motivated.

Finally I thank God for wisdom and bringing me this far.

“Sense of place is the sixth sense, an internal compass and map made by memory and spatial perception together.”

~ Rebecca Solnit

Abstract

This thesis focuses on unaccompanied youth migrants in urban centers. For this study, I have looked into two main arguments – one that says that social inclusion and exclusion are inherent in any social system and the other that views place as an outcome of social processes. In this sense, I ask whether the various levels of inclusion and exclusion that unaccompanied youth experience, has the potential to impact on the way places are shaped and valued. I approach this question by looking into the context of Sweden. On arrival, the youth are subject to the requirements of integration policies, and based on the outcome, they either go underground or attend education institutions such as the Folk High School. An inclusion-exclusion analysis is done on the circumstances that lead the youth to end up in each of these scenarios. The impact of these social processes on the youth is then overlapped on the qualities of places that have been identified to contribute to overall wellbeing. The findings of this place evaluation reveal that based on their inclusive-exclusive experiences, the youth tend to attach different values for each of the places.

Key words – Unaccompanied youth migrants, social inclusion and exclusion, place value, Sweden, Folk High Schools.

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1 Introduction

This thesis focuses on unaccompanied youth (UAY) refugees and asylum seekers in urban areas. They are individuals outside their country of origin who migrate to a host country unaccompanied by a parent or a legal guardian. These youth are a highly vulnerable group mainly due to the lack of familial support. The hurdles they struggle through during the long journeys while fleeing their home countries, take on a new face once they enter the host country. On arrival, the host country requires the youth to fit into the category of a ‘deserving refugee’, and meet the requirements of various policies and legislations to receive various benefits from the state. This paper particularly focuses on youth and not children because on turning 18, it is common for these individuals to lose their benefits as the state no longer considers them to be children and so they are forced to navigate through various social processes of inclusion and exclusion and finally find themselves in different scenarios. The integration policies and approaches created by the state have a strong influence on the lives of these youth and can potentially discriminate/integrate them. This impact can further change the youth’s perception of places they inhabit or use in urban centers that are crucial to their wellbeing. This study identifies ‘place’ to be a social construct and an outcome of ongoing social processes. In this sense, the goal of this thesis is to examine the role of place-shaping and the relation between place and wellbeing as shaped through the experiences of the youth. The thesis follows two main arguments, one in which social inclusion and exclusion are inherently present in any social system, and the other that explores how amid exclusionary policies and practices unaccompanied minors relate to the built environment to create a sense of place. Based on these reflections, two main questions arise:

1. How do the socio-economic and political factors of inclusion and exclusion experienced by UAY shape the quality of places that are essential for their overall wellbeing?
2. By assessing the quality of these places, are UAY able to attach value to these places?

Initially, my research intended to examine the paradoxes of inclusion and exclusion in Barcelona, specifically in the neighborhood of La Ribera (Ciutat Vella). Using qualitative methodologies I intended to explore how unaccompanied minors (MENA) experienced criminalizing and exclusionary policies but at the same time are also able to navigate through them by creating social relations with the neighbors and local entities as well as shaping processes of attachment in some places in the area. However, with the impact of the COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdown of the city I had to reorient my research and use only secondary sources. Since the academic literature about Barcelona is meager (especially in English), I decided to shift my case study to explore similar conceptual frameworks but about unaccompanied youth migrants

in urban centers of Sweden. Thus this research is limited to a desk analysis based on secondary sources.

Sweden has a reputation for having good integration practices (Moriconi & Bordignon, 2017, p. 7-8); (European Migration Network [EMN], 2018, p.53) and so provides for an in-depth case study. On entering Sweden for the first time, the youth are subject to various policies and legislations all in the name of integration. Depending on the way they meet the requirements of the laws, along with their individual capabilities and criteria, the youth can find themselves in different levels of society. This thesis analyzes two possible directions that UAY chooses or are forced to take:

1. Going underground – This direction is less of a choice and is mainly for the youth who fall into the gaps of the integration policies and legislation and are forced to abscond from the law and make hard choices to survive.
2. Going the Folk High School (FHS) way – A government-led initiative called the Folk High School Track Project offered an alternate pathway for educating the UAY who are 18 years of age and have a residence permit in Sweden's Folk High Schools, instead of the mainstream introductory classes

At first glance, it would seem as though the youth going underground are likely to face more exclusion than the youth going the Folk High School way. However as will be elaborated later, the paradox of inclusion and exclusion is inherent in the legal and social system as well as in the educational system. Therefore each of these outcomes will be analyzed under an inclusion-exclusion lens based on some contributing factors such as spillover effects, new emerging inequalities, co-optation, and manipulation of laws. For the youth going underground, the policies and legislations that have driven the youth to go into hiding will be analyzed. In the case of the youth choosing the Folk High Schools, the institute will be analyzed on the way they try to integrate the youth. This is done to portray the various levels of inclusion and exclusion the youth are subjected to and to understand the level of impact these social processes have on the youth. The next part of the analysis then evaluates the role of place in promoting a sense of wellbeing, through the youth's perspective. Based on the outcomes that the youth end up in and their consequent experiences, we check whether certain places hold better or worse value for the youth. The views of authors and practitioners related to the study of unaccompanied youth are taken into account to get an understanding of relevant themes and concepts. The narratives and perspectives of the youth are also used from interviews in news articles and other media platforms.

An understanding of the factors that influence the way UAY perceives places of wellbeing to look like and in turn, the level of attachment they have towards these places is an important prerequisite for future studies of place-making. Unless we understand why the youth hold certain

values for certain places based on their backgrounds, we cannot see the entire picture when we study place-making, which is based on the way youth transform their surroundings to establish themselves in society through various initiatives and activities.

2 Conceptual Framework

2.1 Paradoxes of Social Exclusion and Inclusion

The struggle for inclusion excludes.

- Mascareño, 2013

Interpretation of exclusion:

The concept of social exclusion has a long history and the purpose of this section is to not just offer a summary but to explain its relevance to my research on unaccompanied youth in urban centers. I argue that processes of social inclusion are often accompanied by practices of exclusion and consequently these processes tend to take on a spatial dimension.

There are a number of ideas on what social exclusion is defined to be. For Rene Lenoir (as cited in Mascareño & Carvajal, 2016), in the 1970s, the excluded were those who were separated from mainstream society because of factors like disability, mental illness, and poverty. The distinction made by Lenoir, of who is excluded helped to show the existence of a problem, but this binary application of the inclusion/exclusion distinction prevents an adequate understanding of the complexity of the problem. Social exclusion should not be thought of as a state but an outcome of a process, that is, with social dynamics, people are not simply included or excluded (part IV, para. 2). According to Landorf (2012), the definition of social exclusion does not frame all of the underlying causes of exclusion. There is a need to include a multi-dimensional framework that includes income-related reasons but also non-income related reasons like capability deprivation (as introduced by Sen), community participation, and access to services.

Despite a clear definition, the general concept of social exclusion started to become central for policymaking as the ‘need to reform’ in the name of ‘national solidarity’ and socially inclusive citizenship. The framework of these policies included the promotion of social justice and fundamental rights based on moral human values of dignity and solidarity (Peters & Besley, 2014). This policy shift moved away from focussing on economic growth and went towards social inclusion through the promotion of stronger communities and to strengthen social capital (Landorf, 2012, para. 8).

