Presenting the Absent
Presenting the Absent
An account of undocumentedness in Sweden

Erika Sigvardsdotter
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Abstract

This thesis provides an ethnography and critical phenomenology of undocumentedness in the Swedish context. By attending to the forces and processes that circumscribe the life-worlds of undocumented persons, as well as the phenomenology and essential experiences of their condition, a complex and multi-layered illustration of what undocumentedness is and means is successively presented. Employing a dual conceptualization of the state, as a juridico-political construct as well as a practiced and embodied set of institutions, the undocumented position emerges as a legal category defined only through omission, produced and reproduced through administrative routine and practice. The health care sector provides empirical examples of state-undocumented interaction where the physical and corporeal presence of the officially absent becomes irrefutable. This research suggests that the Swedish welfare state – universalistic, comprehensive and with digitized administrative routines – becomes a particularly austere environment in which to be undocumented.

Drawing on interviews with regional and local health care administrators, NGO-clinics’ representatives and health professionals, as well as extensive participatory observation and interviews with undocumented persons, I argue that the undocumented condition is characterized by simultaneous absence and presence, and a correspondingly paradoxical spatiality. I suggest that the official absence and deportability of undocumented persons deprives them of the capacity to define space and, in an Arendtian sense, appear as themselves to others. There are, however, some opportunities for embodied political protest and dissensus. The paradoxical qualities of the absent-present condition manipulate the undocumented mode of being-in-the-world and I argue that alienation and disorientation are essential experiences of the undocumented situation.

Keywords: Undocumented migration, undocumented persons, feminist methodology, irregular migrants, existential geography, paradoxical space, Hannah Arendt, critical phenomenology, Sweden, political geography, papperslösa, absence and presence, embodied action, public space, alienation, disorientation, digital welfare state, health care, bio-politics, institutional border, embodiment

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In the memory of my Mother and my Father
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I. Introduction

Irregular, undocumented, illegal, *sans-papier, papperslös* – these are terms denoting people living where they lack the necessary documents to officially reside. The negation built into these words lie at the core of what undocumentedness *is* and means, and constitutes a key factor in all its dimensions. Officially, in the Swedish context, undocumented persons do not exist. They are not defined in legislation and they cannot possess the ID number necessary for most formal transactions. Their physical presence produces no corresponding legal or socio-political identity or presence; officially they are absent.

Absence is however not only imposed upon them from outside. Obscurity and absence from the gaze of the state are tactics for undocumented persons in order to sustain their presence; discovery means detention and deportation. Invisibility need not mean ‘hiding’ or being out of view, however. Undocumentedness is not written in someone’s face and walking down the street an undocumented person can overtly conceal themselves by pretending to be someone with a right to that place. Physically present and just as opaque as everybody else, they are visible, but not as their undocumented selves. The ability to appear as oneself – as a subject among subjects – requires the power to define space. Stuck in the cracks between territory, jurisdiction and population, that power is denied undocumented persons.

Within the territorial boundaries of the state, but outside its social and political realms, the undocumented *here* becomes unsanctioned, constituting what Susan Coutin calls spaces of nonexistence (Coutin, 2003). Undocumented persons both constitute and inhabit these spaces on the borders of the dominant spaces where citizens dwell, but not in a manner mappable or plottable on a two-dimensional map. These are paradoxical, Möbius spaces in the sense that positions that are normally opposites – margin and centre, inside and outside, here and yonder – are occupied simultaneously (Rose, 1993:140). These both-and/neither-nor spaces constitute what is available to undocumented subjects when building their life worlds, impressing on them their inherent paradoxical qualities.

The interest that initially prompted this research was directed towards the relation between the state and its unacknowledged population – a relation that officially could not and did not exist, but unquestionably did. I wanted to find out how undocumented persons negotiate their situation in a place where they live entirely under the radar, and how the Swedish state institu-
tions deal with a group of people who according to any of their official definitions are not there. This thesis explores various aspects of undocumentedness but there are many ways of describing what a thesis ‘is about’. This one is also about the production of the undocumented position and its spatiality. As such, it is also about the state regulations and practices creating that position. It is about the interaction between undocumented persons and the state in the context of health care. It is about undocumentedness as a condition of simultaneous presence and absence. It is about the undocumented experience as a mode of being-in-the-world.

A research project and a thesis

Endeavouring to uncover the mystery (Asplund, 1970) of the relationship between the state and its undocumented population, I embarked on two and a half years of mixed fieldwork including interviews with public officials, politicians and NGOs, compilation and examination of legal and policy documents, as well as interviews and participatory observation with undocumented persons. Throughout the research project, new questions and answers have been found, succeeding and supplanting each other as I have gained a deeper understanding of the issues at hand. The research questions have shifted over time and been amended, revised and rephrased through events and experiences in and out of the field, as well as by a varying literature diet. Eventually, the main aims consolidated, allowing for a more focused empirical fieldwork and reading. In this thesis, I approach two main aspects of the phenomenon of undocumentedness:

Firstly, I explore the production of undocumentedness as a legal and socio-political position, as it is constructed, produced and reproduced in legislation, policy and practice. By teasing out the legal and administrative demarcations of undocumentedness and tracing them to where undocumented persons and state employees meet, I aim to define and describe the configuration of the undocumented position in the Swedish context. The main practical examples are drawn from the health care sector concerning provision of, and access to, health care services for undocumented persons.

Secondly, I approach undocumentedness as a situation. Starting in an investigation of the spatial dimensions of the undocumented condition, I aim to give an account of undocumentedness as an embodied situation or mode of being-in-the-world.

In combining these aspects, I aim to provide an ethnography and critical phenomenology of undocumentedness in the Swedish context. There is a growing body of work engaging in ethnographies of categories, processes and concepts. Notable among these are David Valentine’s ethnography of the category transgender (Valentine, 2007a) and Mitch Rose’s ethnography of sacredness (Rose, 2010). Within the present field of research, Susan
Coutin’s ethnography of the struggle to become legalized (Coutin, 2000), Sarah Willen’s critical phenomenology of ‘illegality’ (Willen, 2007c), and Shahram Khosravi’s ethnography of ‘migrant illegality’ in Sweden (Khosravi, 2010) are good examples. The purpose of these studies is not to describe the lives of others or to better understand cultural practices or identities, as the traditional ethnographic approach originating in anthropology would have it (Ingold, 2008). Rather, it is to explore and highlight the forces that produce, allow for and circumscribe those identities and practices, as well as to account for the phenomenology and experiences of certain processes, categories and situations (Willen, 2007c; Rose, 2010).

Thus, this ethnography of undocumentedness should not be understood as a description of the lives of persons who are undocumented, or as a study of the culture or the practices of undocumented people, the ‘group’ of undocumented people in Sweden is heterogeneous and fleeting and could only by force be called a community. While ethnographic methods such as participatory observation may be an important part of doing an ethnography of a concept as in the present case, it is not its core, nor its precondition. The presentation of this ethnography is thus poor in biographical detail and concentrates on how undocumentedness as a legal and socio-political position shapes everyday experiences of being-in-the-world.

