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**A place where they belong -
unaccompanied youth and their experiences of home,
journey and integration**

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1. Introduction

Should Rinkeby and Rosengård be considered neighborhoods filled with large social problems and in urgent need of action to solve these problems? Or should they be considered grey suburbs, where the largest threat towards your health are the old guys with moustache, smoking on the park bench next to you? Journalist and author Nima Dervish (2017) posed these questions in a newspaper column the other day and suggested that the answer to both questions, is ‘yes’, meaning that hope and threat can exist side by side on a daily basis. To me, his column suggested that the same place can have very different meaning to different individuals as “places exist and are constructed by their inhabitants from a subjective point of view”. (Knox et al. 2014:14) The meaning of a place can fade away as you move from one culture to another, while the importance of some places somehow survive a transition through time and space. The teenagers I meet in my work as a caretaker at a youth home for unaccompanied refugee minors, have gone through a transition in the sense that they have left their home country, but they are also about to become adults. Just like any other teenager in Sweden they are supposed to find their place in life, but the place they have arrived at, is a lot different from what they are used to.

In this thesis, the first aim is thus to find out how a small group of unaccompanied refugee teenagers relate to places in their lives, and to compare the meaning of these places, as the teenagers move from one part of the world to another. They have travelled far to reach Sweden, spent times in various places on their journey while in the back of their heads, memories of a place called home is ever present. And still, Sweden might not be the end of their trip. These are times when young people can view many different places in the world as a possible home. The second aim of this thesis is to investigate to which extent the places the unaccompanied refugee teenagers relate to in Örebro, give them opportunity to meet and interact with Swedes, and thus, whether the efforts of the municipality of Örebro to integrate these young individuals, are sufficient, or could be improved. Then, the questions I intend to answer are:

1. How do the young individuals being interviewed, relate to places in their original home country, places on their journey to Sweden and places where they have spent time, since arriving in Sweden?
2. To what extent do the places in Örebro, where they spend time, represent opportunities to integrate with individuals born in Sweden? And if they do not, how could the municipality of Örebro create places for integration?

The first question is, from a scientific point of view, motivated by there being a lack of research on the relation between refugee and place in the narratives by unaccompanied refugee minors (Sirriyeh 2008:12). Chase is also interested in the connection between refugee and place as she proposes employment of the geographies of well-being by Fleuret et al. (2007), for researchers interested in the narratives of unaccompanied refugee minors (2013:867-868).

The second question is motivated as integration has become a major political topic in Sweden and elsewhere for the past couple of years. Integration is also an objective in the layout plan for the municipality of Örebro. The local policy makers suggest that through the planning of a city with districts where there are a variety of functions and meeting places, we can create preconditions for people with different ethnic, economic and professional background to meet (orebro.se 2017d). This objective follows the introduction of the layout plan for Örebro, where the local policy makers state that the overall aim with the lay out plan is to strive for sustainable development from an economic, environmental and social perspective (orebro.se 2017f). In spite of there being some distance between the concepts of integration and sustainable development in the lay out plan, I draw the conclusion that the local policy makers view integration as part of the aspiration to achieve sustainable development. Furthermore, from a scientific point of view, researchers have suggested there is a need for further research related to different theories explaining the interaction between actor and structure and where integration as a concept is discussed (Zetterqvist et al. 2016:46).

The thesis starts with a presentation of the theoretical framework, including a literature overview with concepts which will accompany the reader through the thesis, and a short introduction to structuration theory. I was familiar with some of the literature since earlier courses but I also used the snow-ball principle: one author referred to another and then I could find this new author in the database at Örebro university library or, at some other university library.

Then I go on presenting the context and circumstances in which you find these young people, which is the Örebro municipal organization for reception of unaccompanied minors, after which I will present the method. The data is collected through interviews with three unaccompanied refugee teenagers living in Örebro. They arrived in Örebro in 2015 and have their origin in three different countries, from which large groups of unaccompanied teenagers have arrived in Sweden. Since I know these individuals, due to my employment as a caretaker within the local social authorities, I will also reflect on my positionality. After the depiction of the context of Örebro, I will present the data, the interviews, one by one, and perform an analysis as I go along. This leads up to a discussion and results of the investigation, followed by proposals for further research, before the thesis ends with a summary.

Demarcation

This thesis includes interviews with three individuals only. Since the group of unaccompanied minors arriving to Sweden was estimated to 35 000 in 2015, the conclusions drawn from these interviews cannot be representative for the whole group. The interviewees include one female and two males. There are differences in their answers which could possibly depend on their different upbringing. However, I have chosen not to use a gender perspective when analyzing the data. From a geographer's point of view, one could have wished for more details characterizing the various places mentioned in this thesis.

2. Concepts and theoretical framework

The concept of place could simply be defined as a “specific geographic setting with distinctive physical, social, and cultural attributes.” (Knox et al. 2014:6, 11) but in this thesis it is also obvious that places have a certain influence on the lives of the interviewees. As they move from one part of the world to another, new places provide new contexts for their social relations and for their daily habits. Arriving in new places, the unaccompanied refugee teenagers will also come to reflect on who they are, and what is expected from them under these new circumstances. Knowing that places have a strong influence on well-being and opportunities in people’s lives, (Knox et al. 2014:13) it should be easy to understand why so many people leave their country of origin and go through months, or even years of hardship, before they arrive in what will possibly be their new home country.

The place they associate with close family relations might likewise be a place where danger and insecurity is all too present. But then, a place felt to be secure and promising from a life-style-point-of-view, might be lonely when there are no close relations to gain that daily support from. And anyone who has been forced, for some reason, to leave his or her beloved childhood home, will know that place, or the experiences and social relations they have had in that place, also can be part of their identity. Thus, places provide both opportunities and constraints which will influence the lives of people. For those who choose to move from one culture to another, it is also significant how places provide context for their socialization, where these people might contest the social norms associated with that place (Knox et al. 2014:14).

The starting point for this essay is the refugee, who has left his or her home, and started a journey that might last longer than expected. Sometimes the journey never ends. How does the refugee in this transition phase relate to places or spaces where they spend time? Reading this literature overview, several useful concepts will appear as authors try to describe the relation between refugees and place. These are concepts which I will return to, further on while performing analysis on my data. My intention is that the literature overview will give the reader a fairly broad picture of what has been written on this subject for the past ten years. The overview also include calls for further research on the subject of refugees and place and of refugees as capable individuals, as you will notice. Then I go on presenting structuration theory which I have chosen for guidance during the latter part of this investigation.

2.1. Refugee and place – a literature overview

Place – a product of social activity

Anthropologist David Turton spent many years studying the Mursi people, a nomadic group of 10,000 in Ethiopia. He believes that to understand how a sense of place is attached to someone's social identity we have to consider place, not as a stage for social activity, but as a product of social activity. Bearing that in mind we will understand that migrating is not only a process where you lose a place but is also about the struggle to create a place, where you can share an understanding with others (Turton 2005:258). It is challenging for anthropologists, and perhaps for others too, that different groups of people cannot be said to live in a single, certain place on the map anymore, but that they are scattered. Their place is not necessarily a particular territory, but is created while they are moving from one piece of land to another (Turton 2005:262). Places are then created through certain rites (Turton 2005:265). The rituals which are given names are particularly relevant when a place is created, as the activity forms a sense of togetherness among those participating, keeping worries and instability away (2005:267-268). Thus, Turton argues that a refugee is not only a human being capable of receiving support, being controlled and dominated for his own good, but an able and social agent (2005:278).

Being a social agent, the refugee needs incentive to act and this review suggests that what the refugee searches for, or what his or her objective is, while settling in a new environment, is a sense of home and belonging (Sirriyeh 2008, Wernesjö 2015), a sense of wellbeing and ontological security (Chase 2013) or the memory of earlier places (Siganporia 2016) or protection space (Lyytinen 2015) together with places filled with opportunities (Horst 2008, Jansen 2015). But, this review also stresses that refugees often have very limited opportunities to even imagine, let alone act, to reach any of these concepts in real life.

Protection spaces in Kampala, Uganda

Lyytinen focuses on Congolese refugees in the city of Kampala, Uganda, as they through their daily habits and encounters create unofficial protection spaces, next to the official ones provided by the UNHCR (2015:45-46). The protection space created by the refugee herself is, apart from being a territorial and a physical unity, also something spiritual, something to imagine and is, in an urban environment, often provided by certain social communities, like the church or fellow countrymen (2015:49). According to Lyytinen protections spaces are created on three levels, the micro level (the family, the house where you live), the meso level (the church, the neighborhood, compatriots) and the macro level (the nation state) (2015:61). The house can provide protection, seclusion (even though many large Congolese families share one room as refugees), and dignity and be a starting point for a social life. The church offer community, a sense of belonging, spiritual services and sometimes physical protection at night (Lyytinen 2015:64).

The neighborhood, on the other hand, can imply tension and conflict. That was the experience of the Congolese families living next to Ugandan families in Kampala. And when there was no protection space to be had from official institutions, the Congolese families had to turn to their compatriots. On a national level, the macro level, refugees sometimes had to avoid public spaces since Ugandans accused the Congolese for affecting the economy negatively or supporting the wrong politician, even though Congolese had no right to vote in Uganda (Lyytinen 2015:70-72). Lyytinen argues that it is important to study protection spaces, if you want to understand how and why refugees choose, or avoid, certain spaces. Results could then be useful to decision makers (2015:51).

Telling stories about a place

Arriving in a totally new environment, having been persecuted and forced to leave a neighborhood to which you have been emotionally and spiritually attached your whole life, you might close your eyes and try to remember what it was like, that place that was so much a part of you. And maybe the memories you evoke, through storytelling, can help you recreate that particular place. Harmony Sigangoria tells the story about the 90,000 Tibetans (including Dalai Lama) living in exile in the Indian city of Dharamsala, the first of them arriving in the late 50's. Having fled from persecution in their former home town of Lhasa in Tibet, they wish to view their stay in Dharamsala as a temporary one, and that someday they will be able to return to Lhasa (2016:65). Sigangoria views this state of liminality as a condition where new meaning and new identities are created through the narratives being told and shared within this group of Tibetans. Together with certain activities, like the koras, a kind of wandering the streets typical for Buddhists while on pilgrim journey, the Tibetans cultivate not only their spiritual habits but their social ones. Walking the streets and pausing in places, which they have given names reminiscing of streets and places in Lhasa, the Tibetans in Dhasa talk with each other and through the narratives, strengthen their social and religious identity. To create and to structure can be seen as originating from narrating if we agree that narrating is the way with which we produce and convey order. We are the stories we tell, and telling stories can thereby be a strategy for avoiding the dangers associated with liminality (2016:66-67). The importance of giving the streets and places in Dhasa (Dharamsala) names similar to those in Lhasa can be understood using the idea of trace residue from Foucault. Trace residue is what remains after a radical shift in life, it is something you desperately need to bring along, next to all the new rules and structures you are expected to absorb in the new environment. Hence, Sigangoria suggests that places can be explored to see which habits of an individual or a group that survived the period of transition and which habits have emerged (2016:69).

When a temporal stay becomes a dead end

For refugees, the possibilities to create new places and new identities or reproduce old ones, can be a lot more limited than they appear to be in the city of Dharamsala. Line Richter has investigated how young men from Mali try to create a place for themselves in Algeria and Morocco on their journey to, what they believe to be, a better future in Europe. Richter finds that

the young men view their leaving home, as a way to grow up and become someone. While in their home country they did not see any opportunities to reach a status as a grown-up. What then happens when they arrive in Algeria or Morocco, is that they often end up in a depressing situation, having no human rights since they have no residence permit, living outdoors in all kinds of weather, just like animals (Richter 2016:78, 80-81) and where they soon resign and begin to compromise with their own moral judgement (Richter 2016:85).

Still they somehow manage to create their camps together with compatriots, with political and social structures much alike the ones they had in their home country (Richter 2016:80). Within this informal society there are some men being considered big men. This is someone who due to his many close social relations and an ability to show solidarity, has a strong position. Getting this position does, however, not indicate that the man had a similar position back home in Mali, where he most likely was, simply, the son of his father (Richter 2016:83). Richter argues that since many of these young men are not able to reach Europe, their stay in the Maghreb (Algeria and Morocco) should be labelled a state of limbo, rather than liminality, which suggests a period of transition. Limbo is more associated with edge, border or even dead end and more accurate when describing the life of these young men (Richter 2016:85).