Paradox of inclusion and exclusion:

This widespread use of the inclusion/exclusion distinction in policy design creates a coherent and strategic political criterion that reveal clear demarcations on how people fall within or outside specific social criteria. Inclusion and exclusion cannot be differentiated in a binary fashion because under highly complex social conditions these two social spheres are intertwined (Mascareño & Carvajal, 2016). In George Simmel’s essay (Simmel, 1950 as cited in Mascareño & Carvajal, 2016), “The stranger” is neither in nor out or maybe both at the same time. The

stranger belongs to the social group, but comes from beyond; he develops charm and significance, but is not the “owner of the soil”, either in a physical sense or in terms of social reference. In other words, the stranger experiences inclusion as well as exclusion (p. 4). Agamben (1998) also talks about the complicated relationship between the outside and inside of every social system. He analyses the paradoxical inclusion of the concept of membership by saying that one cannot be included in the whole of which it is a member. Consequently one cannot be a member of the whole in which it is always already included.

Through these complex phenomena, we see that the paradox of exclusion and inclusion is inherent in any social system. Based on the existing literature, let us understand some of the contributing factors and circumstances that turn inclusion practices into exclusionary in relation to unaccompanied youth in Europe.

Spillover effects:

Critics have identified flaws in social centered policies by saying that the potential for embedded power structures can impose constraints on social engagement and have the capacity to accentuate social exclusion rather than inclusion (Landorf, 2012). One such instance is the Dublin Regulation that holds EU member states responsible for examining asylum applications. The regulation was formulated on the assumption that the asylum laws and practices of EU states are based on the same common standards and so asylum seekers can enjoy similar levels of protection in all EU countries. In reality, asylum legislation and practices are not homogeneous and vary widely from country to country, leading asylum seekers to receive different treatment in different EU countries (Moriconi & Bordignon, 2017). In the name of improvement, policymakers and social organizations are continually coming up with interventions and approaches, and these could have unintended consequences (Oliver, et al., 2019). In other words, policies that have goals of being inclusive towards a vulnerable population and thus can have countervailing or ‘spillover effects’ by excluding them.

When new emerging inequalities are not legitimized:

Fitoussi and Rosanvallon, approached inclusion/exclusion in terms of equality/inequality, and so in the observation of specific situations, equalities and inequalities can appear in both inclusion and exclusion (as cited in Mascareño & Carvajal, 2016). The universal principle of equality favored over inequality demands legitimization when inequality is inherent to the situation. For example, inequality of professions (different professions), is legitimate, but gender inequality (discrimination) is not, and since it is not justified, inequalities must be introduced in order to equalize (quotas in politics, flexibilities in employment, protection in the family). When this does not occur, inclusion in a particular category becomes exclusionary because it treats

equals as unequal, resulting in wage differences between men and women for the same work (part IV).

This is illustrated in the case of Mongolian society as described by Tom Kadie (2018). When the state of Mongolia had increased the economic opportunities of women in the name of inclusion, this brought about the decline in the self-esteem of men, leading to increased intimate partner violence. In response to this violence, the state failed to protect these women by not punishing the perpetrators. Thus, while Mongolian women have experienced inclusion in public life, that inclusion has facilitated their brutal exclusion in other aspects of Mongolian society.

“Co-optation” changing the language without changing the system:

Some scholars warn about the deception of the increased use of positive language like ‘integration’ has in relation to migrants and refugees since the turn of the millennium (Lems, 2020, p. 410). The current migration policies continue to be in keeping with former approaches to migration, which were marked by extremely exclusionary practices.

This is further illustrated in Lems’ paper (2020), as she shows how the deeply contradictory dynamics of the Swiss school integration measures, makes it acceptable to implement measures of exclusion while cloaking them in a language of compassion and inclusion. Unaccompanied youth refugees who enter Swiss society are initially perceived to be vulnerable victims in need of special care and protection and are given access to educational opportunities. These integration measures, instead of being an easy pathway to swiss society, turn out to be riddled with contradictory expectations that constantly swing back and forth between signaling refugee youth’s right to inclusion and expecting them to wilfully accept their continued exclusion.

Manipulation and interpretation of laws by the state:

There are times when laws and policies have contradictions and are complicated to interpret, and have conflicting ideals. Odrowąż-Coates (2018), describes the conflicting articles that exist within The Universal Declaration of 1948. Article 1 clearly states the concept of human rights by saying that all humans are equal in rights. This stands in contrast with the provision of Article 18 which guarantees religious freedom for religions that contradict basic human rights or devalue one person over another based on religious authority, religious orientation, or gender. Thus, the very reality of human rights can be called into question and might as well be associated with superstitions, fantasy creatures, or magic (p. 18).

Even when international laws are clear in their goals and objectives, the member states who sign the conventions and agreements, still have the power to interpret it based on national interests. For example, in the case of Eritrean asylum seekers, the fear of enforced conscription, which usually starts at the age of sixteen, pushes them to flee their homeland to Switzerland. Since late 2016 Swiss migration authorities explicitly only regard Eritreans, who can prove that they

were actively involved in the army or regime worthy of protection. This new policy has led to a wave of rejections of asylum applications by Eritrean unaccompanied minors in Switzerland. Thus we see that even though the category of the refugee is legitimized by the Refugee Convention, its interpretation and implementation is highly dependent on specific national interests and priorities. These priorities constantly change, thereby continually reasserting who deserves refugee protection and who does not (Lems, 2020, p. 410).

To sum up we can say that integration policies and approaches, although they may seem like it, do not encompass only inclusion. With the interplay of various power structures along with national interests and emerging inequalities, there exists a paradox of inclusion as well as exclusion.

2.2 Unaccompanied Youth (UAY) refugee or asylum seekers

"My French friends can't wait to turn 18 to go clubbing or get a tattoo ... for me, turning 18 means that I'll lose the protection for minors. And I might lose everything."

- Thierno Diallo, a young refugee in France, *UNHCR*, 2014

Between 2008 and 2013, the number of unaccompanied minors seeking asylum in EU member states had been consistently high between 11,000 and 13,000 (Eurostat 2020). In 2010, the European Network, Voices of Young Refugees, held a seminar which resulted in the need to "recognize young refugees, asylum seekers and other youths in need of humanitarian protection aged 18-30 years old as a group with specific needs within European society" (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2014). By 2015, the number of applications rose to 95,000, almost nine times as high (Eurostat, 2020). These groups of children were predominantly from conflict-ridden countries like Afghanistan, Somalia, Eritrea, and Syria (Lems, et al., 2019, p. 5); (UNHCR, 2014).

On arrival to the host country, two main problems arise when unaccompanied youth are confronted with the host country.

Fear of aging out:

In the beginning, the group of unaccompanied children was portrayed as "crisis figures" by the media, and there was a moral responsibility to protect them. But this depiction quickly changed from victimhood to imposter children as reports emerged saying that 48 percent of them were lying about their age. According to Silverman (2016), in 2015, 590 asylum applicants in the UK had their ages officially disputed; 574 underwent age assessments, of whom 65 percent were diagnosed as having a birth date suggesting they were over eighteen years old within the one to two-year age range. This is mainly because once a child enters the majority age, they "age out"

of the protections that are only reserved for children. Therefore age assessment is done to establish whether a child is entitled to certain rights and protection. According to research, it is virtually impossible to determine the biological age as the likelihood of gaining an accurate age assessment decreases with age. Nevertheless, invasive and non child-centered technologies are continually being used (pp. 32-33).