The Swedish context

The Swedish context, in which this research is set, is a barren place to be undocumented in and there are a number of reasons for this. The Swedish state has a long history of gathering statistics on its residents; comprehensive registers were introduced in the 17th century, earlier than in any other country. Picture-ID and personnummer1 are commonly used as identification in contact with public as well as private and civic institutions, and this practice is widely accepted in Swedish society, more so than in most other countries (SCB, 2007). A society where the population register is publicly available and widely used, and with almost universal computerization of membership registers, customer forms and ticketing systems, Sweden has created for itself rather rigid boundaries between its official and its shadow spaces.

1 Personnummer means ‘civic registration number’ and is a Swedish, or Scandinavian version of a social security number. It is usually assigned at birth and consists of ten digits: date of birth plus four control digits indicating the sex of the person and usually also the place of birth. The personnummer, or rather the lack of it, plays a key role in the lives of undocumented persons in Sweden. Its wide range of uses is quite specific to Swedish society, and is mentioned by most undocumented persons I have spoken to by its Swedish name, no matter what language they were speaking. I have for these reasons decided not to attempt a translation into English. Its properties and uses will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Four.
Sweden is also a comprehensive welfare state with high levels of unionization and universal social insurance and health care provision – complete and accurate population registers being one of the prerequisites for this. The efficiency of exclusion of those who are ‘out’ equals that of the inclusion of those who are ‘in’, and the marked difference between those two positions, makes Sweden, perhaps unexpectedly, an unusually harsh place to live off the grid.

Irregular migration and undocumented populations have only recently become topics of research in Sweden and the Nordic countries. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, in comparison with the US and South and Central Europe, undocumented migration in the Nordic countries is a rather recent phenomenon and of limited magnitude. The undocumented population in Sweden is, compared internationally, rather small – it is estimated between 10 000 and 30 000 individuals (Zelmin, 2011). Secondly, Swedish political discourse concerning undocumented migration and migrants has been completely engulfed by a wider asylum and refugee discourse, and has been conceptualized accordingly. This has to some extent prevented the acknowledgement of undocumented persons’ presence or situation being an issue (Düvell, 2010).

Undocumented persons in Sweden are few in number and marginalized, yet constitute the core of a larger legal and political tangle. In another context, Barbara Babcock argues that “symbolic inversions define a culture’s lineaments at the same time as they question the usefulness and the absoluteness of its ordering” (Babcock, 1978 in Stallybrass and White, 1986:20). The centre cannot exist without the margin; there can be no inside without an outside, and in the case of undocumented persons, their marginal political position is symbolically central, making visible power relations that are obscured when directly scrutinized. I argue that undocumented persons’ predicament inside-outside the Swedish welfare state makes their situation interesting beyond their situation in its own right. The peculiarities of the Swedish context amplifies some of the key elements of undocumentedness, making it a strategic case (Flyvbjerg, 2006) for social science engaged in issues of exclusion, vulnerability and undocumented migration.

Disciplinary context

In addition to defining a thesis on the basis of its theme, content and geographical setting, an indication of its disciplinary context and connections may also provide insights into its character. My academic home is a geography department and my interest in undocumented persons’ lives and experiences originates in a background in migration studies.

Migration studies is an inherently interdisciplinary field of research, ranging from geography, sociology and anthropology to demography policy stud-
ies and economy, and its history can be traced in statistics and Ravenstein’s ‘laws of migration’ based on 19th century census statistics. Since then, migration scholars have measured, explained and controlled migration flows through quantification, computation and mid range theory (Massey, et al., 1993). Some have focused on the effects in sending and or receiving communities, often with an economic or development perspective (eg. Sørensen, et al., 2002; Grillo and Riccio, 2004; Portes, et al., 2007) – my earlier study being of the latter category (Sigvardsdotter, 2011a). A different strand in migration research, originating in anthropology, has focused on diasporas, transnationalism (eg. Vertovec, 2001; Kothari, 2008) and the life histories, coping strategies and experiences of migrants (eg. Franz, 2003; Herman, 2006; Blunt, 2007; Chávez, 2011). This has inspired human geographers to engage in more qualitative research concerning migration and migrant groups (eg. King and Mai, 2004; Voigt-Graf, 2005; van Liempt and Doomernik, 2006).

Research concerning undocumented migration is characterised by a similar divide. The majority of the literature that presents itself when scholar-googling ‘undocumented migration’ or ‘irregular migrants’ engages either in quantification and control of irregular international movements or populations (eg. Cornelius and Tsuda, 1994; Jandl, 2004; Düvell, 2006; Kovacheva and Vogel, 2009), or in irregular cross-border mobility and migrants’ strategies (eg. Carling, 2007; Monzini, 2007; Bloch, et al., 2011; Chávez, 2011). A smaller number of studies concern the conceptual and political underpinnings of undocumentedness, deportability and ‘illegality’ (eg. De Genova, 2002; De Genova, 2004; Coleman, 2008). Anthropologists have also engaged in describing undocumented persons’ living conditions and experiences (Willen, 2007c; Castaneda, 2009; Kalir, 2010; Gomberg-Muñoz, 2011).

This research project takes place within this interdisciplinary context, but is concerned with undocumentedness as a position and situation, rather than with migration tactics, transnational spaces or the life histories of undocumented persons. Therefore, from this point on, I pay rather less attention to the literatures dealing with the migration of undocumented persons lives; drawing primarily on ethnographical and critical literatures originating mainly within anthropology, geography, sociology and feminist studies. My own position and perspective within this interdisciplinary framework of migration or migrant related research can best be characterized as one of feminist political geography.

The scholars and writers who have had the most profound influence on this research project are, in chronological order (my chronology that is): Hannah Arendt, Gunnar Olsson, Giorgio Agamben, Michel de Certeau, Susan Bordo, Sarah Willen, Sarah Ahmed, Iris Marion Young and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Among them is but one geographer, Gunnar Olsson, and his influence manifests less as explicit references than as an indirect encouragement to think. The attention paid to space and spatiality is nonetheless
pronounced among all of them, perhaps especially so in the case of Arendt, Ahmed and Merleau-Ponty. Rather than viewing their divergent disciplinary and theoretical origins as problematic, I find that they produce interesting and sometimes unexpected intersections, well suited for the questions at hand. Failure at returning texts to their context and histories is both the promise and the risk of interdisciplinary scholarship (Ahmed, 2006:22-3). This thesis is a stab at using my power as a creative consumer of text (de Certeau, 1984), to reconcile and cultivate something new from the differences of these various bodies of scholarship.

Disposition

The structure of this thesis and the organization of its chapters follow a mystery-solving kind of logic. Beginning by providing two ‘tool-box chapters’, establishing the methodological foundations and considerations of the investigation, the remaining chapters present the different aspects of undocumentedness along the internal logic and chronology of the investigation itself. Following the line of thought of the research process and analysis, the chapters consecutively introduce different dimensions of undocumentedness, successively adding complexity to the description and deepening the understanding of its various aspects.