The meaning of freedom of action

When Western nation states strive to maintain their borders and sovereignty, migrants seeking asylum can pose a problem. The solution for these states, according to the Italian philosopher Agamben, is the detention camp, or the asylum center, where the refugees lose legal rights as well as human rights (Vitus 2011:95). Are there any possibilities to create a place, a life, in an asylum center? I would suggest that creating a place you need to be a social agent, and to be a social agent, you need some kind of space and freedom of action. Katherine Vitus (2011:96) argues, just like Richter, that spending up to seven years under limbo-like circumstances, where you are between states, with no legal or human rights, is a situation that can trigger a depression. In the case which Vitus refers to, it takes about one year, then parents in refugee families, being locked up in Danish asylum centers, “go to bed, or sit apathetically by themselves while the children take care of themselves.” (2011:95) The theory of the refugee camp (asylum center) and the state of exception being forced upon its inhabitants, is not just about the specific place in itself but the social place where the inhabitants have a special relation to the state, according to Agamben. The refugees are precluded from life governed by the Danish law, while at the same time confined to an existence run by the Danish law (Vitus 2011:98). According to Vitus (2011:101) refugees are then transferred, in average, six times between different asylum centers, while in Denmark, a fact that keep them “in a transitory, fleeting and depersonalized position” towards those who exercise power over them.

The anti-place

Pauline McLoughlin et al. (2008:255,262) describe an even worse existence among the East-Asian refugees ending up for years in detention camps in the Australian desert, far away from

civilization, developing all kinds of serious psychiatric illnesses. The authors argue that it is necessary to examine the connection between the place itself and the illnesses occurring among the refugees. Health and place cannot be viewed separately, as the meaning of a place cannot be separated from the place. The authors go on arguing that the constant monitoring of the camp together with its position far away from society makes it an anti-place (McLoughlin et al. 2008:256). Anti-place is a concept by the American philosopher Edward Casey referring to a space which is emptied of power and forced to fit the spatial demands of an institution. Within anti-places, people and things are put in a never ending system of relative, dehumanized and restricted positions. Instead of nurturing and embracing concepts like meaning, position and identity, which Casey believes belong to the concept of place, the anti-place delimits and exercises control over its inhabitants, both physically and socially (McLoughlin 2008:259).

Being trapped in this kind of condition for several years, the refugees in Australian detention camps lose their sense of context. The restrictions in time and space are coupled with the refugees having their names withdrawn, only initials are allowed together with an id-number, they get their medicine, if needed, through fences, and they have to wear hand-cuffs when transported as they are believed to be guilty of something unstated, until they have proved to be not guilty (McLoughlin 2008:260-261). The authors conclude that the anti-place together with the time spent in the detention camp, while being intensively monitored 24 hours a day, a phenomenon the authors view as embodied space, leaves the refugees with no other possibility to show opposition than becoming ill (McLoughlin 2008:262).

The supposed protection space in Sweden

Drawing on the concept protection spaces by Lyytinen (2015:45) presented earlier, I find that it fits well with Sigvardsdotters (2012) investigation of undocumented migrants and their relation to certain spaces in Sweden. At the time of Sigvardsdotter's study the undocumented migrants staying somewhere in Sweden were between 10,000 and 35,000. They do not have any id-number since they do not have a residence permit nor a temporary permission to stay, and they do not belong to the member states of the EU, meaning they are not allowed to stay, nor work in Sweden as citizens of the EU can choose to do. Being undocumented, having no id-number, places the migrant in a stressful situation, in relation to official authorities in Sweden (Sigvardsdotter 2012:160-161). A Swedish hospital fits well to the description of an official protection space provided by authorities. And Swedish authorities have decided, not only to practice the idea of human rights towards all people, and offer appropriate hospital treatment in case of need, but most county councils also have a generous code of ethics which include giving medical treatment to people who stay temporarily in Sweden, like undocumented migrants. But Sigvardsdotter (2012:162-165) finds that to an undocumented migrant, a need to visit a doctor puts him or her in a precarious situation. Administrators at hospital facing an undocumented migrant, are used to ask for id-number and might unsuspectingly call the Swedish Migration Agency, an act that can reveal this patient's whereabouts to all authorities including the police, and in the end, a visit to the supposed protection space of the hospital can lead to the migrant being deported.

Kakuma – a place with opportunities

Bram Jansen, then, contrasts these dark pictures of life as a refugee in the Western world, as he describe how refugees relate to the African camp of Kakuma in Kenya, run by the UNHCR and NGOs since more than 20 years (2015:149-150). Just like McLoughlin et al. (2008), Jansen argues that the camp, as a concept, is not only a physical structure but the result of a relation between those in charge, whether they are unfriendly guards and their panopticons (Australia) or officials representing humanitarian actors (Kakuma), and the refugees (2015:149). But if a refugee camp is normally associated with a life where you are excluded or even locked away from society, Kakuma is, apparently, a place with swinging doors. According to Jansen (2015:150)

“People are sometimes in the camp, sometimes in the city and sometimes in South Sudan, Uganda or the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where they relate in different ways to aid. People redefine aid by the ways they seek access and explore what is on offer, and increasingly the Kenyan camps are an accepted part of livelihood options available.”

Kakuma, then, is not only an emergency shelter but a point of transit and a place where refugees in their relation with humanitarian actors can receive health care as well as education and training. The camp is run by the humanitarian bureaucracy and as such, is integrated in the larger socio-economic context. With such all-round functions, Kakuma has become an attractive option to many people and businesses too, contributing to the north-eastern Kenyan refugee camps yearly turnover reaching 25 million American dollars. Jansen argues that camps like Kakuma, with its well-functioning humanitarian bureaucracy usually stands in contrast to a rather weak surrounding national state, making the camp an inclusive space, “in which processes of reordering, identity formation, emerging humanitarian economies and politicization take shape.” (2015:150-151) Further, Jansen argues that while most research on refugees focuses on aiding refugees and aiding programs, researchers have so far shown little interest in the viability and potential in camps like Kakuma. Jansen is aware of the refugee camps being places where lives are tinged by insecurity and gender based violence, but he thinks this is the case outside the camps as well, and part of the culture (2015:152).

Kakuma – from a different perspective

Producing a second view on life in Kenyan refugee camps, Cindy Horst (2008:77-78) is, just like Jansen, eager to emphasize the relation between the refugee as an agent seeking opportunities and the camp space produced by humanitarian organizations or governments. Then refugees are, at least the ones Horst met while doing research, not victims, but determined human beings who in spite of difficult circumstances cling to the opportunities available to them, in order to survive, and who try to grasp the difference between things they can change and things they have to accept as they are (Horst 2008:17-18). While depicting the life of a Somalian father of many children, living in the camp, as content; he receives free food, education for his children, health care when needed, clean water, 99 per cent security, a piece of land where he built his house and where his cattle has their pasture (Horst 2008:5-6), the author then gives a more nuanced

description of what life in the Kenyan camp can be like. It is not all about being spoon-fed. Food is insufficient. And while there are some opportunities to work for an extra income, most of these jobs go to Kenyan refugees. Non-Kenyans are then paid lower wages. Refugees are not allowed to move freely (no swinging doors here, then) and international humanitarian aid is focused on care, rather than supporting the refugees in their becoming independent (Horst 2008:80-81).

While Jansen settled for an attitude that insecurity and gender based violence is nothing particular for the refugee camp but rather part of the culture in which the camp is situated, Horst believes these actions are worth considering. The camps are unsafe, particularly for women who run the risk of being raped as soon as they leave their house to collect firewood, and who also often, together with their children, are beaten at home by their husbands or fathers (Horst 2008:88-89). Refugees running small businesses are repeatedly being robbed (Horst 2008:90) and conflicts often rise between members of different clans. Sometimes the origin of the conflict lies way back in history, when the opposing clans lived in their home country (Horst 2008:91). Considering the two slightly different views on life and opportunities in Kenyan refugee camps by Jansen and Horst I find it important that Horst has a gender perspective. Drawing on the concept of protection spaces (Lyytinen 2015), it is clear that if home or neighborhood is supposed to represent protection space to refugees, this is not necessarily the case for women and children in Kenyan refugee camps, an observation that deserves attention.

The experiences of unaccompanied refugee children

During the past few years there has been a growing amount of research on unaccompanied refugee children. Until 2012, most of this research focused on the emotional problems affecting the unaccompanied children, where studies were performed with a psychiatric or medical perspective. The problems among the children were often considered to have their origin in past traumas, especially being separated from their parents (Wernesjö 2012:495). Ketil Eide (in Wernesjö 2012:497) has divided research on unaccompanied children into three categories: the organization of the reception, their rights, and the psycho-social situation of the unaccompanied children. Ulrika Wernesjö (2012:497) proposes an extra category: the experiences of the children, as told by themselves, and their reasons for asylum. Wernesjö (2012:503) builds her argument on the understanding that there has been too much focus on the emotional problems and the weaknesses of the children and too little on their inner strength and resilience. Among the few researchers who Wernesjö considers to be exceptions from this rule, is Elaine Chase, to whom I will soon return.

Wernesjö (2012:504) further argues that since the unaccompanied children are categorized as in need of help, their existence is placed outside a normal, or ideal, childhood. This is due to most research being performed in disciplines with focus on individuals and where researchers have a perspective based on psychopathology and development. Wernesjö (2012:505) ends her overview by calling for more research on the unaccompanied children as a group of capable young people, even though they are vulnerable. This kind of research should let the children speak for themselves on the subject of well-being, and what the children think could contribute to their

well-being. Questions should cover what possibilities and hindrances they see in the education system, in the labour market and the reception system. Wernesjö believes that the concept of belonging could be used to investigate how the children relate to their new country. Before returning to a study where Wernesjö (2015) uses the concepts of home and belonging let us turn to Ala Sirriyeh (2008), who also prefer these concepts while performing a study on unaccompanied children a few years before Wernesjö.

Home – a fluid concept

Sirriyeh (2008:12) argues that several studies have shown that safe and secure accommodation is a cornerstone for these children while they strive to integrate in a new society. Still, according to Sirriyeh, there was (up to the time of her study) a lack of research where concepts like place and neighbourhood were used, when researchers investigated the narratives of unaccompanied children. Another aspect which Sirriyeh (2008:13-14) finds significant is that most studies on these children have related to children with a residence permit, while she believes that integration starts on the first day in the new country. And looking for home is not the same as looking for the definitive place called home, but rather a search for a sense of home which might arise during the transition phase, while unaccompanied children wait for an answer to their application for asylum. Home can thus be a place which is fixed geographically but also, as it is a fluid or relative concept, it can be a sense of belonging, the result of emotional interaction between people in a larger social, political or economic context. Still, the conclusion drawn from Sirriyeh's interviews with a group of unaccompanied refugee children, was that they considered home to be something they dreamt of, something from the past or in the future. Home to them, was part of a normal life, and being in this transition phase, waiting for asylum, the children did not think of their life as normal (Sirriyeh 2008:17-18). When it comes to the concept of belonging then, Sirriyeh argues that children do not need residence permit, nor citizenship, to get a sense of belonging. During the ongoing asylum process, the children construed their own narratives of belonging based on their social, political or cultural activities, learning English and making friends at college or in various communities (2008:24).

The group home – the actual home

Belonging is a concept often used by researchers investigating migration and the lives of people who are displaced, and therefor Wernesjö (2015) finds it adequate to use when studying a group of unaccompanied children in Sweden. With a poststructuralist approach Wernesjö considers the concepts home and belonging to be dynamic and constantly negotiated. Thereby she challenges the essentialist view of home and belonging as concepts related to ethnicity, race, nation or place. Just like Sirriyeh, Wernesjö argues that senses of home or belonging are produced by people while they interact with each other in different contexts and thereby these concepts can appear in different places, no matter the ethnical background of these people (Wernesjö 2015:452-453). Meeting the unaccompanied children in a small group home in Sweden, Wernesjö finds that to them home is associated with close relations and family. They wanted to live with a Swedish

family, not in a group home with professional staff. To live in a family with parents is what the children considered normal for someone of their own age (2015:456).