The rationale behind these age assessments is that along scientific lines, children abruptly stop becoming children without any regard to their psycho-social state. According to sociologists, "childhood" is a socially constructed phenomenon that is differently understood depending on cultural, societal, and political contexts. However, the definition of childhood under international law has western roots as it is marked by a chronological age with no social relativity and little room for diversity. This European view of childhood creates a sharp distinction between childhood and adulthood and can have a huge impact on societies, including the formation of specific policies and attitudes. (Markowska-Manista, 2018; Lems, 2020)

Lack of documents:

Documented identity is thought to establish identities, provide a link to a particular state, facilitate access to social security and other services. When entering the host country, many times, unaccompanied youth fail to produce identification documents or can also be rendered stateless. This is mainly due to substandard bureaucratic infrastructure, gaps in the legislation on the citizenship of a country, the formation of new nation-states, changes in borders, forced migration, or violent conflicts. For example, during the protracted wars of the 1980s and 1990s, the Afghan government did not have the bureaucratic or institutional capacity to register births. Another reason for lack of documents is that during migration, documents can get destroyed, left behind, or taken away by smugglers (Silverman, 2016, p. 34; Markowska-Manista, 2018).

Since evidence of identity and birth has been recognized as crucial preconditions to the acquisition of rights and protection, migrants without identities are treated with suspicion and seen as threats to citizens. Children arriving in the EU without identification are often seen more as "problems" needing to be solved, rather than as individuals, whose experiences and contexts matter. In this vein, we should question this "bureaucratic identity" in refugee status determination processes (Silverman, 2016, p. 33). Citizenship is said to be defined as "the right to have rights," and so, citizenship is not just being a full member of a national community but also a member of humanity. Thus a person denied citizenship is deprived of civil rights as well as socio-economic rights (Markowska-Manista, 2018, p. 37).

We see that for the problems stated above, the youth constantly need to fit the picture of a "deserving" asylum seeker or refugee. Child-only protections are not just valuable, to the asylum-seeker but also to the moral sense of deservingness felt by the community offering them. Many

community members feel that these “biological adults are buying time” that they do not deserve, and are not welcome (Silverman, 2016; Lems, 2020). Some of the reasons behind this kind of thinking are; notions of acculturation and cultural essentialism and the idea that migrants are a financial burden for nationals.

Indeed, the perception of "a deserving refugee" comes from a deep-seated racialized fear of "over-foreignisation" that is being out-numbered in one's own country (Lems, 2020, p. 409). There is also a risk of cultural essentialism, which sees individuals as entirely defined and constrained in their behavior and interactions by their culture of belonging (Markowska-Manista, 2018, 152). This kind of thinking leads to people, especially educators, to believe that acculturation is a necessary precondition for academic success. Acculturation occurs when the cultural backgrounds of the refugee youth are seen as deficient and there is a need to instruct them on how to behave so they can successfully get integrated into a system of values that are believed to be alien to these youth (Lems, 2020, 415-416).

According to Allport (as cited in Markowska-Manista, 2018) prejudice is caused by the existence of two factors: lack of knowledge and fear. Lack of knowledge about a particular group leaves too much space for imagination and misunderstandings, which can lead to a rising fear of the unknown and as exaggerated or completely unjustified potential threats to the well-being of the prejudiced person (p. 195). This is particularly seen in mono-cultural societies, whereas multicultural societies find ways to live with diversity and also to use their potential for further development. In her research, Zakrzewska-Olędzka (2018) shows that the heterogeneity of a society plays a crucial role in shaping their openness to others and willingness to engage in mutual cooperation to successfully create a common space of co-existence (p. 202).

Another root cause for the term "deserving refugee" comes from the impact of emergency response costs on the public finance of EU countries. Typically, the total cost of processing and accommodating asylum seekers can be in the range of €8,000 to €12,000 per application for the first year, although the figure may be much lower for fast-track processing. When there is a lack of coordination in functionings, some countries end up with more than their fair share of asylum seekers and so the burden of welcome weighs down more on some than others (Moriconi & Bordignon, 2017, p. 9).

As shown, we see a lot of factors get triggered and come into play once the UAY enters into a host country. This added pressure of being a "deserving refugee" on top of being a refugee in an unfamiliar country can provoke or impact the youth in many ways and can influence their perception of the environment around them. So far we have seen the inherent presence of social inclusion and exclusion in any social system and the interplay of factors that cause various actors from governing bodies down to community members in including and excluding these youth. The

following section will link these reflections to the impact of these processes on UAY migrants in urban spaces and the way certain places of wellbeing are shaped and valued in their eyes.

2.3 Perception of Place: Place Shaping and Place Value

“It takes a community to create a place, and a place to create a community.”

- Fred Kent

There is a tendency to think about the physical world only in terms of its physical qualities. A good neighborhood has good lighting, green spaces for recreation, adequate street furniture, etc. The social aspects such as acceptance, coherence, equality are viewed as separate entities. However, Petter Næss (as cited in Ng, 2016, p. 5), opposes this thinking of the physical and social world as having a casual relationship. He argues that the built environment can be seen as a particular subset of social structures, embodying power relationships, and the social order of a place, with distinctive disciplining effects. We see this argument coming along the same lines when we talk about the difference between space and place. Space is a physical entity with geographical properties. A place, on the other hand, is more than a physical space. A place is ‘space plus meaning’ (Donofrio, 2010 as cited in Mcevoy-Levy, 2012, p. 1) and is an outcome and achievement of social ‘work’ (Byrne & Goodall, 2013, p. 65). In other words, place is a social construct that is shaped and created by social outcomes. Friedman (2007, as cited in Hes & Santin, 2020, p, 19) goes further to describe places as sites of inclusion as well as sites of resistance and that they are shaped by planning, rules, and regulations, as much as by community occupation, local experiences, and activity. They are constantly reinterpreted and reconstituted and entail ongoing power struggles and negotiations (Mcevoy-Levy, 2012, p. 2). In this vein and also by taking Næss’s argument, can we say the outcome of being included and excluded manifests into certain types of places? If this is true, the quality of these places would be subjected to the different levels of exclusion and inclusion experienced. If we analyze the different factors and reasons that are responsible for shaping a particular place, we see the resulting “type of place” and understand its qualities. Since the focus of this paper is on unaccompanied youth, I will be narrowing down on the places that can together create therapeutic landscapes and contribute to the overall wellbeing of the youth.

In their research, Sampson & Gifford (2010) identified and described 4 types of places that were valued by their participants having refugee backgrounds: places of opportunity, places of restoration, places of safety, and places of sociability. Following these lines, I will further discuss how these 4 types of places are shaped with regard to the experiences and overall wellbeing of UAY. According to Carmona (2019, p. 4), a high quality place is one that returns the greatest

value to its users with regard to sustaining them physically, socially, and economically. In this vein, I will identify key factors that can either enhance or reduce the qualities of these 4 places:

a) Places of opportunity:

These places arise only when the youth are given opportunities to participate and acknowledge their dreams and aspirations. When stakeholders invest in social capital and promote participation, this enables children to be active participants and help them express their agency (Markowska-Manista, 2018, p. 152). According to Prilleltensky (2014), “feeling ignored, neglected and forgotten is a terrible violation of a psychological human right”. He further talks about “the power of mattering” (p. 151). When we receive signals of recognition from the world that our presence matters and is acknowledged, we feel a sense of agency: that what we do makes a difference in the world. In other words, the moment of recognition follows with a sense of agency. Furthermore, agency is not just the capacity of an individual to shape his own life but has the potential to influence social contexts. (Markowska-Manista, 2018, p. 152).

b) Places of restoration:

Places that promote experiences of relaxation and restoration are important in dealing with trauma and distress (Sampson & Gifford, 2010, p. 123). One of the main qualities of restorative places is giving priority to mental health. According to Zabłocka-Żytka (2018), psychological support may be an important step during the integration process in helping migrants cope with living in another country. On entering a new unfamiliar socio-cultural environment, children and adolescents can suffer from anxiety, disorientation, confusion, and low self-esteem. This is called as acculturative stress and is referred to as being associated with strong emotions – both positive and negative, and a part of a longer adaptive process. Acculturative stress usually follows acculturation when an individual is forced to adapt to the dominant culture.