The next chapter provides the ontological and epistemological foundations for the rest of the thesis and is divided into two main parts. The first section outlines a theoretical framework through which to explore undocumentedness as a legal, political and social position. Hannah Arendt’s political theory is being revived in various disciplines (Schaap, et al., 2010; Björk and Burman, 2011) and her writing on statelessness and the right to have rights has provided fruitful insights in the literature on vulnerable groups, including undocumented persons (Benhabib, 2004; Krause, 2008). There is however much to be learned about undocumentedness in her conceptualization of political action and public space as a space of appearance. By adding the critical and feminist geography perspectives that her writing lacks, I outline an understanding of public space and of absence and presence in relation to undocumentedness. The second section of the chapter reviews the basis of the phenomenological method, and outlines a critical phenomenological foundation, on which I later develop an understanding of the undocumented life world.

The third chapter is a methods chapter, providing an account of the empirical material on which the arguments of this thesis are built, as well as a reflexive hands-on discussion of the research process behind this thesis. Following the co-evolution of research questions and fieldwork, the methods used, ethical considerations and my role as a researcher are discussed together as different facets of an integrated process. The methods chapter is
also an account of the research project as a learning process, focusing on the individual knowledge production as well as its subsequent communication and representation.

Chapter Four begins by establishing the socio-political context in which the undocumented position is examined. Conceptualizing the state as on the one hand a territory-population-jurisdiction triad within an interstate system (Agamben, 1998; De Genova, 2004) and as a set of institutions peopled by politicians, bureaucrats and practitioners on the other (Smith, 2006; Mountz, 2010), two different approaches to constructing the undocumented position are outlined. The second part of the chapter discusses the specificities of the Swedish context and draws out the construction, production and reproduction of the undocumented position within that setting. By tracing (the absence of) undocumented persons in Swedish legislation and administrative routines and the consequences of that absence in related practices, the undocumented position emerges as a residual category, eliminated from the ‘gaze of the governor’ (Stenum, 2010) and efficiently excluded from public, private as well as civic institutions through standardized and computerized practices. It is shown how exclusion by omission can prove just as efficient as explicitly exclusionary language.

Undocumented persons may be a residual group, undefined and unidentified, but their physical, corporeal presence forces the institutions and individuals making up the Swedish state into continual contact with them. Having reviewed its general composition and the bordering processes producing the undocumented position in the previous chapter, Chapter Five continues by providing specific examples of those borders in law and practice by making the health care sector a special case study. Health and health care are basic goods in a welfare state such as Sweden, and over the past years, the issue of undocumented persons’ rights and access to health care services has received attention in public and political debates in Sweden and internationally (Hunt, 2007; PICUM, 2007). By tracing undocumented persons’ eligibilities and access to health care in national legislation and local policy, as well as in administrative and medical practice, I provide a concrete account of how the residual undocumented position is produced, reproduced and negotiated in this context, as well as point to some of the tangible and embodied consequences of being in that position. Politicians, administrators, health practitioners, as well as the undocumented persons themselves, are part of these biopolitical negotiations, upholding and perforating the institutional borders of the Swedish welfare state.

In chapter number six, I shift focus from the production of the undocumented position to explore how its residual nature manifests in people’s lives, and provide an account of the political dimensions of the absent-present condition. I argue that the undocumented spatiality is a paradoxical one (Rose, 1993) and drawing on Hannah Arendt’s conception of public space as a space of appearance, I argue that their official absence and de-
portability deprives undocumented persons of their capacity to define space and appear in front of others. By giving examples from fieldwork and interviews with undocumented persons, I outline various configurations of the presence-absence of undocumentedness and show that despite their being expelled from public space, undocumented persons can, albeit with difficulty and only temporarily, make an appearance and claim rights.

In the seventh chapter, I add yet another aspect to undocumentedness by turning to its phenomenological existential aspects. With extensive examples from my empirical material and drawing on arguments made in the previous chapters, I suggest alienation and disorientation to be key elements of the undocumented experience. This claim does not necessarily mean that those elements are universal for undocumented persons, but rather that they are structures of experience that most undocumented persons must either overcome or live with. I also give examples of ‘orientation devices’ and tactics that undocumented persons employ in order to temporally and spatially anchor their lives.

The eighth and final chapter summarises and discusses the main themes and contributions of this research project. Undocumented migration and undocumentedness are relatively new fields of academic interest in Sweden, and every input to the field substantially adds to the pool of knowledge. Existing research on this topic has used varying theoretical frameworks, for instance Maja Sager taking a pronounced feminist and postcolonial perspective (Sager, 2011) and Shahram Khosravi leaning heavily on the Agambian theorization of bare life (Khosravi, 2006; 2010). This thesis approaches undocumentedness as a condition and mode of being-in-the-world. However, engaging in undocumented persons’ situation without paying attention to the power relations putting them there would be naïve, and I would say, irresponsible scholarship. This is typical criticism of phenomenology (Ahmed, 2006:40-1), but I argue that the emerging field of critical phenomenological research, especially as inspired by queer and feminist thought, is a fruitful route towards a more politically aware, experience-centred scholarship. The critical phenomenological approach to undocumentedness I employ, allows me to combine a spatial, existential, and experiential perspective with a potent focus on the political, biopolitical and human rights aspects of those experiences.
II. Human Conditions

Before setting off the story of the present study, this chapter and the next introduce the theoretical and methodological tools employed in this research project. This chapter establishes the foundation of the critical phenomenology that provides the main theoretical framework for the forthcoming description and analysis of the various aspects of undocumentedness. It is divided into two main parts. The first outlines a political theory and framework for engaging with undocumentedness. This discussion is mainly guided by Arendt’s writings on public space, the right to have rights and on statelessness, supplemented by the critical and feminist geography that it lacks. The second part gives a brief introduction to some of the elements of the phenomenological method that are of particular interest and indicate what role they play in this research. One of the most common critiques of phenomenology is its failure to recognize the power structures, dependencies or contingencies that lie at the bottom of the studied phenomena (Ahmed, 2006). In itself, classical phenomenology is near enough apolitical and needs adjusting in order to fit a research project concerning a thoroughly political topic such as undocumentedness and the undocumented life-world. This thesis is deeply influenced by the critical, feminist and queer developments within phenomenological thought. These are rather few, albeit growing in number (eg. Desjarlais, 1997; Fisher and Embree, 2000; Ahmed, 2006; Willen, 2007a; Schües, et al., 2011), and have produced compelling frameworks for thinking about embodiment and everyday experiences, as well as the politics forming the constraints and background to those experiences.