Wernesjö argues that living in a group home lower the potential for the unaccompanied children to produce a sense of home. Still, when the youngsters leave the group home to live by themselves, on their way to become independent, they often return to see their friends and even the staff at the group home. This could, according to Wernesjö, be explained using the poststructuralist view where the youngsters renegotiate their view of home. When the group home is no longer theirs, and the youngsters look back, they somehow perceive it as an actual home (2015:457-458). Using an old poststructuralist proverb you could also say: You never miss the well, until it runs dry! While living in the group home situated in a small Northern village in Sweden, the unaccompanied children found it hard to produce a sense of belonging, since they were excluded from the social networks of the local youth. Rather they had to turn to their compatriots or other refugee children. Even so, Wernesjö suggests that having the same background should not be overemphasized as a precondition for having a sense of belonging, since conflicts can arise among people with the same origin (2015:463).

The places of well-being

If Sirriyeh and Wernesjö prefer the concepts of home and belonging when investigating the relation between refugee children and place, Elaine Chase (2013) chooses the concepts of well-being and ontological security. Ontological security, as a concept, originates from Anthony Giddens, whom I will return to when I present the theoretical frame being used in this investigation. Well-being might not have the same meaning in different academic disciplines, nor among people of different origin or ages. What we agree on is that well-being is a lot more than just absence of illness. Chase, then, proposes that well-being should be connected to ontological security, a concept which, according to Chase, could be described as being able to let one's self transcend time, place and context in order to make us able to interact without fear of losing our identity. Having no ontological security leave us uneasy, with no capacity to maintain our life-story (Chase 2013:858-859). Chase proposes that ontological security, as an extra dimension of well-being, gives us the opportunity to investigate the need among refugee children to see themselves as being part of a future scenario.

Chase considers the need to make plans for the future as fundamental among refugee children, if they are supposed to have a sense of well-being. But this is a need which has been neglected so far (2013:860). The interviews made by Chase reveal that regardless what type of trauma the children had gone through, their principal concern was their future. Not knowing what role they would have in the future, if any at all, made them lose their ontological security. As they could not speak English, they could not express themselves without interpreter and this, together with the sense of being different and stigmatized as asylum-seekers, made them refrain from speaking about their background. Then, not being able to maintain their life-story, they had to accept the identity glued on to them by the authorities (Chase 2013:862). But where does well-being and ontological security connect to place in this argument? The study reveals that there are certain

places where the unaccompanied children are able to get a sense of well-being. These are the school, the church, the mosque and the leisure services in various places. As the children got to know a few grown-ups, this contributed to their ontological security. Spending time in school, they were able to plan for their future, even the youngest children did that (Chase 2013:864).

Altogether, for these children, well-being is to be able to maintain their life-story (who they are, where they come from and where they are heading), to get a sense of belonging and have routines and predictability in their life. This kind of well-being was more important to the children than having medical treatment for past traumas. The ability to maintain the picture of themselves in a present and future context was in itself a therapeutic project (Chase 2013:866). And referring to the geographies of well-being by Fleuret et al. (2007), Chase proposes the employment of one of their four physical or social spaces, the spaces of therapy (can a particular space have a curative effect?) and argues that the spaces of therapy for the unaccompanied children could include the school, the church, citizenship, political and economic rights and security (2013:867-868).

Depending on what the researcher wishes to investigate there are also the spaces of capability (does a particular space enable or hinder wellbeing?), spaces of integration (could spaces that are socially or culturally integrated affect wellbeing positively?) and spaces of security where the researcher investigates the relation between individuals and their emotions and sensations caused by for example environmental threats, food risks or living in spaces haunted by conflict (Fleuret et al. 2007:113).

2.2. Concepts for analyzing refugees and place

Before I turn to the theory by Anthony Giddens, I would like to share my view of the concepts and approaches in the literature review, and why I find some of them useful in this investigation.

Turton believes that we have to consider place, not as a stage for social activity, but as a product of social activity (Turton 2005:258). The struggle to create a place calls for a refugee who is not only capable of receiving support, but an able and social agent (Turton 2005:278) and this is how I like to regard the refugee teenagers in this investigation. I choose to label this able and social agent a *determined* individual, meaning a person who sets up a goal and go for it, rather than wait passively. Lyytinen focuses on the unofficial protection spaces created by Congolese refugees in Uganda when they find the official protection spaces provided by the UNHCR not sufficient (2015:45-46). The unofficial protection space can be the house where you live, but also the church or the country itself (Lyytinen 2015:61). I choose to view protection spaces as places where individuals or groups experience a sense of safety and as such, they can be applied on different levels: the micro, the meso or the macro level. This is an approach I find especially useful as it gives me an opportunity to bring forward, and analyze, experiences of safety under quite different circumstances and in different contexts in the lives of the interviewees.

While depicting the lives of refugee Tibetans in Indian exile who wishes to someday return to their beloved hometown of Lhasa, Sigamoria argues that telling stories about the home country

can be a strategy for avoiding the dangers associated with liminality (2016:66-67). This approach appeals to me as it offers a way to see how, or if, refugees relate to their background while talking with their new friends in Sweden and if this kind of storytelling is meaningful to them, in the sense that it strengthens their ontological security. Sigamoria (2016-69) also refers to the concept of trace residue, originating from Foucault, with which the researcher, through the investigation of a place, can get an indication of which habits that survived a period of transition, or have emerged since transition. This became kind of a follow up-question in the interviews, making the teenagers reflect on their relation to school and religious places. Line Richter investigated how young men from Mali try to become adults and create a place for themselves in Algeria and Morocco on their journey to Europe. They end up in a depressing situation, with no human rights, living outdoors in all kinds of weather, just like animals (Richter 2016:78, 80-81). This inspired me to ask my interviewees about their experiences of places during their journey to Sweden and whether they have grown up since they came here.

None of my interviewees, luckily enough, had suffered the experiences told by Vitus (2011) or McLoughlin et al (2008) as they describe how life in detention camps, or anti-places, in modern Western states like Denmark and Australia make refugees seriously ill. Nor are my interviewees here illegally, like the undocumented migrants in Sigvardsson (2012). Jansen (2015) and Horst (2008) gave a more optimistic view of life for the active refugee in their investigation of Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya. Especially Jansen (2015:150-151) wishes to depict life in the camp as one with many opportunities while Horst (2008:88-89) also points at the difficulties and dangers in the camp, not least for women. These stories also relate to the concept of determination I mentioned earlier, since the authors stresses that refugees can change their lives, at least in the context of the Kakuma camp. When it comes to research about the unaccompanied refugee children, Wernesjö (2012:503) stresses that there has been too much focus on the emotional problems and the weaknesses of the children and too little on their inner strength and resilience while Sirriyeh (2008:12) argues that there was (up to the time of her study) a lack of research where concepts like place and neighbourhood were used, when researchers investigated the narratives of unaccompanied children. I do hope that the approach in this investigation can be some kind of answer to the alleged shortages.

Just like Sirriyeh (2008:24), Wernesjö (2015:452-453) argues that senses of home or belonging are produced by people while they interact with each other in different contexts. Thereby these concepts can appear in various places, no matter the ethnical background of these people. To me, the concepts of home and belonging seem appropriate to use when interviewing young individuals who just left home and travelled several thousand kilometers to a place they do not know. Will they be able to feel at home or get a sense of belonging here? Chase (2013:860) considers the need to make plans for the future as fundamental among refugee children, if they are supposed to have a sense of well-being. I believe this is a relevant point since I have noticed that many young refugees claim that they find it difficult to concentrate in school, or sleep at night, when they do not know if they will get a permanent residence permit. And according to Chase, this need to know what lies ahead, has been neglected so far.

And finally, there are the approaches by Fleuret et al (2007:113): the spaces of therapy, the spaces of capability, spaces of integration and spaces of security. I find the spaces of therapy and capability useful when investigating the meaning of different places to the young interviewees as they relate to experiences of safety and determination – concepts I choose to consider important for these refugee teenagers as they speak of places in their home country, places during the journey to Sweden and finally, different places in Örebro.

2.3. Structuration theory – agency and integration

After analyzing the interviews individually, using the concepts from the literature review, I will carry out an analysis on parts of the interviews by using structuration theory by Anthony Giddens. The parts of the interviews I would like to investigate guided by structuration theory concerns integration and the nature of human agency. The reason for this choice, is my aim to analyze the relation between the interviewees and certain places they relate to.

The actor is crucial to Giddens, but the interest in the activity is also significant (Parkatti 2007:22).

The basic domain of study of the social sciences, according to the theory of structuration, is neither the experience of the single actor, nor the existence of any form of societal totality, but social practices ordered across space and time. (Giddens 1984:2)

The actor is the driving force behind social development even if the reproduction of our social activities or habits are partly guided by terms and consequences of which we do not know. The actor also depends on socially constructed norms and some social and material power to be able to act. A certain structure is needed (Parkatti 2007:24).

Structure thus refers, in social analysis, to the structuring properties allowing the ‘binding’ of time-space in social systems, the properties which make it possible for discernibly similar social practices to exist across varying spans of time and space and which lend them ‘systemic’ form. (Giddens 1984:17)

Structure, then, are the recurrent patterns of social activities along with their motives. The social structure, according to Giddens, has a duality which means that it represents both the conditions and the result of an activity. According to Giddens, structure is in production continuously and the actors are the producers (Parkatti 2007:34-36). Structure becomes real and obvious only when the actor experiences the effects of his or her activities and the responses from the individuals the activities are meant for, or not meant for. Social structure does not exist without the actors but if the actors are going to act, they need structure for guidance and incentive. The activity can then maintain the structure. Together, the actors share knowledge about the social reality in their practical consciousness (things we all know, but do not speak of) and as they repeat their activities, they can make the structure last (Parkatti 2007:36-38).

Giddens views the actor as someone who can take action and transform his or her material world (Parkatti 2007:18). But according to Giddens, human agency cannot simply be defined as when

we do something intentionally, since our activities might have consequences we were not aware of, nor wished for. Rather, human agency should be defined as a capability to do something and then eventually be the perpetrator of that certain activity, deliberately or not.

An officer on a submarine pulls a lever intending to change course but instead, having pulled the wrong lever, sinks the Bismarck. He has done something intentionally, albeit not what he imagined, but thus the Bismarck has been sunk through his agency. (Giddens 1984:8)

Giddens takes another example, which might seem more relevant these days, when he describes how individuals in two equally large ethnical groups live scattered in an urban area. They have no negative feelings towards the other ethnical group, but still prefer to live in a neighborhood where they are not in minority. Therefore they move around until the two ethnical groups are somehow divided geographically – a phenomenon we name segregation.

The ‘composition effect’ is an outcome of an aggregate of acts (...) each of which is intentionally carried out. But the eventual outcome is neither intended nor desired by anyone. It is, as it were, everyone’s doing and no one’s. (Giddens 1984:10)

Which part of our consciousness is at work when people start to move in order to not be part of a minority? This is my question and it leads me to the part of the structuration theory where Giddens stratifies the three levels of consciousness: the subconscious, the practical consciousness and the discursive consciousness. The subconscious driving forces creates motive which stands in direct contact with interest. We are not always aware of this, but the subconscious level sometimes makes us do things which has significance for the reproduction in society (Parkatti 2007:19). Could the subconscious be the driving force behind ethnical segregation? Early in his or her life, the actor develops a need of ontological security which is secured by the subconscious. The ontological security comes about as we learn to recognize repeated appearances and trust that they will be repeated. Meaning and emotions are closely related, according to Giddens.

The practical conscious level, then, manages the tacit knowledge, the knowledge we do not verbalize. With tacit knowledge, the actor can use his capacity to change things while experiencing the effect of his own activities, or someone else’s activities, thereby understanding things that are not said out loud. This presupposes that fellow actors have a mutual tacit knowledge. Being the only one in a group not having that kind of tacit knowledge can put you in an awkward position (Parkatti 2007:20-21). The discursive consciousness is the top of the iceberg. It is the relatively few things we can express verbally, originating from all our experiences, attitudes and intentions, stored during our lifetime (Parkatti 2007:21). Giddens does not consider the line between practical consciousness and discursive consciousness to be particularly dense.