c) Places of safety:

Places that provide a sense of security are primarily the most important as it caters to the needs of unaccompanied youth who are predominantly from conflict-ridden countries such as Afghanistan, Syria, Eritrea or Somalia (Lems, et al., 2019, p. 5). It is said that most often these groups of children, continue to feel unsafe and vulnerable and do not stop encountering traumas even after reaching a ‘safer place’ after fleeing from their homes (Markowska-Manista, 2018, p. 260). From their findings, Sampson & Gifford (2010) reported that places of authority such as the office of school principals and police stations were avoided by the youth as these places represented a possibility for getting into trouble and moreover they felt unsafe and uncared for around such places (p. 127). Therefore apart from ensuring security, trust is an important factor that can influence the quality of these places. Even in the presence of protective authoritative

figures, if there is a lack of communication and trust the place can immediately be rendered as unsafe in the eyes of the youth. Educators can create safe spaces by being trustworthy, predictable, and clear towards the children (Markowska-Manista, 2018, p. 269).

d) Places of sociality:

Social support from friends, family, and other community networks helps individuals to meet emotional and practical needs, and belonging to a strong social network that requires communication and mutual obligation makes people feel cared for and valued. (Azuma, et al., 2016, p. 14) Places that support social networking have a great impact on psychological well-being especially in the case of UAY. Places of sociality are born out of social acceptance and mutual understanding. As previously discussed, acculturation is a way in which there is an emphasis in correcting a migrant's behavior in the name of integration or perhaps "acceptance". This can be questioned when we understand one of the root causes of acculturation that is the concept "Otherness." It was introduced by Said (as cited in Markowska-Manista, 2018) and according to him it is the West's way of distinguishing itself from "the orient" and is constructed based on its "fears, desires and feelings of superiority". Such views, however, have little to do with the real situations and contexts of people living in those regions (p. 127). In this sense, can we say that social acceptance based on acculturation can in fact do more harm in making a migrant feel less accepted and inferior?

In sum, the place characteristics are interconnected with each other, and it has been argued that "when people live in a safe and supportive community with strong emotional support and love, people will understand what social acceptance is and will develop capabilities to actualize their potential, willing to contribute to their own coherent and integrated community" (Ng, 2016, p. 4). In these lines, Carmona (2019, p. 4) describes the notion, called 'place value', which reflects on the idea that a complex but interrelated basket of benefits accompanies any intervention in the built environment and ultimately flows to those with a stake in the place. Place value can therefore be defined as 'the diverse forms of value generated as a consequence of how places are shaped'. By understanding how these places are formed, we can identify the contributing factors that influence these places. Furthermore, by evaluating them, on their basis of quality, we see the value they bring to the wellbeing of the youth.

3 Research Methodology and Research Context

The research for the case study, set in Sweden, is restricted to a desk analysis based on secondary sources. Reports from governing bodies, international organizations, and Swedish newspapers have been used to understand policies and legislations regarding UAY. The views of authors relevant to this study have also been taken into account. Additionally, qualitative data has been obtained from interviews published in news articles and other media to understand the perspective of the youth. All of these sources have been used to answer my research questions, which are:

1. How do the socio-economic and political factors of inclusion and exclusion experienced by UAY shape the quality of places that are essential for their overall wellbeing?
2. By assessing the quality of these places, are UAY able to attach value to these places?

The four places of wellbeing identified by Sampson & Gifford (2010) as discussed earlier (places of opportunity, restoration, safety, and sociability) that contribute to a migrant's overall wellbeing will be evaluated based on the experiences of the youth who have gone underground and those who go through Sweden's informal education institute- Folk High Schools. This quality evaluation will be done based on the perceptions of the youth impacted by the experiences of inclusion and exclusion. The places will be rated as good or poor and the data represented graphically. The results will highlight the way each place is perceived according to the characteristics. Furthermore, we will see how their individual experiences allow the youth to attach meaning and values towards these places.

3.1 Research Context

Overview of Sweden's policies with regard to integrating UAY

Refugee Crisis in Sweden:

According to many authors, Sweden is one of the European countries that; “display more positive attitudes towards immigration” (Moriconi & Bordignon, 2017, pp. 7-8) and “has supportive transition arrangements for unaccompanied minors turning 18 years” (EMN, 2018, p. 53). However, this image of a country that values human rights and equality has become increasingly debated (Wernesjö, 2020, p. 390). This is mainly because of the events that followed 2015, the so-called “the refugee crisis” year in which the country saw an unprecedented figure of almost 163,000 asylum seekers, out of which approximately 35,000 were unaccompanied minors under the age of 18 years (Spanish Commission for Refugees [CEAR], 2019); (Bunar, 2017, 3). These have primarily been boys aged 16–17 years, coming from Somalia, Afghanistan, Iran,

Syria, and Iraq (EMN 2018, p. 5). According to Wernesjö (2020), at first, the people had support for these asylum seekers arriving by providing them with food, clothes, and housing. However, this support turned into a language of ‘crisis’ (p. 389).

Disbelief and suspicion towards asylum seekers’ age and motives grew and the figure of the unaccompanied minor moved beyond the professional discursive realm of lawyers, children’s rights advocates, academics and NGOs, and started to permeate in public debates (Lems et al., 2019, p. 6). In Fassin’s words (2005 as cited in Wernesjö 2020, p. 390), the narratives of the children went from ‘compassion’ to ‘repression’. Concurrently, Sweden’s system for the care and accommodation of unaccompanied minors came (and remains) under strain due to the unexpected influx of applications. In November 2015, the government declared the need for a ‘breathing space’ in asylum reception (Wernesjö 2020, p. 389). This was followed by several policies and law changes with tighter border and identity controls on the Swedish borders, particularly along the border with Denmark. In June 2016, the Swedish parliament (Riksdag) introduced changes to the Aliens Act by passing a temporary law called the “restrictions law” or “temporary law” which restricted the possibility of acquiring a permanent residence permit and reduced access to upper secondary school education (CEAR, 2019, p. 7); (The Swedish Refugee Council [FARR], n.d.). All these policy reforms resulted in a sharp decrease in the number of asylum applications; from 7,000 in 2014 to 2,200 in 2016 (European Migration Network [EMN], 2017, 15).

New Policy Reforms:

Despite this, the state found a new set of challenges posed by the 35,000 unaccompanied minors who had arrived in 2015 and are on the verge of attaining majority age or have already done so. (EMN Sweden, 2017, p. 29) Apart from having no knowledge of Swedish and having limited education, there were reports that the children were suffering from psychological trauma, and not getting the care they need. According to The 2018 Red Cross report, the consequences of the restrictions law of 2016 had led to increased mental health-related illnesses among the group of unaccompanied children and young people (“You have to fight”, 2019). Additionally in 2015, the then newly elected government explained in the Budget bill that addressing high youth unemployment was one of its top priority labor market policy challenges. So in response to the poor integration and growing unemployment rates, the government introduced a series of regulations to enable unaccompanied children to access education and training so as to help them integrate and participate culturally, socially, and economically. In Jan 2016, new reforms were made to improve the quality of education that newly arrived students were receiving in introductory classes which is where UAY following their status determination are first kept in before they join regular classes in the mainstream schools. However, these introductory classes

were only open to minors up to 18 years of age and who have residence permits (European Migration Network [EMN] Sweden, 2017, p. 14).