A political theory of undocumentedness

A productive writer and thinker on many subjects, Hannah Arendt has received many appraising as well as critical reactions. Arendt’s writings on statelessness and the right to have rights from the middle of the last century are just as topical today as they were then, and are gaining increased attention within several fields of study (Dietz, 2002; Krause, 2008; Schaap, et al., 2010; Björk and Burman, 2011). The Arendtian concepts of key interest here are public space as a space of appearance, and its connection to the right to have rights. This is by no means an exhaustive discussion of her production,
nor of the criticisms and conflicts that her work have given rise to, but a limited discussion of the concepts relevant to the present research.

The attitudes among feminist scholars towards her writing have been disparate, albeit the general attitude has been scepticism. While she by some has been criticized for being phallocentric (Pitkin, 1981) and of harbouring an “extraordinary level of horror at the natural“ (Brown, 1988:28), others have appropriated her writing as gynocentric (Hartsock, 1985). I argue that her contributions that have merited most criticism lie at a quite superficial level in her theorizing. Many of her expressions are traditional or even reactionary and she has been accused of an unhealthy level of nostalgia for the ancient Greek polis (Dietz, 1995). This must however not hinder contemporary readers from taking advantage of the insights that lie beneath that somewhat old-fashioned surface. In order to explain her conceptualization of public space, political action and rights, how she employs these notions and, more importantly, how I employ them, a short introduction of some of her other fundamental concepts is necessary.

The triad concept of Vita Activa is one of the key categorizations of all of Arendt’s production and lies at the bottom of many of her further conceptualizations. The basic distinctions are between three types of human goings-on: the labour of our bodies, the work of our hands, and action. The distinctions between them are somewhat ambiguous throughout her vast writing, but are succinctly formulated in the introduction to The Human Condition:

Labor is the activity which corresponds to the biological process of the human body, whose spontaneous growth, metabolism, and eventual decay are bound to the vital necessities produced and fed into the life process by labor. The human condition of labor is life itself. Work is the activity which corresponds to the unnaturalness of human existence, which is not imbedded in, and whose mortality is not compensated by, the species’ ever-recurring life cycle. Work provides an ‘artificial’ world of things, distinctly different from all natural surroundings. Within its borders each individual life is housed, while this world itself is meant to outlast and transcend them all. The human condition of work is worldliness. Action, the only activity that goes on directly between men without the intermediary of things or matter, corresponds to the human condition of plurality, to the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world. (Arendt, 1958:7).

Action, as the political activity per se, is at the core of any Arendtian discussion of public space, rights and appearance. Arendt distinguishes the category action from labour and work, where the two latter are activities connected to life, matter and things, while action appears to be disembodied, going on without any intermediary means or matter. However, in order to take part in political action and in public discussions, means such as knowledge of language, a physical place and a physical body in and with which to act, as well as recognition from others, are necessary.
An undocumented person may have agency in some private or social matters – more freedom of movement than an incarcerated convict, more freedom of opinion than any resident of a totalitarian state – but this does not necessarily imply that they have the resources for action. Because “their freedom of opinion is a fool’s freedom, for nothing they think matters anyhow” (Arendt, 1968:296). Arendt didn’t explicitly redefine her action concept, but touched upon the consequences of this in her subsequent complications of the triad (Arendt, 1968). I will return to these issues later in this chapter.

**Birth and plurality**

The miracle that saves the world, the realm of human affairs, from its normal ‘natural’ ruin is ultimately the fact of natality, in which the faculty of action is ontologically rooted (Arendt, 1958:247).

Birth is the beginning of every new human being – we are born by someone, to someone, at a certain point in time and space. What that new person will say and do in life and what trains of events he/she will set in motion is impossible to predict – an infinite number of trajectories are possible. This uniqueness and unpredictability of human beings and their collective plurality is what Arendt had in mind when she titled *The Human Condition* (Arendt, 1958). Plurality is, according to Arendt, the supreme human condition. Not an essence of humanity or part of a human nature, but the condition through which humans live together (Arendt, 1958:7). Plurality is what induces or forces humans to communicate, interact and negotiate – were all humans “endlessly reproducible repetitions of the same model, whose nature or essence was the same for all and as predictable as the nature or essence of any other thing, action would be an unnecessary luxury” (Arendt, 1958:28).

For Arendt, birth is the origin and rule – beginning and principle – of human existence, and as such, the ontological foundation for all activities and their corresponding conditions, but especially for the condition of plurality. The newcomer is a beginner and stranger of this world and possesses the capacity of initiative, of setting off unpredictable chains of events – of acting. Here, she turns on its head, the proposition by Heidegger, that it is our mortality, or being-toward-death, that is the basis for our individuality (Solomon, 2000a): “since action is the political activity par excellence, natality, and not mortality, may be the central category of political, as distinguished from metaphysical, thought” (Arendt, 1958:9).

The principle of natality is double, Arendt argues – a principle of *givenness* and a principle of *publicness*. That which is given us by birth – our position and physical existence – does not in Arendt’s framework constitute the political subject. It signifies “the shape of our bodies and the talents of
our minds” (Arendt, 1968:301), and this what-ness of being is not a principle on which to found public interaction. Rather, equality in the public realm can only be established by subjects in mutual action, where we are who we are, not what we are. The birth of the political self, its who-ness, is the birth of the unexpected word. Speech in this political sense is performative and inaugurate, not descriptive. Thus, the self is not a consequence of speech; instead, the who is born in the very speaking itself (Birmingham, 2006:24).

Aided by our capacity for language, humans appear to one another as speaking and interacting individuals. Without this interaction, or without the possibility or potential of interaction, “they would literally be dead to the world; it has ceased to be a human life because it is no longer lived among men” (Arendt, 1958:176). Here Arendt implicitly recognizes the needed means for action and interaction, means that often originate in the what of a person; an undocumented person is hindered in participation and interaction by his/her position as undocumented, not by any property in his/her political subjectivity. Arendt is somewhat inconsistent concerning the interconnection between the ‘given’ physicality of our beings and initium – our insertion into the world with word and deed. Peg Birmingham argues that the two principles of humanity, although analytically distinguishable, should be understood as intermingled and inseparable (Birmingham, 2007).

Combining Arendtian political theory with a feminist outlook and feminist scholarship requires a couple of clarifications that are only peripherally related to the main questions of this study. These relate specifically to the relation between public and private that takes its origin in the above-mentioned distinction between what and who, and Arendt’s exclusion of the private and the social from the political realm. At first, the exclusion of the private and what Arendt calls necessity from politics may seem in direct opposition to feminist statements such as ‘the private is political’, and especially to any conceptualization of intersectionality (Valentine, 2007b). Bringing the multiplicity of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion and class into the Arendtian public realm is not compatible with her action concept (Dietz, 1995). Susan Bickford captures this incongruity in what she calls the paradox of public appearance: “[O]ur urge to appear in public as particular and mobile identities and the fact that such appearance depends upon the attention of others who will judge for themselves” (Bickford, 1995:315).