On the contrary, the division between the two can be altered by many aspects of the agent’s socialization and learning experiences. Between discursive and practical consciousness there is no bar; there are only the differences between what can be said and what is characteristically simply done. (Giddens 1984:7)

3. Context and circumstances – the reception of unaccompanied minors in Örebro

The municipality of Örebro is the seventh largest in Sweden with 144 000 inhabitants. Within the city there are people originating from 165 different countries (orebro.se 2017a). In 2015, the local department for reception of unaccompanied refugee children expected that approximately 150 refugee minors under 18, would arrive in Örebro. When the year 2015 came to an end, the municipality had received in total 639 unaccompanied children, of whom 272 were allocated to stay while their application for asylum was processed at the Swedish Migration Agency. The rest of the unaccompanied children were, after some time, allocated to other municipalities in Sweden (Jakobsson 2017).

Creating homes for newly arrived children and teenagers

Late in 2015 the local department for reception of unaccompanied children opened several new youth homes and recruited 24-hour staff to attend to the teenagers and children arriving. I was one of the caretakers being employed. Many of the arriving minors were also allocated to local families, or families in other municipalities, when there were no families to be found in Örebro, such was the pressure to quickly organize living accommodation for them. The teenagers being interviewed in this thesis were among the 272 who arrived, and stayed, in Örebro in 2015 and they were all (the three of them) allocated to youth homes in the Örebro area. From my experience, the staff at the youth home (Hem för vård och boende, HVB) are instructed to organize everyday routines in order to create a sense of security and predictability in the lives of the adolescents. Put more straightforward, we try to make them eat, sleep and go to school *regularly*, and encourage them to healthy leisure time activities, not unlike ordinary parents.

Safe and secure start in Sweden

As they are expected to be independent in a couple of years, the unaccompanied teenagers are also encouraged to take part in the daily chores at the youth home which include cleaning, washing and cooking. The goal with the activities, as they are presented on the homepage of the municipality, is that the teenagers receive a safe start in Sweden, that they are prepared for an independent life and that they have an occupation and a place of their own when they turn 21 (orebro.se 2017c). Behind the practical work being performed to support and integrate the refugee children in Örebro and Sweden, there is an approach called BBIC (Barns Behov I Centrum) originating from Socialstyrelsen, the leading national health authority, and adapted to the Social Services Act (socialstyrelsen.se 2017). Through BBIC, caretakers like me can be guided in motivating these unaccompanied minors to reach their goals, whether it concerns school, health, social relations, emotional development and not the least, independency.

Apart from the youth home labelled HVB, where there is staff around the clock, the authorities in Örebro also has youth homes (Stödboenden) where unaccompanied teenagers aged 16 or older,

are expected to be more independent, and where there is no staff present at night. Finally, when youths are considered to be integrated and well-functioning, they are allocated to a flat, which they can view as their own, within the municipality (utsluss). Then they are expected to take care of themselves, with some light assistance from staff. (orebro.se 2017c). For the unaccompanied teenager, there are great advantages to still be under 18 when you finally receive your residence permit. Then you will remain within the care of the municipality organization for unaccompanied minors, even as you pass 18 and, in a juridical sense, become a grown up. Thereby you are guaranteed accommodation and assistance by staff until you are 21. Teenagers who turn 18 while still in asylum have to leave his or her youth home and choose between asylum accommodations for grown-ups, where the living standard is way below the comfort of the youth homes, or they can choose to live with friends or relatives.

A prolonged waiting

Before 2015, the expected time for an application for asylum, to be processed at the migration authorities, was a few months for an unaccompanied minor. However, two of the interviewees in this thesis had to wait for nearly a year, and the third one, who arrived when the inflow of refugees in Sweden was peaking in autumn 2015, has waited for more than 18 months, presently.

Integration – a concept with many definitions

The local decision makers have made a layout plan for the municipality of Örebro where the integration in terms of socioeconomic status, age and ethnic background is supposed to improve, through efficient city planning (orebro.se 2017d). This plan is obviously not aiming at unaccompanied youth specifically. On the homepage presenting the reception of unaccompanied refugee youth in Örebro, the concept of integration is not spelled out. However, the message is that unaccompanied youth is supported in order to become established in Örebro, and this implicates that there is an overall aim of integration guiding the department responsible for the reception of unaccompanied youth in Örebro (orebro.se 2017d).

Meanwhile, integration is perhaps the most delicate issue on the political agenda in Sweden right now. When the leaders of the political parties in the parliament had a televised debate May 14th this year, integration was the opening topic for discussion (Agenda 2017-05-14). However, there are many different definitions of the concept of integration. "Integration refers to individuals having a sense of belonging to society. It implies that each and every one should have a sense of being part of the Swedish society. Integration means that different groups in society meet and interact." (informationsverige.se 2017 my transl.) This is a definition made by the county councils in Sweden (länsstyrelserna). On the home page of the Social Democratic party, the message is simpler. Integration means to be part of the work force, to get a job (socialdemokraterna.se 2017). The conservative party (Moderaterna) connects integration to the ability to speak Swedish, to be part of the work force and to be self-sufficient (moderat.se 2017). The left-wing party (Vänsterpartiet), has an approach where integration appears to be more inclusive towards the newly arrived foreigners. On their home page, integration is associated with

a non-discriminating society (vansterpartiet.se 2017). Among academics there is an awareness of the need to broaden the outlook when it comes to integration. Having a transnational perspective, the strength and number of possible interpretations when it comes to integrative work, could grow for those working with these unaccompanied teenagers in Sweden, while there are more opportunities for the refugee teenagers themselves, to find their way to a new identity, which will include their background as well as their present life and experiences in Sweden (Söderqvist et al. 2015:249, Zetterqvist et al. 2016:46). And Zetterqvist et al. calls for further research related to different theories explaining the interaction between actor and structure, and where integration as a concept is discussed (2016:46).

I do agree that a transnational perspective is needed when discussing integration. I argue that integration, apart from demanding an open mind from the receiving, as well as the arriving part, also includes an awareness of our particular country being part of a larger context. As I have mentioned earlier in this thesis; these young individuals arriving in thousands – Sweden might not be the end of their trip. Many of them will not be granted asylum. A 16 year old boy at the youth home where I work, told me the other day that if he will not be able to stay in Sweden, he will try and get asylum in some other European country. As I listened to him I thought, how do we prepare him for a future in some other country? Integration might not be all about learning Swedish, but to be prepared for a transnational life.

So, to conclude I consider integration to be partly an approach, a perspective to apply, and partly the physical result of that approach. The second aim and question in this thesis concerns the physical result of integration as I ask the interviewees to which extent the places, where they spend time in Örebro, represent opportunities to meet and interact with Swedes.

4. Method

This is an investigation performed with an abductive approach, in the sense that I have been moving back and forth between the data and the theories and concepts, while performing my investigation. My literature review was not particularly systematic in the beginning, but rather interpretative with the aim of getting a first impression of the theme, that I wished to gain a better understanding of (Bryman 2008:112-113). However, as I became more focused, I searched for particular articles and books that some of the authors referred to, or articles with the key words unaccompanied children, home and belonging. Thus, I knew that the first question in my investigation would relate to the various homes the interviewees had had.

I also knew what other places I wanted the interviewees to reflect upon. These would be: school, religious places, places where they happened to stay a little longer on their journey to Sweden, and places for leisure activities. These places were all mentioned in the literature and from my own experience as a caretaker I consider them important in the lives of the unaccompanied refugee minors I have met. Then, there were answers from my interviewees that made me start thinking about their integration, and that is why I chose a second question, which also should be of interest to the authorities responsible for the reception of unaccompanied teenagers in Örebro.

The reason for having an interpretative approach to my thesis is that the research questions could not possibly be answered in a quantitative study. How do the young individuals being interviewed relate to places in their original home country, places on their journey to Sweden and places where they have spent time in since arriving in Sweden? And to what extent do the places in Örebro, where they spend time, represent opportunities to integrate with individuals born in Sweden? And if they do not, how could the municipality of Örebro create places for integration?

These are questions which imply that I wish to explore a marginalized, but growing, group of people in Sweden and to understand their experiences. They also imply that I am open to cultural description, subjective understanding and interpretations by the interviewees (Marshall et al. 2016:100). As I focus on the individual lived experiences, which the interviewees had in particular settings, I need to talk to them face-to-face to understand the meaning behind their feelings, thoughts and actions in various contexts (Marshall et al. 2016:101-102).

Interviewing unaccompanied teenagers in Sweden can be a tricky task for several reasons. The teenagers arriving in the autumn of 2015 do not necessarily speak Swedish that well yet. Writing a thesis in English could imply that I would have had to use an interpreter, whom I do not know, for the interviews, and then do a second translation from Swedish to English as I write out the thesis. I did not like the idea of having the data translated twice. Then, since I know these teenagers fairly well, I considered the idea of doing the interviews in Swedish, since I am quite used to listening to them and interpreting what they say, repeating what I believe they are saying and having them confirm it. This became the interview technique which I used for the three interviews, when their answers were not clear enough, or if I wished for more details.

“In qualitative studies, the researcher should think through how she will deploy the resources available for the study to ensure full responses to the research questions.” (Marshall 2016:123) These words relates very well to my situation as a social science student. As I work full time in a youth home for unaccompanied teenagers, since 16 months, I realized I had a unique opportunity to reach these young people. However, there are things to consider when doing research in your own setting. I might expect too much from the fact that I know the interviewees. An awkward situation might arise as I change from being an employed caretaker to an inquisitive researcher. I might stumble into ethical dilemmas, as I know things about these teenagers I would not know as a visiting researcher. On the other hand, there are plenty of positive aspects from the fact that I work among the objects for my research. They are easy to get access to, I do not have to spend a lot of time searching for the right interviewees as I know them and their abilities quite well. And in these particular cases I feel that I had trusting relationships with the participants before the interviews, and perhaps even better relationships afterwards. Being close to the people and having intense interaction with them provides “subjective understandings that can greatly increase the quality of qualitative data” (Marshall et al. 2016:106)

But having easy access to a group of young people, with no parents present, I should be aware of the power dynamics between myself and them, and make sure they participate willingly in the study and that I do not misuse their trust in me. In the case with two of my participants, they had turned 18 and could give their consent to the interview, whereas in the case of Arman, I had to get a consent from his guardian (Marshall 2016:162). To protect their identity from being revealed I have given them fictive names and I have not named their countries of origin. Still, I imagine that some of my colleagues will be able to figure out who these young people are, but since my colleagues are restricted from discussing the unaccompanied children with anyone outside the youth home, I expect the risk of having the participants’ real identity revealed to a larger group, is very small. The interviewees were all aware of the aim with the interviews and they were even supportive towards me, as a student writing a thesis.

It would indeed be interesting to know how a larger group of unaccompanied teenagers who arrived in 2015, relate to places in their lives, but as this is not a realistic task while doing an investigation in a couple of months, I have selected three individuals who will represent this particular community. Selection can be informed by concepts or theory as the researcher forms criteria that will help to identify suitable interviewees (Marshall et al. 2016:110). I have to admit that my first criteria had nothing to do with the concepts or theory being applied in the investigation, but concerned the ambition to select individuals who did not mind being interviewed. Important criteria was also that they should be able to do the interview in Swedish as I did not want to use an interpreter. I also considered it necessary to select individuals whom I considered to be careful, detailed and accurate when answering questions. These criteria narrowed the field quite a lot, and in the end there were these three individuals. Having such strict criteria, maybe it is not surprising that the three of them also happen to be determined agents, thereby corresponding quite well to the actor in structuration theory and to the “able and social agent” of David Turton’s.

The interviews performed were in-depth and lasted for approximately one hour each time. I brought a piece of paper to the interviewees where I had written down “Home and other places in your home country, the journey and places where you stopped on your way to Sweden and Örebro including different places”. I also wrote down the concepts of home, belonging, safety, belief in the future and determination. While interviewing I used these concepts when we were talking about the various places, making the interviews “topical” in their character as I explored some general topics and asked for the participants’ views but also respected the way they framed and structured their answers (Marshall et al. 2016:150).

The interviews were all recorded and transcribed. This method improves our memory as we can rewind and check if something we interpreted in a particular way seems accurate when we listen a few more times. Recording also make it possible to refute accusations from someone who claims not having said what actually can be heard on the recording. Having transcribed a long interview, it is also possible to store it and then reuse it when doing a future investigation (Bryman 2008:428). After recording and transcribing the interviews in this thesis, I sent them, or brought them, back to the interviewees, instructing them to read and make comments if they wanted to change anything. They all did and there were some minor changes.