More recently, in 2018, a new law called the “Gymnasium law” or “the high school law” came to be that made it possible for unaccompanied persons over the age of 18 and for those whose asylum applications received rejections, to be offered a temporary residence permit so they could complete their upper secondary studies. Nevertheless, this law came with a lot of problems as the waiting periods were very long, during which this group became very exposed because the municipalities had no formal responsibility for their housing or livelihood (“You have to fight”, 2019).

Apart from reforming the mainstream education for UAY, alternate adult education initiatives or ‘popular education’ also started to get more attention and one key government measure was to fund unaccompanied young people aged 17 to 21 to attend Sweden’s Folk High Schools (FHS), or Folkhögskolespåre through The FHS Track project. Through these schools, the project aimed to provide the youth with an alternative educational pathway along with accommodation, food, counseling, and financial support (Employment, Social Affairs, and Inclusion, n.d.).

As mentioned earlier the case study focuses on UAY who have taken two polar opposite directions on entering Sweden mainly due to the way they matched up to the integration policies. If a youth is 18 years of age with a residence permit, he/she would be allowed to join the FHS through the FHS track project. However, on getting the asylum application rejected and depending on the type of municipality he/she lived in, the migration agency can stop providing financial and housing support, and so the only option would be to go underground. Additionally, there is a rule that says one can hide for 18 months and then seek for asylum again (Landelius & Funke, 2013). In the following sections, we will try to understand the context of both these scenarios.

Going Underground:

In November 2019 TT News Agency wrote an article titled “Unaccompanied refusals are drawn into crime” saying:

Several hundred unaccompanied young people who have been rejected under the new high school law have gone underground. Many of them have become part of the growing shadow community where they are subjected to drug abuse and crime. In the future, the group is expected to grow further when more people are rejected.

This is not the first time the term “going underground” has been used in Sweden. The Border Police in Stockholm, working with unaccompanied persons, described a society where young people run the risk of falling into the hands of criminal gangs and a reckless black labour

market (Ferm & Lindhagen, 2017). Furthermore, the new high school law is just one of the government's efforts towards "integrating the youth" into society while at the same time restraining the number of asylum seekers coming into the country. The unaccompanied youth; who get their asylum applications rejected, who don't meet the criteria of certain integration policies and who age out of their benefits after turning 18, are forced to abscond from the law and go into hiding. According to Silverman (2016, p. 32) the problem of aging out, lack of information about the implication of reaching the age of majority, lengthy application processing times, and the fear of repatriation force us to question about whether these youth are being protected or simply held in limbo for a number of years until their claims can be assessed. The fear and mistrust in authorities force UAY to abscond from the law and further make them vulnerable to trafficking, criminal activities, and drug abuse. (EMN, 2017). According to Anosh Ghasri (2019), in 2017 the Swedish Migration Board wrote in its forecast that the number of wanted migrants would be up to 50,000 people by 2020. The forecast came six months after the then Migration Minister's notorious figure of 80,000 deportations. The number of open rejection cases from the Swedish Migration Board to the Police Authority is just over 17,000. Of these, 12,000 are hidden people living in the shadow of society. One of the main reasons for the youth to choose to stay in Sweden rather than going back is because as mentioned earlier, a majority of them are from conflict-ridden countries. An article published by Aftonbladet revealed that "The boys who live here (in Sweden), have problems in Afghanistan. They have no father, no mother, and many problems. When you have no one in Afghanistan, when your relatives themselves are in danger, you cannot go to Afghanistan. To die is better" (Sachnin, 2017). "Rather than going back, they live as paperless in Sweden and risk being left in a life where they are exploited and ill-treated" (Björk, 2016).

Going the Folk High school way:

Folk High Schools is a form of adult education outside the official education system and is similar to the community college system in America. They were established in Sweden over 100 years ago and are said to have been originated in Denmark inspired by the nationalistic ideals of Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig (1783–1872). They were set up in rural areas to equip peasants and farmers with social competences and prepare them to participate consciously in decision-making processes, thereby enabling them to enjoy civic rights (Maliszewski, 2003, p. 108). It was thought to be a place where the ordinary people would be given knowledge about their history, language, and cultural inheritance. (Lövgren, 2017, p. 62). It is important to note that these schools were the first in Sweden to make education beyond the primary level possible in the countryside, where educational opportunities were scarce (Larsson, 2013 as cited in Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2020, p. 34). This original plan of establishing civic schools as an alternative to public schools continued, and thus the primary objective of the school is to provide a "general civic education" (Bagley & Rust, 2016, p. 290). The school quickly became popular and started

being accessed by urban dwellers. In 2018 there were around 155 FHS spread across the country. (Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2020, p. 34). The majority of the schools are boarding schools which means that students live and study on the same campus. (European Social Network [ESN], 2017). Education at the school is funded by the government, while housing, food, and other support are funded by the school's local municipality (Hayes, 2019). Each of the schools is independent and has a decentralized managerial framework, which means they are free to decide how to organize career and counseling guidance for students. (Bagley & Rust, 2016, p. 284).

The **Folk High School Track Project** started in 2012 and offered alternate pathways into a university-level study, vocational professions, or the creative industries through Sweden's folk high schools. Through FHS, unaccompanied migrants could live alongside Swedish youth to improve their command of the Swedish language. One of the main objectives of the project is to inform ministries, central authorities, and organizations to further facilitate the placement of unaccompanied children in Folk high schools and to work towards removing obstacles in legislation and regulations. The project was funded by the counties' funding program, '§ 37 funds' which covers salaries for project managers, travel, expenses for information meetings, training, and conferences (ESN, 2017). In 2017, approximately 70 unaccompanied young migrants attended 15 Folk High Schools across Sweden. The number of participants increased to 500 in 2018 as the scheme was extended to 16 of Sweden's 24 counties (Hayes, 2019). The project has now been completed, but the model for the Folk High School track lives on at the Folk High Schools (Sweden's Municipalities and Regions [SKR], 2019) Furthermore, it has been recognized in the European social network as an example of successful integration and transition to adulthood for migrant youths.

4 Case Study Analysis

4.1 Going Underground

4.1.1 Going Underground: Inclusion and Exclusion analysis

Under this section, the list of policies and legislations that are directly and indirectly responsible for driving UAY to “go underground” will be analyzed under an inclusion-exclusion analytical lens in order to understand the complex social phenomena that can impact the youth.

Embedded principles in policies during asylum procedure:

Sweden has a set of principles and values that are embedded in their integration policies for UAY refugees and asylum seekers and are supposed to provide equal opportunities for all members of society. One of the guiding principles, ‘The Best interests of the child’ is enshrined in the Social Services Act. According to the Act, the best interests of the child shall be crucial in all decisions and measures of care and treatment provided to children (EMN Sweden, 2017).

But is this really the case? In order to check the credibility of an asylum seeker’s application, the Swedish Migration Agency conducts personal interviews, medical age assessment and other measures to conclude the credibility of the minor’s age claim. However, as mentioned before these age assessment tests have been claimed to be inaccurate and furthermore, The National Forensic Medicine Agency (Rättsmedicinalverket) had previously emphasized that no method of medical age assessment can determine a precise age. “The results of these checks don’t give a picture of how accurate the given age of all asylum seekers in Sweden is, as the checks have only been carried out in cases where there was reason to doubt the person’s given age” (“Impact of Sweden’s asylum,” 2017).