This division has also been accused of falling in with dominant masculine discourse, making gender-coded distinctions between public and private (O’Brien, 1981; Brown, 1988). However, to criticize Arendt for a gendered public-private dichotomy is, according to Dietz (1995) to diminish or even erase her original tri-part conceptualization of human activity. Labour and work are gendered in Arendt’s conceptualization, it is true, but when recovering the original triptych on which the public-private dichotomy has been superimposed, one discovers that action, or publicness, is a non-gendered
and existentially superior third category beyond the gendered labour and work (Dietz, 1995).

Public space and the “right to have rights”

Arendt’s conception of power is one rooted in mutual action, where mutuality and interaction are empowering in their own right (Birmingham, 2006). To act is to set trains of events in motion, to take initiatives and communicate – to appear in front of each other as equals. As such, her performative theory of political action is one of discourse ethics (Benhabib, 2004:12-24).

The geographical dimension of Arendt’s political action is public space, or the space of appearance. In line with her conceptualization of power as process and concerted action, public space is not material, but performed and socially defined by the members of the political community acting together. In contrast to for instance Habermas, whose political theory of communication is furnished with a rather indistinct public realm, her notion of the performed public space is clearly defined as small scale and local (Howell, 1993). For politics to occur, a representative democracy where citizens anonymously vote according to their private opinions is not enough. Rather, the participating individuals must be able to see and talk to one another in public, to meet in public places so that their commonalities as well as their differences come into view and can become the subject of political debate. In the treaty on the human condition, Arendt remarks on the super-portability of public space, quoting the watchword of the Greek colonization: “Wherever you go, you will be a polis” (Arendt, 1958:198). The polis, here, is not the city state itself but

…the organization of the people – as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be … It is the space of appearance, in the widest sense of the word … To be deprived of it means to be deprived of reality, which, humanly and politically speaking, is the same as appearance. (Arendt, 1958:198-9).

To act is to take part in and be a constituting part of the human community and a human community where humans speak and interact will, she argues, always be a political community. In today’s global regime, membership in the current political communities is citizenship. A recognized member of a community has the power to act and to define public space, and this is what is indicated in Arendt’s ‘axiom’ that all humans should have the right to have rights. Without the possibility to appear in front of others, to act and speak, it is impossible to claim any rights, whatever they may be. Thus, in the same way as the citizen ‘is a polis’, the undocumented person is not a polis and is not able to define space.
Despite the fact that the social and private realms are prerequisites for the political, social categories and social struggles are excluded from the Arendtian political realm. With this conception of the political, Arendt ensures that all threats to the political are external to it. What, then, is left for political debate? Seemingly, such politics premiere form over content, and only allow for differences of opinion or conception within certain limits (Kaveh, 2011). This is a relevant critique of Arendtian political action but does not prohibit the use of this conceptualization of politics and of the political subject when asking the question most relevant in relation to undocumented persons: who can speak and act and who cannot?

While other thinkers, Rousseau prominent among them, argue that the state of nature is where the good life should be sought – it is our societies and our manners that corrupt us – Hannah Arendt firmly argues that it is within the political community that humans can strive towards equality. People acting as political subjects can interact on equal terms, she argues – it is the introduction of social categories and the what-ness of being that introduces inequality. We are not born equal, she says, but “we become equal as members of a group on the strength of our decision to guarantee ourselves mutually equal rights” (Arendt, 1968:301). In this way she celebrates the political and the public as the only institutions that can grant, or at least have the potential of granting, human rights. On this point however, she is not very optimistic. In the present context where neither nature nor history can form a basis for human rights, she writes, “the right to have rights, or the right of every individual to belong to humanity, should be guaranteed by humanity itself” but continues by laconically stating that: “It is by no means certain whether this is possible” (Arendt, 1968:298).

Rights and justice are closely related and, in this case, a justice concept based on the absence of oppression and domination (Young, 1990:192) is best applicable. The discussions within geography concerning spatial justice and public space have often taken place within a Marxist or post-Marxist framework and thus largely focused on distribution (eg. Harvey, 1973). Discussions within geography have also generally dealt with public space as concrete sites. However, when Henri Lefebvre is concerned with spatial justice and writes about a ‘right to the city’ – that word right, is intimately connected to Arendt’s right to have rights. The city, for Lefebvre, is a place of simultaneity and encounter and the right to it means, not only to be able to make use of the city as a place to be, but also refers to those encounters and that simultaneity. The right to the city is a right to a place in which to struggle and confront (Dikeç, 2001:1789). Transposed into Arendt’s vocabulary, that is to act and to speak.
Statelessness and bare life

Although Arendt celebrates the civic and the political as the good or full life and the bounded human or political community as the precondition and only possible safeguard for human rights, her attitude to political institutions is much more ambivalent. The same institutions that allow individuals to become human subjects by reciprocally granting rights, also destroy those rights and constitute threats to the individuals concerned. Statelessness, which became a mass-phenomenon during and after the 20th century World Wars, was not a sign of a failure or a flaw in the interstate system, according to Arendt. Rather, she recognized the coeval establishment of the European interstate system and the phenomenon of statelessness, and considered stateless persons “the most symptomatic group in contemporary politics” (Arendt, 1968:277).

In the modern world, to be forced out of the political community is effectively to be expelled from humanity. The stateless person, stripped of all political meaning and all characteristics but that of being human, cannot appear in front of others to speak for his/her cause – or any cause – because a person will not be judged by what he/she says or who he/she is, but rather by what he/she is. The processes behind statelessness and undocumentedness are different and the two statuses cannot be said to be the same, but in relation to rights and being expelled from the political community, however, their effects are similar. A person who carries no legal or political identity or meaning,

...can be adequately dealt with only by the unpredictable hazards of friendship and sympathy, or by the great and incalculable grace of love, which says with Augustine, ‘Volo ut sis [I want you to be]’ without being able to give any particular reason for such supreme and unsurpassable affirmation. (Arendt, 1968:301).

The stateless and the undocumented can only be cared for through the administration of charity. Although humanitarian organizations often speak in terms of human rights, they draw on the arbitrary benevolence of compassion as their logic of action rather than a logic of justice or rights. Thus, humanitarianism can only function by grasping human life as bare life (Agamben, 1998:131-5) and hinges on the cultivation of an adequately compelling rhetorical or symbolic relationship of compassion between provider and recipient. Instead of furthering human dignity, the result is a limited version of what it means to be human (Ticktin, 2006).

While Arendt has been criticized for theorizing a gendered, Cartesian divide between the material, object – or abject, ‘mere human’ realm, and the lofty political acting and speaking subject, such a distinction has continued to be fruitful in critical migration studies and political geography through the work of Giorgio Agamben. His writing has become a central point of refer-
ence in critical analyses of post 9/11 militarization and securitization (Kaplan, 2005; Ek, 2006), as well as contemporary migration control regimes. The Arendtian influences on Agamben’s writing are both acknowledged and apparent, where statelessness, in combination with Foucauldian bio-power and the work of Walter Benjamin and Carl Schmitt, form the foundation for Agamben’s discussions on bare life and the interrelations between sovereignty and the state of exception (Agamben, 1998; 2005). The figure of *homo sacer*, the constitutive exception, outside both human and divine law, not killed, but exposed to infinite possibilities of being killed, has inspired a great number of studies of forced migration, undocumented persons as well as of other marginalized groups (Pratt, 2005; Khosravi, 2006; Fluri, 2012).