Analyzing the data in qualitative research can be “mysterious” according to Marshall et al. (2016:217) who argues that “the interpretive act brings meaning to those data” which otherwise would have been “inexpressive”. Apparently there is no standard formula for the transformation of raw data into findings. Marshall suggests that after some initial organizing, if the amount of data “seems overwhelming and unmanageable”, one should “cuddle up with, embrace, and get to know [the data] better.” I was perhaps not as intimate as Marshall suggested but I remember being quite content and relieved, as all my interviewees returned the transcripts, only with small remarks, and they all seemed happy and not bothered by this experience.

Coding the data, I used the concepts from the literature, that is *theory-generated codes* (Marshall 2016:218), which had guided me through the interviews as well. Structuration theory became the starting point for further analysis concerning my second research question as I pondered on the experiences my interviewees had had when meeting, or not meeting, Swedes. Going back and forth between theory and the data I ended up with the theme: “equal position in relation to the spoken language supports integration” as some kind of conclusion, with which I could connect the three interviewees and the experiences of othering that they had had.

5. Interviews and analysis

The names appearing in this chapter are all fictive. The interviews were all performed in 2017. All responses in italics belong to the interviewees under respective headings.

5.1. Mariah

Mariah is 18 and has a Swedish residence permit. She talks about her childhood home and her different Örebro homes:

-My childhood home means everything to me. It is hard to explain, but...I feel safe and I never worry about anything. My parents run everything, I just go to school and come back home. I did not have to do very much. I spent most of my time in school.

Since Mariah arrived in Örebro she has been accommodated in three different youth homes. During one year she lived with a small group of unaccompanied youths in a fairly spacious flat. She considers that her best home in Örebro, so far.

-If you stay in one place long enough, it will become your home. If you live together for one year – we were like a little family. We were like siblings, I would say.

-Did you feel safe?

-Yes.

Last autumn Mariah moved to a youth home where she prepares for independency as she has a one room-flat of her own where she can run her own household. She says she considers this her home now and that she feels safe there.

-But home can be many different things. It can be a place where you keep your stuff but it can also be the most important place in your life...

-Yes. I do feel that this is home, too. But most, I feel that home is what I have left. It is safe here. I have got everything I need. Except for parents. If my parents were with me now, this would feel like home.

-You feel most at home where you have your close relations?

-Yes, I believe I do.

-Where are you then, emotionally?

-I'm in my home country. I do live here in Sweden but I think about my home country all the time. I think about it while I live here. But I'm safe here. That's a reason for me to stay strong.

-Do you and your friends, who share the same origin, talk about places in your home country?

-Yes, it happens a lot. We talk about everything; how we got here and what it was like in our home country.

-Does that make you feel good?

-Yes, it feels good. We compare how we talk in different parts of our home country.

-So you could say that you have this link to your home country through this little community of yours?

-Yes.

From Mariah's description of her different homes we can see that home, indeed, is a fluid concept, just like Sirriyeh (2008:17-18) and Wernesjö (2015:452-453) suggested. Even though *the* home obviously is Mariah's childhood home, she considered her present home and an earlier youth home in Örebro as her homes as well. It is also obvious that home is a concept close to that of safety and belonging, which is what Mariah remembers from the small youth home where she and her unaccompanied friends were "like a little family". This memory does not harmonize with the conclusion drawn in Wernesjö's (2015:457-458) study where she states that living in a youth home, rather than a family home, makes it less likely for the unaccompanied children to produce a sense of home. I would prefer to view the social relations within the home as more important than the formal structure of the family.

The part where Mariah reflects on her emotional bond to her home country so far away, and where she and her friends compare dialects from their home country, relates to the story about the Tibetans living in exile in India. Sigamoria (2016:66-67) views this state where you are somewhere between two places as a condition where new meaning and new identities can be created through the narratives being told and shared within a group, just as Mariah and her friends did. Being able to talk with compatriots about the home country could also be a way to maintain one's life-story which is important for the well-being of refugees in the transition phase, according to Chase (2013:862).

School as a place

-I was good in school. My dad used to say "You have to go to school. Don't do things at home. It's better if you just go to school, that's better."

-What kind of place was the school to you? Did you like it? Was it safe?

-Yes, it was safe. But the rules were not like in Sweden. Sometimes, if we were late, the headmaster had to punish us. Then they hit us or forced us to walk on our knees. It hurts terribly.

-Did you have a sense of belonging when you were in school?

-Yes. I had many friends. You know each other. It's not like in Sweden. Here you don't know everyone in school. But there, you know all students in school.

Mariah says there were 2000 students in her school in her home country but that she knew all of them.

-If I make friends with a girl from a place, then I know all of her friends and she knows all of my friends!

-How did you relate to your future while in school? Did you think of school as a part of a possible career?

-No, I didn't know anything. I just went there. I liked school, but I didn't know what kind of work I would like to do in the future.

Mariah has two younger sisters. She says they were all good in school and received rewards every year from the head master. Arriving in Örebro Mariah started introductory classes as to learn Swedish.

-What do you think of school in Örebro, as a place? Do you get a sense of belonging?

-It is very hard, I should say. You don't get to know people as quickly as we did. But it gets better and better.

Mariah agrees that she has a sense of belonging in her class, but not when she leaves the classroom. And since she began school in Sweden she has dropped that carefree attitude she had towards the future.

-I am quite determined. There is no one who can do things for me now. I have to do them myself.

-Do you have a belief in the future while you are in school?

-Yes, I meet the student counsellor and she tells me what to do, what grades I need and so on.

Mariah has seen school as a space of capability (i.e. a space which enables or hinders wellbeing) in line with the theoretical framework by Fleuret et al (2007:113) ever since she was a little girl due to her upbringing, with a father who encouraged her to focus on her studies, and a head master, who indeed punished her once or twice, but also rewarded her for hard work in school. There was also a strong sense of belonging and safety related to her school in the home country, since she claims she knew all of the students. Arriving in school in Örebro, Mariah has initially not felt the same sense of belonging, as in school in her home country, but to some extent in her Swedish introductory class. This fits with the results from the study by Chase (2013) which reveals that school is one of the places where the unaccompanied children are able to get a sense of well-being. Chase stated that the children got to know a few grown-ups in school and this contributed to their ontological security. Spending time in school, they were able to plan for their future (p.864).

Even though Mariah did not have any future plans while she attended school in her home country, meeting the student counsellor in her Örebro school occasionally, she is now aware of the relation between grades and future possibilities. This could also be seen as an expression of

her *determination* in school and relates very well to the theory by Turton about the refugee who need to be an able and social agent, and not just wait for support, in order to create a place since places are no stages for social activity, but produced by the actor (Turton 2005:278).

The journey

Mariah's journey to Sweden took several months and for some time she had to stay in a refugee camp in Libya, while waiting for an opportunity to get on one of those overloaded rubber boats to Italy, boats which tragically did not always reach their destination. In the camp, together with Mariah, there were some 1200 refugees living secretly from the authorities.

-Yes, you have to hide. You can't walk around in the camp. You just have to stay at home. Or it was not home, there was no roof, just fences all around.

-What was it like then, in the camp?

-It was ok, I think. You could say so. You are alive but you don't eat very much. You get a little to eat and drink. You just have to wait till it's your turn to leave. I was there for maybe three months.

Mariah believes those in charge in the camp were people smugglers, whose orders they had to obey. The situation could be frightening at times.

-Yes, I felt afraid. Sometimes there were airplanes coming. Then they said we had to go to sleep. Everybody had to sleep.

-What? Did they tell you to lie down?

-Yes, everybody had to lie still. I don't know why. They just said so.

-Did you do that, then?

-Yes. They used to say that children must not cry.

-Were you very quiet?

-No, not very quiet. But we could not shout. You mustn't laugh out loud, or cry, so that those nearby could hear you. You could talk, but not loudly.

Still, in spite of the pressure and the tense atmosphere in the camp, there was a sense of belonging, Mariah says.

-Yes. We did speak the same language. There is always a sense of belonging. We didn't know each other at first, but you can make friends there, too. You have to help each other. If I was really thirsty and someone had water, even though they didn't know me, they said: here, drink some water. You have to help each other in order to survive.

Comparing the story of Mariah's journey with that of the young men from Mali who meets a dead end in Algeria or Morocco, as told by Richter (2016:78, 80-81), it is clear that Mariah was lucky

to reach Europe. To her, the stay in Northern Africa was no dead end, but a state of liminality as she could leave for Europe after three months, and make it all the way. She experienced three months living outdoor, with no roof and sparsely with food and drink, but still some sense of belonging, as many of the refugees in the camp spoke her language and showed compassion towards her. This leads me to think of the protection spaces depicted in Lyytinen's (2015:70-72) study of Congolese refugees in Kampala, Uganda, who turn to their compatriots in the city when no official protection space is available, and get support. Richter (2016:80) also mentioned the importance of having compatriots to turn to while in the camp.

The church as a place

-How often did you go to church back home?

-I didn't go to church.

-Why not?

-Young people don't go to church, at least not where I lived.

-Your parents went to church, but you didn't?

-Yes, they went. But none of my friends went either.

-Then religion was something you practiced at home, most of the time?

-Yes. My parents spoke of the church, and my grandfather, he was so good. He went to church every Saturday or Sunday and he told me about church and about the Bible

-How come, then, that you started to visit the church here in Örebro?

-I met two girls in the first youth home where I stayed. They used to sing in the church choir. The asked me to come along. And I haven't got my parents near who could tell me things, or who could say "do this or do that". I have to go to church to learn more about the Bible and about the church.

-Is it also about how to lead your life?

-Yes, absolutely. Most of it concerns how to lead your life. There are plenty of rules

-Do you get a sense of belonging while you are in church?

-Yes. We speak the same language. And you can talk to anyone without hesitation.

-Even if you don't know them?

-Yes. I believe you don't do that in Sweden. You can't talk to people you don't know. But we do that.

-What do you talk about while you're in church?

-We talk about different things. When the priest isn't preaching, me and the rest of the girls sit and talk about other things.

-So to you, going to church regularly is a new habit?

-Yes.

-Has your relationship to religion changed since you go to church and don't get the information from your parents anymore?

-No, not really. But I do take the decision that I have to go to learn. I have to do this and that, I have to stay strong. You do become...grownup. I go to church like a grownup woman.

Chase (2013:864) considered church to be among the places where unaccompanied refugee children can get a sense of well-being and I think that goes for Mariah as well. She mentions there being people who speak her language, she talks with other girls at church and is able to chat to anyone she meets there, as she is used to from her home country. These are habits I think of as expressions of belonging. Inspired by Fleuret et al. (2007:113) Chase (2013:867-868) wish to name these kind of places therapeutic spaces, for their curative properties, and reflecting on the obvious need in Mariah to receive guidance in spiritual as well as daily matters, I believe that the church, indeed, is a therapeutic space to her. To Mariah, the church could surely also be considered a protection space on the meso level, as described by Lyytinen (2015:64) whose study among Congolese refugees in Kampala demonstrated that a protection space, like the church, offer community, a sense of belonging and spiritual services.

Mariah's decision to start visiting church regularly, is also an example of a habit she has taken while in transition, as she did not use to go to church in her home country. Here, I refer to the argument by Sigamoria (2016:69), who suggests that researchers can explore places in order to find the habits which survived a transition, or find new habits which have emerged. Mariah's decision to start visiting the church, to take responsibility and become a grownup, could from one perspective be seen as corresponding to the theory of the refugee being, not only a human being capable of receiving support, being controlled and dominated for his own good, but an able and social agent (Turton 2005:278).

But it is more complicated than that, since the reason for her visiting the church is, at least in part, to receive guidance on how to lead her life. That could be interpreted as if Mariah is being dominated, or even controlled, which somehow does not correspond to the theory of the able, social agent. But then, as I like to view the able and social agent as a *determined* individual, I argue that Mariah, indeed, is determined when she takes the decision to go to church in order to get the guidance and the company she considers necessary.

5.2. Samuel

Samuel is 18 and has a residence permit. Here he talks about his childhood home.