Policies towards integrating the youth through education:

The main policy that dictates the country’s education system is The Education Act 2010, which stipulates every child’s right to equal access to education regardless of gender, geographic residence, and social and economic conditions. Although the freedom of education is included in the Constitution of Sweden (Denkelaar, 2018, p. 8), unaccompanied children who have turned 18 and do not have a residence permit do not get funded by the municipality for secondary education. Only the ones below 18 years of age and holding a temporary residence permit have the right to be enrolled at secondary school. Municipalities have the option to decide if secondary school should be available for unaccompanied minors in this category between 18 and 20 years of age (EMN Sweden, 2017, p. 35). When the “Gymnasium law” or “the high school law” was implemented, unaccompanied persons over the age of 18 could be offered a temporary residence permit so they could complete their upper secondary studies. However, even though the law

seemed to be positive and allowed rejected asylum seekers to remain in the country, the introduction of the legislation underwent a lot of criticism for being over-complicated and lacking clarity. Furthermore, the politicians had not solved any of the existing problems and simply pushed these problems on to the society that had to deal with these youth who had no house or jobs. The Migration Court of Appeal is expected to rule on whether the law should stand or be rejected, but no date for the decision has been given (Afzali, 2019); (Knappe, 2019).

The emphasis on Language learning:

Language introduction programs were specially designed for newly arrived without previous knowledge of the Swedish language, to prepare them for a transition to another individual, vocational or university preparation programs (Bunar, 2017, p. 10). In 2013 a new legislation took effect regarding experimental operations with increased teaching time in Swedish or Swedish as a second language for newcomer students in primary and secondary education (Education Act, 2010 as cited in Denkelaar, 2018, p. 10). According to Bunar (2017, p. 5), the government's investment in education for refugee children was more to do in improving the Swedish language. Research indicates that while it takes children approximately two years to acquire communicative language skills, they can take up to seven years to develop the academic language used in school environments. There is little time available to learn the host country language and take on new content before they face high-stakes tests that determine eligibility for further education (OECD, 2018 as cited in Cerna, 2019, 21). In his article, Sachnin (2019), talks about the difficulties many Afghan and Syrian refugees faced with their studies. Coming from largely poor villages, these groups are mostly illiterate and have a hard time learning the language. This difficulty in grasping a new language is also one of the main reasons for defection from introductory courses. Since language introduction was introduced in 2011, the number of students in the program has increased by 34% in grade 1. However, after two years, only a fifth of the students remained. Then only 40% of the students had passed on to either national programs or other introductory programs. An equal proportion (41%) was no longer in secondary school after two years. (Denkelaar, 2018, p. 17).

4.1.2 Going underground - Impact on the youth

From what we have gathered, we see that the youth who don't match the criteria of the integration and educational policies and also the ones who have limited capabilities are subject to higher levels of exclusion than inclusion. On paper, the above integration policies and approaches seem to be empowering the youth, but in reality, the implementation of these laws only results in disempowering them. Now let us understand the impact these social outcomes have on the youth:

Poor mental health:

The ambiguous nature of these laws can have a serious effect on the youth's mental wellbeing. An article in *The Local* ("Sweden's school law", 2018), talks about the frustration that comes with waiting during the long processing periods. The decision of who is allowed to stay and who is made to leave is described to be similar to that of a lottery. A boy was mentioned who waited for 13 months for his first ruling from the Migration Agency and was not eligible to apply under the law. However, if it had instead taken 15 months, he would have been eligible.

The frustration and hopelessness of their situations can consequently push the youth to the extreme edge. As Roden (2017) says: "Concerns have been raised that refugee children in Sweden are using online forums to plan mass suicides, with some saying they knew they would die anyway if they had their asylum application rejected and were deported."

Distrust:

The feeling of being excluded by "seemingly being included" though a language "cloaked in positivity" can lead them to be more suspicious and impact their sense of trust. When there is a serious lack of consideration of the child's views, the consequences of these approaches can place vulnerable children in harm's way. These non-child centered procedures render the youth voiceless and contribute to their mistrust in officials. The reliability of these assessments is further called into question when children start trusting traffickers more than the authorities (Markowska-Manista, 2018, pp. 122,139). This mistrust in protective mechanisms is also one of the main reasons for UAY absconding from the law, thus increasing their likelihood of endangering themselves.

Detrimental choices:

"When the high school law was passed, the question of how the young people's housing would be arranged was omitted. This has led to young people throughout the country expected to cope with their studies while also lacking access to stable housing and basic security. Many testify that they are utilized in different ways, mainly in the sex and drug trade, for example, to get somewhere to sleep or a meal. We also see that young people who, for technical reasons, are not covered by the high school law are in an even more vulnerable situation." (Ärnlöv, et al., 2019).

Following an article by *Sverigesradio* (Wirenhed, & Sjöwal, 2019), it was reported that it is common for unaccompanied persons who do not have the right to housing to be exploited in a black labor market.

"I talked to a youth who worked on renovating tenancies and he just described feeling completely like a slave and not daring to say anything because you are so afraid of losing the job

even though it is poorly paid. And it may be that money is not enough to provide food for the day or pay the rent, but it can be money to send to the families living in a war-torn country.”

Furthermore, it is said that sometimes having a job in the black labor market is the better option as it can keep one away from criminal gangs recruiting unanimously for drug sales. There are rumors of undeclared work in Malmö and that smuggling and trafficking human beings is part of a larger tavern (Landelius, & Funke, 2013).

Drug addiction is an inevitable outcome for the youth who take this path. An article in Expressen (Petersson, 2017), talks about a heroin wave that hit the small city of Uppsala wherein around 100 young people from Afghanistan, mainly, were suffering from heavy heroin abuse. The teenage boys were hiding in underground corridors and to fund their addiction the most common choice was to cheat or steal.

Mutual Ties:

Despite this detrimental situation, one of the relatively positive outcomes of going underground is finding solidarity with people coming from the same background. A news article, (Landelius, & Funke, 2013), describes how a 17-year-old UAY was pushed to live on the streets when he received a rejection from the migration agency. His hopeless situation drove him to suicidal thoughts, but fortunately, he got help from “the asylum group” - a loosely composed network that helps asylum seekers and the paperless. They arranged for him to live temporarily in an apartment where the owner had just moved and was left vacant.

4.2 Going the Folk High School Way

4.2.1 Folk High Schools: Inclusion and exclusion analysis

Under this section, we will investigate Sweden’s Folk High Schools as an institute. An inclusion-exclusion analysis will be done on the opportunities and approaches offered by the school aiming to educate UAY.

Founding Ideologies and objectives:

As previously discussed, the idea of Folk High Schools (FHS) originated in Denmark from Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig. He believed a school like this could help restore Denmark’s cultural heritage and national spirit (Bagley & Rust, 2016, p. 282). This newly planned educational system founded on the realization that “the common folk” needed to be educated in order to make informed decisions about their country was seen as an opportunity to counteract the progressing degradation of the Swedish rural population. These nationalistic ideals along with the objective of providing civic education, to enhance each individual’s human resources for

contributing to society, become a debatable subject. As per the FHS official website (The Information Service of the Swedish Folk High Schools [FIN], 2016),

“Folk High Schools offer a unique opportunity to enhance each individual’s human resources by learning the language, history, and the culture of the host country, and help them verify their life experience. The students’ experiences of working life and society are put to use, and their contribution is very vital.”

According to Eastman (1999, p. 32), civic education became a means of assimilating immigrants by educating the ‘politically unsophisticated and ignorant constituents’ of immigrants. We see this idea of correcting one’s behavior relating to acculturation and as discussed before, this thinking comes from the concept of “Otherness.”