**Resistance and the conscious pariah**

However, a too-heavy focus on exclusion and vulnerability runs the risk of representing and reproducing individuals as abject victims or less-than-human objects. A rise of interest in resistance and empowerment among these groups has added important complexity to the image of ‘the vulnerable’, but can in its turn fall into patterns of romantization and exotization of that resistance. Studies of subversion and resistance may aim at empowerment for the oppressed, or at correction of earlier objectifying representations. They may however just as often achieve the opposite – either exaggerating agency, or reinforcing the dominant order by carrying it in through the back door. Lila Abu-Lughod takes the cue from Foucault – “where there is power, there is resistance” (Foucault, 1978:95) – and argues that studies of resistance can and should be used as a diagnostic of power (Abu-Lughod, 1990).

Mirroring Foucault’s arguments concerning the micro-physics of disciplining and power, Michel de Certeau attends to the anti-disciplines that constitute resistance, albeit with less political intent than Foucault (de Certeau, 1984:xiv). By doing so, he exposes the close relationships between dominant power and resistance, providing tools for making diagnostics of one from the other. He distinguishes between the strategies of the dominant power and the tactical responses of those subject to that power. While strategy signifies the proper, the structure and the infrastructure, the tactical is the activity and making-do of the Other within that structure.

The strategic rationale of dominant power is to define its ‘own’ autonomous place or territory where it establishes rules and infrastructure, engages in long-term planning and exercises control through defining knowledge and its limits. Strategy is the “triumph of place over time” (de Certeau, 1984:36). The maintenance and stability of those rules and that infrastructure are key to the strategic rationale, as is the mastery over territory and over subjects through surveillance. Tactic in contrast, is what is not sanctioned and what
does not have a right to place; it is “defined by the absence of a proper locus” (de Certeau, 1984:37). Instead, it is a resistance to the dominant order, on the dominant’s territory. “A tactic insinuates itself into the other’s place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance” (de Certeau, 1984:xix). An undocumented person may be seen as the ultimate archetype of the figure that is left with only tactical reactions to the strategies of the state. However, to understand the two rationales as dichotomous would be erroneous. The nation-state rationale may be one of strategy but is nonetheless dependent on the everyday activities of its civil servants, politicians and practitioners. Its strategies are also vulnerable to erosion and wear over time.

Tactics are always to some extent modelled around the strategic power it resists and even in the most subjugated positions, some measure of resistance, under certain circumstances also political action, is possible. As well as pointing out the fundamental vulnerability of statelessness, Arendt also reminds us of the excluded and Other as possible conscious pariah and political figure (Arendt, 1978b; Krause, 2008), a notion not unfamiliar to feminist scholarship (Harding, 1991). The power and political explosiveness of the excluded lay in their position as Other, as well as in being an embodiment of the contradictions in the political and legal arrangements that exclude them (Krause, 2008).

The conscious pariah constitutes an exception in Arendt’s argument, because as Rancière has pointed out, there is circularity in Arendt’s ‘axiom’ of the right to have rights. He argues that by insisting that human rights must attach either to the human being as such (construed as bare life) or to the citizen (construed as a member of a political community), Arendt constructs an ontological trap for her own argument. If human rights are reducible to the rights of citizenship they are redundant, but if attached to the human as such, independent of his/her membership in a political community, they amount to nothing: they are the “mere derision of right”, the “rights of those who have no rights”; the “paradoxical rights of the private, poor, unpoliticized individual” (Rancière, 2004:298). The problem of extent and boundedness is inherent in all democratic attempts at defining political membership (Benhabib, 2004:13-24; Näsström, 2011) and I would argue that Arendt does problematize this ontological trap in discussing the possibility of the conscious pariah (Arendt, 1978b). Rancière’s critique draws on the situation of women during revolutionary France, pointing out that the distinction between political subjects and bare life is not clear-cut. He quotes Olympe de Gouges, who during the French Revolution stated that if women are entitled to go to the scaffold, they must be entitled to go to the assembly. Women had not the political rights they were entitled to as equal-born, but there was at least one point where their bare life proved to carry political meaning: there were women sentenced to death as enemies of the revolution. Considered unfit for political life, the revolutionary women could not make this
point heard to lawmakers or politicians. But nevertheless, they were able to protest and by doing so make a twofold demonstration:

They could demonstrate that they were deprived of the rights that they had, thanks to the Declaration of Rights. And they could demonstrate, through their public action, that they had the rights that the constitution denied to them, that they could enact those rights. So they could act as subjects of the Rights of Man in the precise sense that I have mentioned. They acted as subjects that did not have the rights that they had and had the rights that they had not (Rancière, 2004:304).

Undocumented persons in France have demonstrated for recognition and for their rights (Krause, 2008), as have undocumented persons in Sweden. Like the women and the slaves of the Ancient Greek polis, they are excluded from the public realm, and like the women of revolutionary France are they able to verbally protest despite their lack of political subjectivity.

The resistance possible in the undocumented position is based in the fact that no law is perfectly implemented, that strategy always depends on its practice, and that geography and materiality are inherently unruly and flawed (Jansson, 2009). Also in the most dire circumstances, there will be loopholes and openings for tactical resistance (de Certeau, 1984). Herein lies the basis and potentiality for a relationship between state and undocumented, and it is consequently also the origin around which the present inquiry revolves.

The phenomenal nature of the world

In this world which we enter, appearing from a nowhere, and from which we disappear into a nowhere, Being and Appearing coincide (Arendt, 1978a:19, emphasis in original).

Public space as a space of appearance implies the presence of spectators; the focus on appearance would make no sense if there were no corresponding focus on perception and experience. Arendt’s political theory is greatly influenced by phenomenology, inviting the use of a phenomenological framework when inquiring into the situation of undocumented persons within an Arendtian political framework. This section introduces the phenomenological tradition and parts of its development within critical, feminist and queer scholarship, and discusses the main concepts of relevance to this thesis.

Edmund Husserl, the first of the early 20th century phenomenologists argued, in a Cartesian and Kantian tradition, that the objects of reality cannot in themselves be apprehended or understood. Objective reality presents itself to consciousness through perception, and it is only through the study of perception and experience that anything of the world can be learned. By ignor-
ing the ‘objective’ object itself, its function and materiality, and by perceiv-
ing it as if it were unfamiliar, he argued, it is possible to attend to the flow of
perception and the experience of the object. Phenomenology as formulated
and defined by Husserl is a method for the study of the essential structures of
experience. The starting point for such an investigation is always the sub-
ject’s point of here, which, as the subject moves, moves with it: “the subject
is always, at every now, in the centre, in the here, whence it sees the things
and penetrates into the world by vision” (Husserl, 1989:166).