-It meant everything to me, because it was my home. That's where I was born, where my family lives and I have all my friends and relatives nearby. Of course it meant a lot to me! I felt safe there.

Samuel and his friends use to go to the beach, play football and hang out with girls. Part of Samuel's hometown was considered unsafe, since there was armed fighting going on from time to time. Samuel was aware of the fighting, but did not think about it that much.

-All I could think of was to be with my friends. That was the most important thing. Sometimes there was war in my home town. Then we used to avoid those districts where there was fighting going on. The fighting used to occur in same districts over and over again. I lived in a neighborhood where there wasn't that much fighting.

In 2015 Samuel arrived in Örebro. He was allocated to the municipality of Örebro and ended up in a youth home in the countryside.

-I met some incredibly nice people of whom I still think a lot. I met kids of my own age. We had some memorable moments there. We did many things together, like we played football or cards, or we just talked about things. I could speak English and so did a few of them, but sometimes we didn't need to speak. Someone just did something and we all laughed.

-Do you mean that everybody could join in even though you didn't speak the same language?

-Yes, but what made it so special was that they became my new family. I spent all my days and nights with them. We watched tv together, ate together, I felt that this is my new family. So everything we did was special. We played football, which I always had done, but playing football with them was special. It meant something to me.

Later, Samuel moved to a youth home in Örebro in order to prepare for independency. He shared a flat with some other unaccompanied youths, but was supposed to run his own household. Samuel was happy to move even though he had had wonderful times with his friends in the countryside.

-When I first arrived to the youth home in the countryside I did not want to stay there since I felt there was nothing to do there. But the staff told me I had to stay there. I calmed down and said: do I have to stay here, then I'll have to stay here. But there was not very much to do. There was just a large forest and nothing else. So when I was allowed to move I was so happy. It felt good.

-In the youth home where you live presently, do you experience something similar to that you had in the countryside?

-No, not quite. I think it depends on me not spending that much time in this youth home. I'm usually not there and then you don't get those feelings towards your flat mates. I don't talk to

them that much and they don't become as important to me as my friends in the countryside. Because they were all I had! I spent all my time with them, I got to know them really well. But here, all I do is to say "hi" when we meet. Sometimes we meet in the kitchen and eat but that's all.

Reflecting on Samuel's story about his different homes, I agree with Sirriyeh (2008:17-18) and Wernesjö (2015:452-453) when they describe home' as a fluid concept. Samuel's number one home was obviously his childhood home, which was fixed geographically and included many important emotional relations, but home as a sense of belonging was clearly something he experienced while in his first youth home outside of Örebro. His description of them playing, eating and being together 24/7 could be equated with Sirriyeh's definition of home and belonging:

'Home' can thus be a place which is fixed geographically but also, as it is a fluid or relative concept, it can be a sense of 'belonging', the result of emotional interaction between people in a larger social, political or economic context (2008:17-18).

Samuel's experiences from his home town could also be associated with the protection spaces in the study by Lyytinen (2015). His home was a protection space on the micro level, with a close knit family, it was a protection space on the meso level too, since his neighborhood was not right in the middle of gunfire, but as his home town had been stage for a civil war for many years, one could hardly say that it is a protection space on the macro level (2015:61).

School as a place

-School was always important to me. Even so in my home country. My mother always encouraged me to go to school and to be the best. She gave me prizes every time I received high grades.

-What did you get then?

-The best thing she gave to me was a Play Station 2. But there were many things. I knew I got them because of me being good. That's the point. It was important for me to make my mother proud. Actually, the driving force within me was not the prizes but to see how happy she was every time I was successful in school.

Since Samuel arrived in Örebro he has had his education in a Swedish introductory class for refugee youths. In 2017 he expects to start a regular Swedish High school. But things have not been that easy, even though Samuel is used to studying hard.

-It's different here. I had to start from zero. I didn't know the language. I knew the subjects but the language stands in the way. I can't show them what I can since I don't know the language.

Samuel expresses frustration for not being able to deliver an answer when he knows the answer. Still, he says he feels safe in school and that he considers school the place to be in, if he is supposed to succeed in life. But he doesn't really get a sense of belonging in school.

-No, I don't have many friends in school but that might not be that strange, since I'm not very social. I don't know. My friends go to other schools. We always meet after school, in other places.

Would you consider yourself helpless or determined?

-I never felt helpless. I always received help, and in one way or another I was always able to do what I wanted to do.

School as a place in Örebro was a new experience to Samuel compared to what he was used to from his home country. The spaces of capability (does a particular space hinder or enable well-being?) by Fleuret (2007:113) as a framework is useful when analyzing how he through hard work in school managed to receive high grades, his mother's pride and a general feeling of well-being back in his home town. But then, after arriving in school in Örebro, he had to realize that language would hinder him from reaching the same results in school, as he could have done if he had known Swedish well enough, an insight that left him frustrated, even though he apparently is well on his way to success anyway.

Samuel also says he does not have any friends in school and no real sense of belonging while he is in school, hindrances which he appears to compensate for after school, when he meets his friends. Chase (2013:858-859) suggests that an aspect of well-being should be ontological security, a concept that concerns our ability to have a remaining positive future outlook, no matter our present time, place or context. Even though Samuel's present school leaves him a little lonely and frustrated, from his telling about repeated success in school from earlier years and his ability to get help if needed, I draw the conclusion that he has a fair amount of ontological security which will accompany him through his education.

The multi-activity center Tegelbruket

Samuel hangs out with friends of different nationalities. They meet in various places in Örebro.

-Can you tell me something about the places where you and your friends in Örebro meet?

-Yes, we usually meet at Tegelbruket and do some dancing or play football. Sometimes we go to the gym. We do different stuff. Tegelbruket means belonging to me. I meet my friends there and I'm always happy when I'm there. Actually, I do feel at home when I'm at Tegelbruket.

-Do you feel safe at Tegelbruket?

-Yes, or when I'm with my friends. I don't know everyone at Tegelbruket and I don't go there on my own. I go there with my friends. Then I know I can be myself, say what I want and no one will condemn me.

-How come that you began visiting Tegelbruket?

-I joined a couple of friends and they showed me around and told me what I could do there. Then I bought a member card. And now I hang out there, now and then.

The Mosque

Samuel is a Muslim and used to visit the mosque in his home town before he came to Sweden.

-Yes, I did. But not here. In my home town I used to visit the mosque on Fridays, and we don't go to school on Fridays in my home country. But here, it's school on Fridays. If there was no school on Fridays I would have gone to the mosque. I like being in the mosque. It feels safe. I believe in God and that I should do what God wants me to do. I get a feeling of safety and well-being when I'm in the mosque. It's comforting. But since I'm in school on Fridays, then there is no mosque for me.

-Have you ever been to a mosque in Sweden?

-No, I haven't. I don't know, I guess I have to try. I guess I have to go to the mosque someday and see if it feels the same way as it used to.

Tegelbruket, or spending time there with his friends, makes Samuel feel at home and that he belongs. But he doesn't go there on his own. It is Samuel and his friends who make it homely and a place where he experiences belonging. Even though this fits just as well with the definition of home as a fluid concept, stated by Sirriyeh (2008) and Wernesjö (2015), at this moment in my analysis I choose another interpretation. When asked if there are any particular place where they use to hang out, Samuel said that they meet in many different places. This makes me think of Turton (2005) and his experience of the nomads in Ethiopia. The place of the Mursi people was not necessarily a particular territory, but was created as they moved from one piece of land to another (Turton 2005:262). Places are then created through certain rites (Turton 2005:265). What if Tegelbruket is one of these places, to which Samuel and his friends belong, and all its activities are the rites? According to Turton those rituals which are given names are particularly relevant when a place is created, as the activity forms a sense of togetherness among those participating, keeping worries and instability away (2005:267-268). I suggest that this is what Tegelbruket is all about: keeping worries and instability away!

Samuel use to go to the mosque on Fridays to keep worries and instability away. Quite matter-of-factly he says that here in Sweden you go to school on Fridays, and he has adapted to that. Maybe he will pay a visit to the mosque sometime in the future. This is an example of a habit which did not survive transition. Siganporia (2016:69), suggests that researchers can explore places in order to find the habits of an individual or a group, which survived a transition, and habits which did not. Chase (2013:864) came to the conclusion that there are a group of places which could be considered therapeutic spaces connected to the well-being of unaccompanied refugee youths. The church, or the mosque, were named, but so were leisure services, like Tegelbruket.

5.3. Arman

Arman is 16 and has no Swedish residence permit yet.

-Tell me about your childhood home.

-All I needed was there, in my childhood home. There was safety and a belief in the future.

-What does it take to make a home?

-For a start you need your parents and then there has to be empathy, within the family. In my family there was love and respect. And I felt safe having my parents next to me.

Arman's parents had a small farm where they grew crop. In the autumn of 2015 Arman arrived in Örebro after a journey which took several months. He was allocated to a newly opened provisional youth home, together with a large group of other boys of the same ethnical origin. After a few weeks Arman moved to a permanent youth home in Örebro together with many of the other boys of the same origin. Arman remembers those first few months as nice.

-At this place, I felt everything was ok. We had a sense of belonging, we felt determination and had a belief in the future. But then, as time went by, I started to think that things would not turn out that well for me. Everything seemed to depend on whether I would get a residence permit or not. I had been waiting for more than a year and I felt so disappointed. I had an injury in my leg too. I skipped school for two weeks. It didn't help. Then I thought that I had to go on, to start thinking positively.

-What happened?

-I did get some help from friends. And then I watched a film that changed me. It's called "The Martian". It's about a group of astronauts going to Mars and the main character is left behind when the rest of them returns to the Earth. He realizes that he can't stay there, on that planet. In the beginning he thinks he is going to die. He has no food or water. Then he starts to think positively. He grows potatoes on the planet. He does all kinds of strange things, and in the end, it works! He manages to communicate with people on the Earth. After more than a year he manages to return. He really struggled and I felt just like him.

-You were inspired!

-Yes, because I felt that I had arrived to a different planet. This film was about me. If I sit and sleep all my life, nothing is going to happen. If I grow potatoes, maybe it will work, maybe I will survive. I thought about his situation. In the beginning he cried. But then, he started to work, he got going, even though he didn't know if he would live or die. He was really tough-minded. I like that! That's me!

-What's it like in your present youth home? Is there a sense of belonging and safety?

-Yes, it's perfect. We've got everything. Football, activities, there are people to talk to. But you know, if you're not well, you cannot fully enjoy it. That's the case with us.

-You need to know what's going to happen to you?

-If you know that this is my country in the future, then you can stay strong, learn the language, get the necessary grades in school. But as it is now, that's not so important.

-Do you and your compatriots talk about places in your home country?

-On Friday nights we sit and talk about all the things we love, places which were important to us. It could be close to a lake, some beach we use to go to. We ask each other: have you been there?

-Where are you emotionally, in Sweden or in your home country?

-Somewhere in between. I'm not 100 % in Sweden and I'm not in my home country at all.

Arman tells me his parents are dead.

-You're then closer to Sweden than to your home country?

-Yes.

-Are there more opportunities for you in Sweden?

-Yes, because everything is possible, almost everything.

-Can you exemplify what you can do here that you couldn't do in your home country?

-Play the guitar. I couldn't do that before. There were no teachers, I didn't have any guitar, or there were no possibilities to play the guitar since that society is kind of strange. In the eyes of the elderly, you're a bad boy if you play music. And here, I can play football or exercise till I'm 100 years old. In my home country I would have to work all my life just to survive, to not die because I'm hungry. Now, I can do whatever I like.

Arman's notion of home is clear from the start: it's where you have your parents and where there is love and respect within the family. Now that his parents have died he doesn't consider his home country to be home anymore. Nor is he really at home in Sweden. But if home includes the concept of belonging, as Sirriyeh (2008:17-18) suggested, it appears as if Armin feels at home in his present youth home where they have everything, he says; football, activities and people to talk to. And the boys sit and talk at night, reminiscing places from their childhood days, maintaining their common identity, just like the Tibetans living in exile in India (Siganporia 2016).