Program of studies:

The schools have a decentralized managerial framework and each school determines its own program with much control given to its principals (Bagley & Rust, 2016, 289). A wide variety of courses is offered for students to choose from, that range from aesthetic subjects like music, theatre, art and design, athletics, environmental studies to subjects relating to developing countries. A few courses are vocational, such as journalist training and youth recreation leader programs. The special courses can be studied at various levels, some of which are equivalent to university/college level (FIN, 2016). As FHS offers a range of courses, the participants have quite diverse backgrounds. A relatively high proportion (41%) of participants who take up basic courses have a migrant background. Participants who take up specialized courses are quite diverse, depending on the type of course. However, the participants with a migrant background only make up 15% of the people on these courses (Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2020, p. 34). Unlike their native counterparts who join FHS to improve their personal skills, UAY are more inclined to working as soon as possible. This is reinforced by the fact that holders of unstable residence permits can stay on in the host country as long as they have work (Cerna, 2019).

Building relationships with native peers:

One of the more inclusive aspects of FHS, is that they do not separate UAY away from their native peers. The on-site accommodation at Folk High Schools makes possible the provision of supervised yet largely independent living conditions for unaccompanied migrant youths, while also giving them opportunities to get to know their Swedish peers (Hayes, 2019). In an interview (“Straight track”, 2016) the headmaster of Hjälmared Folk High School explained that, “Instead of living alone in an apartment or together with only people who have the same background as you, you live in a boarding school with people from all over Sweden.” The school’s location on the outskirts of the city is also probably one of the factors that bring the students living on the

same campus together. According to the European Commission (Employment, Social Affairs, and Inclusion, n.d.), unaccompanied migrants living and learning alongside Swedish young people not only improve their command of the Swedish language but also fosters a bi-directional growth of tolerance and familiarity among both groups.

Emphasis on vocational training vs individual career aspirations:

After graduating from FHS, the students are eligible to study at university. Additionally, the students find their way into society through their existing connections with employers in the local areas which accelerates their transition into paid employment and independent living (Hayes, 2019). In an interview (“The folk high school”, 2017), the project manager of the Löftadalen Folk High School commented about the unaccompanied youth students saying, “We have five genuine "new-builders" who live here at the school...We have this name for unaccompanied young people so we can think of them as the ones who will build the new Sweden.”

The former National Coordinator for the Folk High School track, Ulf Wallin, reported saying that there have been few drop-outs and that many of the young people also have summer and extra jobs which is an indicator of the project’s success (SKR, 2019). According to the follow-up surveys that the FHS Track Project conducted, 75% of the migrant young people secured summer jobs (Hayes, 2019). However, it is important to point out that formal evaluation surveys have not yet been undertaken to show how many of the youth who graduate from these schools access the formal labor market and whether they are only given access to the informal labor market.

4.2.2 Going the Folk High School way - Impact on the youth

From the above analysis we see that in several ways, the FHS have provided the youth opportunities to have better control of their lives. Still, there are certain exclusive aspects that we cannot ignore. In this vein, let us see how the youth are impacted by the institute.

Identity Crisis

The strong emphasis of acculturation through learning the Swedish language and culture is seen by both the government and the folk high schools. Consequently, the youth are subject to the pressure of learning and adapting to their new environment in a short period of time. As discussed before, acculturative stress is associated with strong emotions on entering a new socio-cultural environment and can cause anxiety, disorientation, confusion, and low self-esteem (Zabłocka-Żytka, 2018). The problems related to acculturation as a necessary precondition for integration, not only impacts mental health, but it restricts the youth from expressing their identity by not

being able to engage with activities of their own respective cultures. This can give them a sense of inferiority before the dominant culture. Even as the state extends its arms to refugees and gear towards diversity and social acceptance, one cannot ignore their constant need to homogenize the population.

Support from native peers

In an interview (“The folk high school,” 2017) conducted at the Löftadalen Folk High School, an unaccompanied Iraqi refugee talked about how he only knew two words in Swedish when he first arrived, and that it helped to have other students around him who only spoke Swedish.

“I became friends with those who have been here for many years and who told me "just talk, it doesn't matter if it gets wrong... if I sit and read a book, there is always someone I can ask if there is any word I do not understand."

“I have learned how to live together. We are all like a big family.”

We see from this case that, in living and engaging in an environment with one's native peers, there is a level of social acceptance which in turn can have a positive and enriching influence. Nevertheless, from the wide variety of courses that the school provides ranging from basic or general to more elite courses, the socio-economic backgrounds of the students are laid bare and the emerging inequalities cannot be ignored. Although there is no evidence to say that this is a major impact on the youth, it is a fact that should be kept in mind.

Actualizing potential

The FHS Track Project conducted impact assessments through follow up surveys that demonstrated 75% of the migrant young people secured a summer job (Hayes, 2019). Additionally given the fact the youth are given the option to study in universities opens up many opportunities for the youth to actualize their potential.

However formal evaluation surveys have not yet been undertaken to show how many of the youth who graduate from these schools access the formal labor market. In their research on labor market participation, Çelikaksoy and Wadensjö (2019), suggest the presence of additional barriers in the labor market for refugee youth as compared with native youth, which puts their labor market well-being at risk by constraining them to be concentrated in precarious and insecure jobs (p. 194). In the interview at the Löftadalen Folk High School (“The folk high school,” 2017), as previously mentioned, the UAY Iraqi refugee had expressed his desire of being a janitor in the school. His reasons were not stated but probably his strong feelings of never wanting to leave the school led him to think of this option. Boccagni (2017) talks about a migrant's aspiration to have a temporal dimension. Aspirations evolve over time as they interact with processes of local

integration and transnational engagement. And so, it is important to note that migrants usually are forced to face reality checks with their future plans because of various social consequences.

4.3 Place Type Evaluation

This section evaluates the quality of the four places identified by Sampson and Gifford (places of opportunity, restoration, safety, and sociality) based on the experiences of the youth who have gone underground and those who went to the FHS way. So far we have seen the impact these various social processes have on the youth from their narratives and perspectives. Along with this, the views of other authors on important topics such as acculturation, labor market participation, are taken into account and each of the places will be evaluated. We will see how far the inclusion-exclusion experience affects the way they perceive places of wellbeing to look like from two different perspectives. Furthermore, we can also see whether or not the youth are able to attach value to these places given the complex social processes that are encompassing them.

a) Places of restoration

For the underground youth, the rating of “place of restoration” is seen as poor. The suspense and frustration of waiting for approval from the migration board can sometimes mean a life and death sentence. Moreover, they are unable to seek psychological support because of the fear of getting caught by the police and being deported. Also, living in unhygienic and detrimental environments can further exasperate their stress and harm their mental health. As mentioned before, living as a paperless in poor conditions is seen as a relatively better choice than getting deported back to their home countries and endangering their lives.

The FHS youth, in contrast, have a better quality of their “place of restoration.” The schools give them free access to counselors and hence they are able to receive psychological support. Furthermore, the aesthetic quality of the schools being located on the outskirts of the city provides a calm environment and thus capable of enhancing mental wellbeing. However, the quality of the place is still average mainly because of the strong emphasis on the acculturation of the FHS founding ideologies which has the potential of developing into acculturative stress among the youth.

b) Places of sociality

The quality of the places of sociality for youth going underground has a better rating than the rest of the other 3 places. This is because of the connections the youth have with others from similar backgrounds. The networks of solidarity help in alleviating stress and providing solutions when situations seem hopeless. However, the rating is still low as the youth are outside of Swedish

society and do not get their support. Therefore they do not get a chance to interact with their native counterparts and foster a sense of familiarity and tolerance.