The subjective and partial perspective of phenomenology is a conse-
quence of our being emplaced in a world that outstrips the expanse of our
being. It is not possible for us to experience the world in its entirety; we
must therefore always focus on particular aspects of it. This is what Husserl
called being ‘toward-which’ or the intentionality of our being. The intention-
ality of perception stresses the importance of direction and orientation. The
subject is always orientated towards things and among things, and experi-
ences those things from the point of view of its here:

The Body of the subject ‘alters its position’ in space; the things appearing in
the environment are constantly oriented thereby. … I have all things over and
against me; they are all ‘there’ – with the exception of one and only one,
namely the Body, which is always ‘here’ (Husserl, 1989:166).

Husserl’s mode of investigation made apparent other consequences of the
partiality of perception and its implications for experiences of the world.
How one sees, what one sees, what one doesn’t see, as well as what forms
the background of that which is seen, depend on the relationship between the
subject and the object. The partiality and subjectivity of perception also
draws attention to the fact that one always experiences more than is actually
perceived with the senses. When encountering an object, it can only be ap-
proached from one side at a time, but previous experience and imagination
furnishes it with the sides momentarily obscured, and other personal associa-
tions add other properties. Emotions are transferred from the subject to the
perceived object and become characteristics of it. The object is experienced
as being the source of the emotion: “‘I am disturbed,’ becomes ‘it is distur-
bing,’ which becomes ‘you are disturbed’.” (Ahmed, 2003:382).

Husserl was a scientist who aimed to develop phenomenology as a scien-
tific method. He viewed the partial and the subjective as the only perspective
possible, and through a sort of turning operation similar to that of Donna
Haraway (Haraway, 1988; Dietz, 2002), redefined the subjective as objective
as the basis on which he built his scientific phenomenological method. Hu-
sserl’s philosophy was taken up and developed by many continental thinkers
during the 20th century and his ideas became the basis for a longstanding
phenomenological tradition, as well as an important cornerstone in both
German and French existentialism.
One of the most noted phenomenologists, especially within the discipline of geography, is Maurice Merleau-Ponty. He was greatly influenced by Husserl, but diverged from him on several crucial points. Most notably perhaps, Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology is not Cartesian. Thus, instead of understanding the perceiving subject as a consciousness situated within a body, he argued that the body itself is the medium of experience and that the subject should be understood as a situated, lived body. Merleau-Ponty acknowledged the materiality of the body and of the world as preconditions for experience, but concluded that “the first necessity can be merely physical only in virtue of the fact that the second is metaphysical; in short, I am accessible to factual situations only if my nature is such that there are factual situations for me” (Merleau-Ponty, 2002:104). Although his notion of the lived body has been criticized for being uniform and perhaps not so ‘embodied’ after all, especially by feminist scholars, this was an important step towards incorporating the body into conceptualizations of perception and experience.

This non-Cartesian ontology has several implications for the relation between the subject and the world. The perceiving subject, that is the conscious, lived body, is situated in the world as its origin and null-point, yet it is also of the world. The skin may be the limit of the body, but at one’s fingertips, the world is but a continuation of one’s being: “The world is inseparable from the subject, but from a subject which is nothing but a project of the world, and the subject is inseparable from the world, but from a world which the subject itself projects” (Merleau-Ponty, 2002:499-500). This means that you are the constituting centre of your world, but you are also a part and a product of it. The question of how this dual relation is configured – what determines what – spontaneously arise. Merleau-Ponty discusses this relation as a complex dialectic: “The body not only flows over into a world whose schema it bears in itself, but possesses this world at a distance rather than being possessed by it” (Merleau-Ponty 1973:78 in Weiss, 1999). Through this, Gail Weiss understands Merleau-Ponty to mean that the body and the world are neither determined by the physiological or psychic makeup of the subject, nor as a body-constituting force. “Perception and bodily motility are the primary means by which we possess the world at a distance; these faculties are what allow us to grasp a situation, as well as being that through which the body flows over into a world” (Weiss, 1999:11). The key concept of Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology is being-in-the-world. It signifies the embodied subject situated in its world, being part of it, possessing it and flowing over into it.

The spatiality of the phenomenological ontology distinguishes between situation and position. The spatiality of the subject is that of situation, the origin from which the rest of the world is perceived and conceived, while objects are positioned relative each other and the subject. The positions of one group of objects, lets say a clump of big boulders, will not be altered if one of them is moved or removed, only in relation to the moved object. But
if you – a subject – walks around among these boulders, your situation in relation to them, to all of them, and your perception of them will constantly change.

Merleau-Ponty defines a positioned object as something existing \textit{partes extra partes}, meaning that they exist alongside each other. They experience no interdependence, only external and mechanical relationships: “whether in the narrow sense of motion received and transmitted, or in the wider sense of the relation of function to variable” (Merleau-Ponty, 2002:84) An object, in the phenomenological or existential vocabulary, exists \textit{in-itself}, as a positioned, immanent object. In contrast, the situated subject is, or at least can be, a transcendent \textit{being-for-itself}.

Descartes and later intellectualists such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir employed the concept of transcendence as strictly related to the mind. The immanent body – conflated with the feminine and with nature, was contrasted with the transcendence of the mind – for Sartre the freedom of consciousness, in the case of Descartes, the divine. Sartre and de Beauvoir identifies transcendence with the free intellect and existing as a conscious \textit{being-for-itself}, oriented towards the future and to its possibilities, while being immanent means living in one’s body as a \textit{being-in-itself} or as a \textit{being-for-others} (Weiss, 1999:45-6). In The Second Sex, de Beauvoir argued that transcendence is the prerogative of men, and that the woman, in a patriarchal order is trapped and ‘weighed down’, at least partially, in her embodied immanent being. Put in Arendtian terms, the situated being-in-the-world is related to the acting \textit{who}, while the \textit{what-ness} of that subject is the position and being-in-itself – the role he/she is given, has taken, or is forced to take in relation to others.

Merleau-Ponty, writing more or less coevally with Sartre and de Beauvoir used the same terminology but applied it to his non-Cartesian framework. Transcendence for him signified the lived body in fluid motion and the experience of being one with the world that it constitutes (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). Thus, transcendence to Merleau-Ponty is a state incorporating the body, not with reference to the body for its own sake but as a transparent medium in the experience of the world.

A phenomenology of emotion

In the previous section, I established that the experience of an object exceeds what one can see and that the origin of part of that excess of perception is emotion. An embodied phenomenology of undocumentedness necessarily includes inquiries into the emotional aspects of the undocumented life world. This brief introduction of a phenomenology of emotion builds mainly on Sartre’s \textit{The emotions – An outline of a theory}, its main focus is on the relation between emotions and perception, the role they play in how the world is experienced, and their relation to subjectivity, rather than their definition or
origin. Sartre’s rather simplistic theory is that emotions are manifestations of a desire of the consciousness to evade a difficult or embarrassing situation, in other words, to avoid another specific emotion — shame (Solomon, 2000b). Although Sartre discusses emotions as choices and strategies for escape, they should be understood as prereflective, rather than conscious choices. Nonetheless, the ‘I cannot’, of for instance Freudian psychoanalysis, is in his vocabulary transformed into an ‘I refuse’ (Solomon, 2000b).