Still, when Armin had spent more than a year in Örebro and not yet received an answer to his application for asylum, he began to lose hope, and he stayed at home, skipping school for two weeks. This reminds me of Vitus' sad picture of life in Danish asylum centers where she argues that one year is just about what it takes until an individual seeking asylum goes to bed, since living under limbo-like circumstances, not knowing what will happen to you, can trigger a

depression. Now, Arman got inspiration from friends and from a film about an astronaut being left behind on Mars, and managed to turn his spirits up, but it is also likely that he has a lot more freedom of action than those asylum seekers Vitus referred to, who had very limited legal and human rights (2011:95-96).

Even so, his ability to motivate himself is significant and corresponds well to the theory of the able and social agent (Turton 2005:278), the *determined* refugee, as I choose to view him. Growing potatoes is then a parable for him rejoining the rites of going to school, playing football and so on, thereby taking part in the place making together with his friends (Turton 2005:265). Even though Arman has no residence permit yet, he looks ahead and manages to make his leisure time meaningful, like the unaccompanied children referred to by Chase (2013:864) and Sirriyeh (2008:24)

The journey

Arman travelled through Balkan and Eastern Europe to reach Sweden. When asked if there were any places where he experienced some sense of belonging he says “no” and that he didn’t know anyone, nor did he trust anyone on the journey, and no one was going to help you, he says. But then, he remembers a stop in Serbia where the citizens came walking on the streets, bringing clothes and food for the passing refugees. Arman points at the knitted sweater and the jeans he is wearing and says: these clothes, I was given in Serbia.

-That seem quite a positive experience?

-Yes, I asked some Serbian people I met “why do you do this?” I asked them in English, and she said “I love to help because I have been in your situation myself”, she said.

This happened when the UN-financed train stopped for a couple of hours in Serbia, Arman tells me. They let people off the train so they could go inside a little hostel and rest for a while before the journey continued further north, towards Austria and Germany.

No matter what has happened in Serbia since, but in the autumn of 2015, the borders were open and Serbian citizens, still remembering their civil war in the 90’s, welcomed the refugees, nursing them with food, clothes and shelter. This, and the sense of wellbeing it brought to Arman and other refugees make Serbia, at that time, worth the label space of integration, thereby answering the question: Could spaces that are socially or culturally integrated affect well-being positively? with a “yes” (Fleuret 2007:113).

The mosque

Arman used to go to the mosque in his home country.

-That’s a place where I felt a quietude. I could calm down in the mosque, just like the rest do there. When I felt lonely, angry or annoyed I went to the mosque. I used to do that. There, I felt safe and calm.

-Did you get a sense of belonging while in the mosque?

-It depended on what time I went there. We prayed three or five times a day and you can do that altogether in the mosque and then I would have a sense of belonging, but I also went there on my own.

-You used to go to the mosque in your home country, but here?

-The mosque has the same effect here. But I don't use it that much in order to calm down.

-There are other things that calls for your attention here?

-Yes, and then it depends on how religious you are.

-But this kind of peace and quiet you felt in the mosque, can you get that feeling someplace here in Örebro?

-No.

-But still you don't give priority to the mosque here? Can you explain that?

-There used to be mosques everywhere back home. Then you do want to go there, to calm down. But now, there is no mosque nearby. So I do something else instead. And I'm not that religious. There are those who believe you should pray all the time. I don't think so. I didn't think so before either.

The mosque is obviously a space of therapy (Fleuret 2007:113) since it had an easing effect on Arman. Nowadays he prefer other sorts of leisure activities. Thus, visiting the mosque is an example of a habit which did not survive transition, with reference to Sigamoria (2016:69), who suggests that researchers can explore places in order to find the habits which survived a transition phase in the life of an individual or a group, and which habits did not. Reflecting on the activities in Örebro supplied by the municipality for young refugees, one also gets the feeling that the spaces of activities are prioritized, that distraction is felt to be more urgent than contemplation.

School as a place

Tell me about your school back home. Was it a place where you felt at home, or felt belonging, or safety?

-I was not interested in school. I felt more comfortable studying at home. Because the school in my village was bad. I didn't get anything from it and the teachers were really tough. They shouted at the students.

Arman tells me that his presence in school was mandatory or he would lose his place, but he used to stay for a few hours in the morning and then go home. The teachers accepted him doing that since they knew he worked hard at home, and also because he was the top student in his class.

-So, education was important to you, but you didn't like school as a place? Why?

-Because of everything. The whole atmosphere in school.

-Was it rough?

-Yes. They use to call me the Chinese because my face looks similar to a Chinese. In that school I was the only one from the ethnical group with those looks. They kept bothering and bullying me.

After a couple of months in Örebro, Arman and his native refugee friends were placed in a school in Glanshammar just outside of Örebro. This was a new experience to him, not just the fact that the school was Swedish, but he realized that he enjoyed being in school, something he had never done in his home country. He felt safe. The teacher also suggested he should visit the City Library in Örebro where he could find literature in his mother tongue, she said. Arman still go to the library now and then, just to be there, and read on his own. That's another place where he feels safe, he says. But let's return to Glanshammar and Arman's first experience of the Swedish school.

-That was the first place where I felt that I could grow and that I had a right to express myself.

-Right to express yourself?

-I felt that I was right, that I could speak up among my class mates, in their ethnical group.

-That you were allowed to?

-Back home, I never spoke in front of the other boys, since they kept bothering me. But now I could talk, and it was easy too!

-Your belief in the future must have grown when you felt that you could speak up and that they listened to you?

-Yes. I felt that I had to be the top student in the class. And I managed to do that. Then I came to my present school and the same thing happened here. That's what the teachers say and I believe so too. Now I believe that every class I shall join, I will have to be the top student.

-Where did you get this attitude?

-From Glanshammar. They all backed me up. The students and the teachers. They said: you can do it!

-You must have felt good in that class!

-Yes, it was very good. I felt belonging and safety too.

Arman is still in an introductory class but he spends more and more hours in a Swedish class where he is the only one with a refugee background. He feels comfortable in this class too, he says. He is not worried about saying or doing anything wrong. He thinks of Sweden as a country where authorities know right from wrong and where he will get resurrection if he is being mistreated by someone. And that, he says, was not the case in his home country.

Chase located several places which were associated with the well-being for the refugee children in her study. Spending time in school, while getting to know grownups was a cure for young students in need of more ontological security, and a plan for the future (2013:864). This was far from reality when Arman went to school in his home country but as soon as he started school in Glanshammar he made quick advancements, not least on a personal level. He felt safe among his new classmates and no longer afraid to speak up whenever he had something to say, and on top of this he was encouraged by teachers as well as classmates! This makes the school in Glanshammar, as well as Arman's present school, spaces which enable him, whereas his old school back home, then, represents a space full of hindrances, according to the spaces of capability by Fleuret (2007:113). This new confidence of Arman's is also associated with the protection spaces approach by Lyytinen (2015) as Arman considers himself, not only safe in school, but in Sweden as a country, where reliable authorities represents the norm and not the exception as in his former home country.

To conclude, and to return to the first question in this thesis: how do the young individuals being interviewed relate to places in their original home country, places on their journey to Sweden and places where they have spent time, since arriving in Sweden? The aim was to compare the meaning of these places, as the interviewees move from one part of the world to another.

Mariah, Samuel and Arman (2017) all felt that home is a fluid concept that can include your childhood home but also various youth homes in the Örebro area, in the sense that they all have had feelings of safety and belonging when living with other youths at these places. The church as a place has become a very important therapeutic space for Mariah (2017) since she came to Sweden while the mosque has lost its' grip on the boys since they arrived in Sweden (Samuel and Arman 2017).

School represents a space of capability to the three of them (Mariah, Samuel and Arman 2017) while Tegelbruket makes Samuel (2017) feel at home when he is there with his friends. It is also obvious that the three of them view Sweden as a protection space and a space of capability where they are safe and where there are life opportunities (Mariah, Samuel and Arman 2017).

5.4. A structuration theory approach to integration

There are a couple of more places where the interviewees spend their leisure time, like the sports centers. Analyzing these places, I will use structuration theory. These places are important as I try to answer the second research question in this thesis: To what extent do the places in Örebro, where they spend time, represent opportunities for the interviewees to integrate with individuals born in Sweden? And if the places do not offer opportunities to interact with Swedes, how could the efforts of the municipality of Örebro, to integrate refugees, be improved?

In the interviews they all agree that they meet and interact with staff at the youth home and teachers at school who are of Swedish origin. But that's all. Mariah then mentions her football trainer, a Swedish girl whom she likes a lot. All the girls who have joined this football exercise have the same refugee background as Mariah, although they are not from the same country, which implies that they have to speak Swedish while training. Mariah thoroughly enjoys having this football exercise once a week. She and the rest of the girls do get a sense of belonging while together.

-Absolutely! We're just girls playing and the place is safe, in my opinion. (Interview with Mariah)

But there are no other occasions where Mariah meets and interacts with Swedes on a regular basis.

Supported by the trainer, Mariah and her refugee girlfriends (as actors) have created a place with a structure (football) which represents both the conditions and the result of their activity. Together they share the practical knowledge required to keep repeating their activity and maintain the structure. They also share a discursive knowledge in the sense that they speak Swedish while they interact. There are, as far as I understand, no surprising, tangible, unintended effects they are causing by playing football. The intention was for them to get together and have fun, and exercise.

Arman plays football with a local Örebro team in which the players are Swedish teenagers. Some of his refugee friends come to the regular training sessions as well, but Arman is one of the few refugee boys who qualifies to the line-up when they are playing matches against other teams. Despite his strong confidence in school, Arman says it's quite a different thing to meet the Swedish guys when they're training football in the evenings. Arman says that there is hardly any talk between the Swedish boys and the refugee boys. There is no sense of belonging between the two groups, he says. Still he takes his bike and goes to training every week.

-Yes, if I don't go, I will be a loser and I don't want to lose. I have decided to keep going. Sometimes they swear at us, if we do something wrong. But we don't say anything. Afterwards, we're like two groups. We never see them before, or after, training, but we do see that they are friends with each other. It feels kind of strange. Then we realize that we don't speak Swedish well enough. (Interview with Arman)

Arman is aware that part of the distance between him and the Swedish players is due to competition. Everybody wants to be part of the line-up.

-Then I think that I will go there, even though nobody wants me to come. Everybody has their rules and I have mine. I do everything I like, even if my parents or anybody else don't like it, I still do it. (Interview with Arman)

Arman and his refugee friends enter an existing structure (football) and try to transform it, as to be included. They can interact on the practical level, since they know the rules in football. But there is no interaction on the discursive level, probably because the two groups do not speak the same language. To me, it seems as if there is some insecurity which has its' origin in the subconscious in these boys, the Swedish as well as the foreign. Their ontological security is built on the safety of knowing that the things and appearances which are important to them, will repeat themselves. Meeting the guys who do not speak the same language and who look somewhat different, make the guys withdraw from each other when the football exercise is over and when they no longer share the practical knowledge with which they could communicate while playing. This could be the unintended consequences of their decision to go and play football, according to structuration theory.

Neither the Swedish, nor the refugee boys probably wished that things would develop this way. With the words of Giddens (1984:10), it's "everyone's doing and no one's". But the distance between them became obvious when Arman and his friends showed up. Giddens name this phenomenon the 'composition effect' because the result is based on an aggregate of acts, but none of the separate acts were intended to cause that effect.

Here, I argue that Giddens is unclear about the reasons for this behavior by the individuals, a behavior which I consider being related to segregation. And structuration theory has been criticized; "for its inattention to the role of the unconscious (I presume this is the same as subconscious in this context, my comment), and for its neglect of issues of culture, gender and ethnicity." (Knox et al. 2010:198)

Samuel talks about his experiences in school where he occasionally meets Swedes.

-Yes. But nowhere else, actually. But it's not that often I meet Swedes in school either, since I'm in one of these introduction programs. So in my class there are just refugees. Then, I can say that I observe Swedish youths in the corridor, and I speak with my Swedish teachers at school but I don't have any connection with Swedish youths. All my friends here are refugees too. They're not born here.

-We spend a lot of time at each other's houses, playing Fifa. As soon as I'm finished in school, I go home, change, leave my bag, and then go see some friend at his house. (Interview with Samuel)

In the case of Samuel, he has his own crowd of friends who all share the same refugee background. They create their places with various structures, like playing Fifa at home, and they

maintain these structures too. They share the same practical knowledge related to their activities, and they share the Swedish language (the discursive knowledge) as second language which make them equal. I asked Samuel if there were any unintended consequences of his decision to move to Sweden. It is obvious that language is a crucial part of the social experiences he has had, in school and elsewhere.