For the FHS youth, the places of sociality have a lesser value compared to the other places as despite having an increased sense of social acceptance, the inequality factor cannot be ignored. Additionally, the emphasis on acculturation, without giving the youth a chance to express their identity reduces the level of social acceptance. The rating is still higher than for the youth going underground because of the social support they receive from their native peers which are beneficial in acquiring a wider network, learning the language better, and understanding the culture.

c) Places of safety

The quality of “places of safety” for the UAY going underground has the lowest rating mainly because of their sense of distrust and suspicion towards authorities that force them to abscond from the law and leave them in a vulnerable position. In order to survive, their desperation allows others to take advantage of them by getting involved in precarious jobs and detrimental activities that can potentially cost them their lives. The question that remains is whether they were better off in their home countries of conflict and poverty or living outside Sweden’s society.

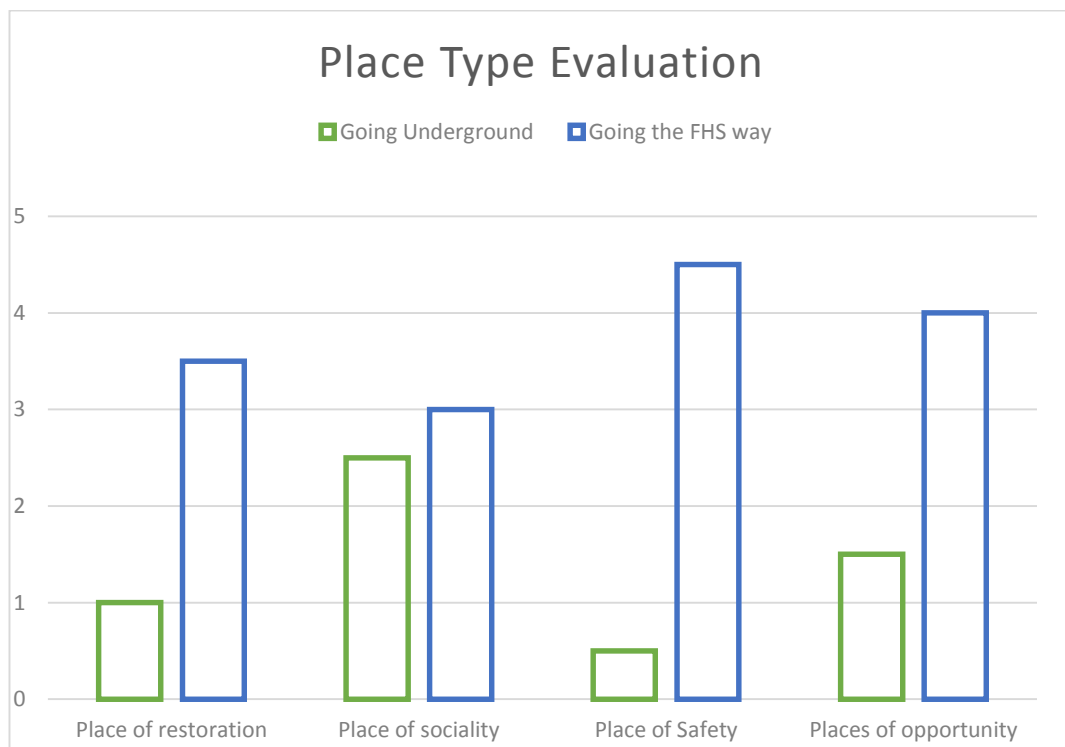
For the FHS the places of safety are given the best rating as the youth are given a place to live within the institute's campus. The schools not only provide a physically secure environment to live and to recuperate but also they have the school staff to keep them safe. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier simply the presence of educators and other authoritative figures is not enough to help the youth feel safe. The attitude and motives of the teachers need to constantly be kept in check. And so the quality still does not reach the highest value.

d) Places of opportunity

For the youth who have gone underground, the quality in “places of opportunity” lies between poor and average. Due to the higher levels of exclusion experienced from the policies and legislations, we see that the youth are forced to take up jobs that take advantage of their situation. By limiting their opportunities to express their agency, the youth are unable to actualize their full potential. Still, the quality of opportunity is evaluated slightly below average as we see that given the circumstances, there exists a degree of agency for the ones who actually do take up jobs to sustain themselves. In their paper Çelikaksoy & Wadensjö (2019), explain that the unique circumstances that shape the outcomes of the UAY, result in the youth to respond resourcefully to challenges thereby displaying both resilience and agency, related to autonomy.

The quality in “places of opportunity” for the FHS route lies between average and good. A higher rating is given mainly because of the choices that the youth are offered, from going to university to getting contacts for paid employment. Additionally, the FHS acknowledges their presence in society by calling them the “new builders” of Sweden. Although this could be a way of using false positive language to show their inclusiveness, we can say that to some extent the youth could feel empowered and help in heightening their sense of agency. The quality of these places still does not reach the highest value, due to the lack of evidence of the UAY participating in the formal labor market which is an indicator of wellbeing.

The above explanation of the evaluation is graphically represented below in a bar graph to provide better visualization of the results, the value 5 being the highest quality given to the place and 0 being the lowest.



(Source: Author)

5 Conclusion

This thesis sought to ask how the experiences of social inclusion and exclusion help shape the quality of places that are essential for the overall wellbeing of UAY. Consequently, whether the youth are able to attach value to these places. The initial analysis helped us to have a better understanding of the various approaches and policies that are implemented to provide a smoother transition for the youth into society. Drawing the impact of the youth from this analysis and then overlapping it over the bar graph, we see that depending on the impact of the social processes the youth are subject to, the value attached to these places seem to have varying levels. In other words, some places have a better value and some have a poorer value.

At first glance, one would assume that the youth who go to the school would have a better value for places of wellbeing than the youth who go underground. Although overall, the results of our findings do confirm this, through the visual representation of the data, we see that the answers are not so black and white, that is the migrant experiences of youth in Sweden are ambiguous. We see that the place of safety received the lowest value for the youth going underground, whereas for the youth going the FHS way got the highest value. The results for this were more expected and straightforward given the factor of security and sense of trust being more evident in the case of the institute. However, when it comes to places of sociality, the results were a bit more unexpected. In the case of the youth going underground, the place of sociality received the highest value than the rest of the other places. In contrast, for the youth going the FHS way, we see that the places of sociality received the lowest value compared to the other places. This is mainly because the factor of social acceptance experienced by the youth in both cases was at different levels. The networks of UAY formed through mutual aid and support is one of the more positive aspects for the youth going underground. Furthermore, it is important to note that none of the places of well being received the highest (5) or the lowest value (0). Thus we can say that overlapping these experiences of inclusion and exclusion over the quality of places important to the youth reveals the factors that value and devalue places.

From this study, we see how place is valued from the perspectives of different experiences. This understanding of the perspectives of place in terms of wellbeing helps pave the way for future studies of place-making and on the different ways, the youth create meaning to these places through their own initiatives and establish their identity.

One of the main drawbacks of the study was the lack of an ethnographic study and getting the perspective of the unaccompanied youth as well as the physical relations they establish with the built environment. A few recommended topics to explore would be; the barriers that the youth face while trying to build relationships with their native peers, childhood aspirations - whether they are able to build on their dreams, their ability to trust their educators and mentors.

Furthermore, talking to the educators and mentors of the folk high school and getting their views on integrating the UAY into society would help check their motives.

The lack or unavailability of data limited the accuracy of the evaluation for some of the places of wellbeing. It is necessary to trace the future paths of unaccompanied youth by getting statistics on the number of youth who have accessed the formal labor market as compared to the informal labor market. Formal evaluations need to be done to check whether these schools actually help the youth to become a part of society and not simply push them to the informal sector and keep them at the margins of society.

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