-It's hard not being able to express myself in certain circumstances. People can be tough, just because you don't can speak Swedish that well. I have noticed that I often get different treatment just because I don't speak Swedish like the natives. The strangest thing that happens to me sometimes is that those guys who treat me not so good, when I have difficulties with my Swedish, they suddenly change their attitude when I start to speak English. Suddenly, I get their attention and respect! It's really sad when that happens. (Interview with Samuel)

For a start, the Swedes who treat Samuel differently when he starts to speak English probably do not *intend* to treat him differently, when they answer him in English. It is an unintended consequence of their decision to respond in English. And I consider Samuel's reaction as natural, since he has put a lot of effort into learning the Swedish language and since he regards Swedish as the key to his future in Sweden.

But the reaction of the Swedes, as described by Samuel, puzzled me. I have tried several interpretations and not being content with my results I turned to a new colleague of mine, a woman of great experience when it comes to unaccompanied children in Sweden. After reflecting for a while she suggested that the Swedish persons, changing into a more positive attitude when Samuel turns to English, might be more comfortable when they share the experience of using your second language, which is English. Maybe it is somehow frustrating to know your language as well as you do with your mother tongue and trying to understand someone who stumbles or cannot get the sentences straight. Changing into English make you equal with this foreign individual, and maybe that makes you more comfortable (Jacobson 2017). I found this analysis valuable and settled for it, as I did not really get any support from structuration theory on this matter. The analysis obviously concerns our subconscious and that is another part where structuration theory has received criticism for being inattentive, as I mentioned earlier (Knox et al. 2010:198).

To conclude, and to return to the second question and aim in this thesis: to what extent do the places in Örebro, where they spend time, represent opportunities to integrate with individuals born in Sweden? The aim with this question was to investigate whether the efforts of the municipality of Örebro to integrate these young individuals are sufficient, or could be improved. And if the efforts are insufficient, how could the municipality of Örebro, create places where people integrate?

The analysis, as guided by structuration theory, indicates that creating a social structure with refugee girls, and maintaining this structure (football), works fine, since the girls have equal linguistic position; they all use Swedish as a second language. Trying to transform an existing

structure (football) as to include the refugee boys, who are able to communicate practically, but not as much discursively, as they do not speak Swedish that well, is complicated. The experience of Samuel's, as interpreted by a colleague of mine, suggests that using a third language, which is not the mother's tongue of any of the actors, could make them more equal, and thereby improving the preconditions for a successful transformation of a social structure. This could be implemented in a transnational meeting place in Örebro, where visitors use a neutral language, like English. For most citizens in Örebro, English is not the mother tongue, but still it is a language Swedes, as well as people from other parts of the world, can use when communicating.

6. Conclusions and further research

Relating to places

The first question, in this thesis has been to investigate how three unaccompanied teenagers relate to places, in their home countries, on their journey to Sweden, and finally in Örebro, where they arrived in 2015. The aim was to compare the meaning in these places as the interviewees move from one part of the world to another. The places they have related to include their homes, their schools, religious places, places for leisure activities and places where they stayed on their journey. Even though they all felt that their childhood home was much more of a home than the different youth homes, where they have been accommodated in the Örebro area, they all spoke of a strong sense of belonging that they felt while living together with other refugee youths, as if they all were part of a family (interviews with Mariah, Samuel, Arman 2017). This would suggest that the concept of home is a fluid concept to unaccompanied teenagers, just as previous research has indicated (Sirriyeh 2008, Wernesjö 2015). This also implies that the conclusion drawn by Wernesjö (2015:457-458), that living in a group home lower the potential for refugee children to feel at home, need not be true.

The church, as a place, has become a very important therapeutic space (Fleuret et al. 2007) for Mariah since she came to Sweden, as it replaces some of the authority, safety and spiritual knowledge, her parents used to provide (interview with Mariah 2017). Meanwhile the mosque has lost its' grip on the boys, Arman and Samuel, since they arrived in Sweden, as they have adapted to different traditions, norms and lifestyle in a Western society (interviews with Samuel and Arman 2017). This relates to the concept of trace residue, originating from Foucauld, and referred to by Sigantoria (2016:69), as she argues that places can be investigated to find out which rituals have survived a transition phase, which did not, and which have emerged. School clearly represents a space of capability (Fleuret et al. 2007) to the three of them, and it is obvious that it did so in their home country too, in the sense that Mariah and Samuel have had continuous success whereas Arman came into bloom as he began school in Glanshammar (interviews with Mariah, Samuel and Arman 2017). The multi-activity center Tegelbruket makes Samuel feel at home when he is there with his friends, but he actually feels at home whenever he is with his refugee friends, visiting their houses or other places (interview with Samuel 2017). It is also obvious that the three of them view Sweden as a protection space (Lyytinen 2015) and a space of capability (Fleuret et al. 2007) where they are safe and where there are life opportunities leaving them with a strong belief in the future (Chase 2013, interviews with Mariah, Samuel and Arman 2017).

Places and integration

The second aim with this thesis was expressed in the following questions: to what extent do the places where the interviewees spend time represent opportunities to meet and interact with Swedes. And if they do not meet any Swedes, how could the municipality of Örebro create places

where people integrate? Guided by structuration theory I have come to the following conclusion: Mariah, Samuel and Arman have Swedish staff at their youth homes, with whom they talk. They have Swedish teachers at school and Swedish coaches when training football, with whom they speak Swedish. But they seldom, or never, speak to Swedish youth or any other Swede in their everyday life, and they have lived in Örebro for 18-24 months (interviews with Mariah, Samuel and Arman 2017). As I analyzed the social experiences of my interviewees, with the support of structuration theory, I came to the conclusion that a social structure is inclusive when all actors participating, have the same relation to the spoken language, whether they speak Swedish as natives, or if they all use Swedish as a second language. But trying to transform an existing structure, where native Swedish is spoken, like football training, as to include the refugee boys, is more complicated. Even though the boys are able to communicate practically as they play football, they cannot communicate as easily discursively, as they do not speak Swedish that well.

The experience of Samuel's, as he discovered that Swedes brighten up and become attentive when he changes his Swedish into English, confused me. But the interpretation by a colleague of mine made sense. She suggested that using a third language which is not the mother's tongue of any of the actors, could make them more equal, and thereby improving the preconditions for a successful transformation of a social structure, that is making a social structure inclusive (Jacobson 2017). Using this interpretation, I could connect the social experiences of the three interviewees and create a theme: equal position in relation to the spoken language supports integration, or inclusion.

Thus, the answer to the first part of the second question is: the places where the interviewees spend time do not represent opportunities to meet and interact with Swedes. And the second part: how could the municipality of Örebro create places where people integrate? The result from this thesis suggest that the local authorities in Örebro should consider the possibilities of creating meeting places where participants of different origin have equal position in relation to the spoken language, in order to support integration, or inclusion. This spoken language could be English, which is not the mother tongue of most citizens in Örebro, but still a language Swedes as well as people of other origins can use when communicating. From my experience as a caretaker at a youth home for unaccompanied refugee minors, I know for sure, that many of the teenagers in this group do not speak English at all. But some of them do. And I argue that creating meeting places where people communicate in English could be to offer one more opportunity for people to integrate, and to endorse the idea of Örebro as being part of a larger transnational context.

Further research

This investigation has been an endeavor to heed the calls for further research on the relation between refugee and place, as told by unaccompanied refugee children (Sirriyeh 2008:12). Sirriyeh also stated that there has been too much focus in social research on the emotional problems of the unaccompanied children, and to little focus on their inner strength and resilience,

a statement which also inspired me (2008:12). Wernesjö (2012:503) suggested more research on the well-being of unaccompanied children, emphasizing that researchers should let the children speak for themselves on this subject, and so I have done.

Now, as I have drawn my conclusion, that meeting places where participants of different origin have equal position in relation to the spoken language, could possibly support integration, I am inclined to endorse the suggestion by Söderqvist et al (2015:249), that there is a need for further research where a transnational perspective is applied. This could, according to Söderqvist et al. increase the field for possible interpretations when it comes to integrative work (2015:249). My contribution, at this moment, would be the question: Are we narrow minded as we insist that integration is a process which involves only two languages? Zetterqvist et al. suggested there is a need for more research related to different theories explaining the interaction between actor and structure and where integration as a concept is discussed (2016:46). I support that suggestion, since I felt that I benefitted from letting structuration theory guide me through the analysis of the social experiences my interviewees had had.

Since the many arrivals of unaccompanied refugee youth in Sweden 2015 appears to be a unique experience, not only for the teenagers themselves but for Swedish authorities, professionals, academics and not least the public, there ought to be longitudinal research on this group of individuals. Spending up to two years, waiting for an answer to their application for asylum, where do they go when they settle down? And how do they relate to the places they become part of? What kind of structures do they meet? And what opportunities do they get to transform existing structures?

Söderqvist argues that having a transnational perspective, there are more opportunities for the refugee teenagers themselves, to find their way to a new identity, which will include their background as well as their present life and experiences in Sweden (2015:249). And Zetterqvist (2016:46) insists on the importance of recognizing the experiences and knowledges of the unaccompanied teenagers, since this can make it easier for them to develop these transnational positions, identities and relations. The conclusion drawn in this thesis suggests that there is a need to investigate the possibility of creating transnational meeting places in Sweden where participants have equal position in relation to the spoken language. I argue that English is a language which could possibly unite people of different origin in such a meeting place.

There is a weakness in this investigation, though, since the conclusion is generated from speaking to only three unaccompanied teenagers out of some 35 000 arriving in 2015. Still, from what I see as an employed caretaker at a youth home for unaccompanied refugee teenagers, there is nothing that contradicts the integration experiences from these three interviewees. So I argue that integrating this population of youths and the many other refugees arriving from countries where there is unrest, is an enormous challenge that demands new ideas and perspectives.

7. Summary

There has been a call for more research on the subject of unaccompanied youth, their inner strength, resilience and capabilities – research where these young individuals speak for themselves (Wernesjö 2012:495, 505). There is also lack of research where concepts like place is used, when researchers investigate the narratives of unaccompanied youth (Sirriyeh 2008:12). This encouraged me to start an investigation, which also attempts to discuss the integration of unaccompanied teenagers. Integration as a concept, can be interpreted in many different ways, and has to be discussed together with theories on interaction between actor and structure (Zetterqvist et al. 2016:46). The first aim of this investigation was to find out how a small group of unaccompanied teenagers relate to places in their lives – places in their home country, on their journey to Sweden, and, finally, in Örebro and to compare the meaning of these places as the interviewees move from one part of the world to another. The second aim was to investigate whether the interviewees meet and interact with Swedes in any of these places, and if not, how could the municipality of Örebro create places where people integrate?

Data for the investigation has been collected through in depth interviews with three unaccompanied teenagers in Örebro. These interviews were guided by concepts from a literature review covering the experiences of places which refugees in different parts of the world have had. While performing this investigation, I have reflected on my positionality, since I work full time as a caretaker in a youth home for unaccompanied minors, and since I have for the past 16 months, developed relations to the interviewees. Ethical considerations were also part of these reflections.

This investigation acknowledges results in earlier studies by Sirriyeh (2008) and Wernesjö (2015), as it indicates that home is a fluid concept which not only covers a beloved childhood home but can include various youth homes, if the unaccompanied teenagers develop family-like relations. The religious meeting place has become more important for the girl, Mariah, as she arrived in Sweden, while it has lost its' importance to the boys, in the sense that they do not visit the mosque any more. All of them consider school to be a space of capability, as it can make students flourish but also represent a language hindrance to a foreign student. An important result from the discussion on integration is that none of the three teenagers meet Swedes on a regular basis, other than staff at the youth home and teachers at school, even though they have been in Örebro for 18-24 months. Their own experiences indicate that there is an imbalance when one of two interacting agents uses his or her mother tongue, while the other is new in this language. The results suggest that using a third language, which put the agents in equal position in relation to the spoken language, supports integration, or inclusion. Following this result the local authorities in Örebro should consider the possibility of creating a transnational meeting place where participants have equal position in relation to the spoken language. The language suggested for this purpose is English.

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