Shame holds a special role in Sartre’s writing for another reason, namely that it is an emotion oriented towards the own self. Being caught in the act of doing something shameful, there is no separating the self from that act. When I become aware of the presence of another, I become self-conscious, and “it is a shameful apprehension of something and that something is me. Shame therefore realizes an intimate relation of myself to myself” (Sartre, 1956:221) In feeling shame in the gaze of another, I become aware of the other as a subject, and I appear to myself as an object in the gaze of the other (Solomon, 2000d).

Sartre’s main argument is that emotions are ‘magical transformations of the world’ (Sartre, 1948). This is a statement with powerful spatial implications and Sartre’s phenomenology of emotion has recently gained some attention among geographers (eg. Smith, et al., 2011). Emotional responses to things and people in the world become part of not only our perception of them, but of the things and people themselves. A feared object becomes fearful and a treasured souvenir becomes infused with memories – becomes a memento. The grapes of Aesop’s tale didn’t turn from sweet to sour – they took on the bitterness of the fox who couldn’t reach them. By way of emotional response to an object, the object is magically transformed. Different emotions invoke different magic but they are all “tantamount to setting up a magical world by using the body as a means of incantation” (Sartre, 1948:70).

In the case of for instance fear or anger, Sartre suggests that emotions are part of a preparedness for action. As such, fear has an incredibly powerful impact on how we experience the world, and here, the notion of escape becomes especially interesting. While anger prepares us for attack, fear is preparation for flight – to remove oneself from the fearful object: A police car and all the imagined futures an encounter with the authorities may invoke in the context of this thesis, or in Sartre’s example, a fast approaching beast. In the case of the undocumented person, the mere potentiality of a police car behind any street corner may infest the whole environment with the fearful qualities that were originally ascribed only to the car itself.

The most common reactions to intense fear is to either to run away or faint; both, according to Sartre, efficient means of escape. For this argument to make sense, one must remember Sartre’s Cartesian distinction between consciousness and the world. The conscious subject experiencing the fearful beast consists not of body and mind, but of mind alone. By fleeing, the body
carries the resident consciousness away from the situation at great speed; by falling unconscious, the consciousness – by corporeal incantation – removes the situation by obliterating itself. The material world remains the same, but what is experienced has been altered – the consciousness is no longer aware of the fearful situation. In Sartre’s phenomenology, emotions should be understood neither as affective disturbances nor as extraneous elements added to, or painted over, an originally objective and neutral world. Rather, emotions are pre-reflective experiential modes of apprehending the world, where “the emotional subject and the object of the emotion are united in an indissoluble synthesis” (Sartre, 1948:52).

Phenomenology and spatiality

Despite its inherent attention to spatiality, geography did not engage with phenomenology to any greater extent until the 1970s, and was initially mainly interested in human experience of place and interaction with the environment. Feelings of being at home, or of not being at home, have been important themes in phenomenological geography. In *Place and Placelessness*, Edward Relph was interested in how people come to belong in a place, and on the contrary, how they come to feel separate or alienated, and not-at-home. Distinguishing between different types of existential insideness and existential outsideness, he was concerned both with how our attitudes and behaviours contribute to these experiences, as well as the role that the qualities of the environment, built or ‘natural’, play in evoking such feelings (Relph, 1976).

Feelings of being at home or not, which is a substantial theme in this thesis, is an issue of continued fascination and interest, cropping up both within the mobilities turn (Cresswell, 2006) and other postmodern approaches to geography (Wise, 2000). These questions lie close to the core of human experience and existence, and with its focus on intentionality, direction and orientation, phenomenology specifically encourages such inquiries. Sarah Ahmed’s queer engagement with phenomenology develops the notions of orientation and disorientation as key elements in feelings of being or not being at home. Undocumented persons are as migrants far away from ‘home’, but orientation refers to so much more than physical places and material conditions. Exclusion, discrimination or emotional responses to the environment such as fear of detection or deportation greatly influences the ability to orientate oneself, and these are crucial factors in the undocumented mode of being-in-the-world.

This section has established a phenomenological basis from which the theoretical framework of this thesis can develop. Phenomenology is a philosophy and method where spatial relations play a fundamental role, and is thus well suited for geographical research and conceptualization. It is however, as I have argued, rather poorly suited for analysing power structures or
raising political or critical issues, which is perhaps part of the reason for its less pronounced influence on geography during the past decades. However, several interesting and compelling amendments have been made to the phenomenological method, and some of these have become key to the arguments in this thesis.

A critique of phenomenological thought

Critical phenomenology, employed mainly in anthropology (Good, 1994; Desjarlais, 1997; Willen, 2007c), is presented and advocated as a way to conceptualize and describe, not only “what people feel, think, or experience but also grasp how the processes of feeling or experiencing come about through multiple, interlocking interactions” (Desjarlais, 1997:24). In the context of this thesis, this means to go beyond the phenomenological description of undocumentedness and attend also to the highly charged, political, social and discursive forces that contribute to form the lives in that setting (Desjarlais and Throop, 2011). In this case, the movement of attention has rather been from the constraining and forming forces towards the undocumented lifeworld rather than the other way around.

Despite the important similarities between feminist scholarship and phenomenology, prominently the partial, situated perspective, the questioning of the taken for granted and an interest in the everyday (Garko, 1999), their differences – a suspected essentialism and a failure to recognize gender differences, have prevented any major feminist engagement with phenomenology (Fisher, 2000). This last section of Chapter Two engages with the feminist developments and problematizations of embodiment within phenomenology (Moi, 1999; Weiss, 1999; Young, 2005b).

The lived body

The ontological as well as epistemological status of bodies have varied within social science and perhaps especially within feminist scholarship. While the lived body has gained some materiality through some strands of feminist scholarship, other feminist writers have emphasised the social construction of bodies and their discursive qualities (Rose, 2003). The conflict between materiality and meaning, fixity and fluidity, is what makes the body the focus point for so much academic thought, and for such contradictory theoretical agendas. While any reference to the material body is seen by some as invoking essentialist sentiments and constructing bodies as mere objects, others, like Luce Irigary, have taken the (female) body as starting point for theorizing an ontology of fluidity and flux (Davis, 1997; Rose, 2003).

While Merleau-Ponty promoted the body in the traditional Western philosophy from the dwelling place, carrier or prison of the mind, to become the
key medium of human learning and experience, his notion of the lived body is still a featureless existence. Feminist scholars within the phenomenological tradition such as Gail Weiss, Iris Marion Young and Toril Moi have attempted to ‘embody’ the lived body of Merleau-Ponty’s writing. As long as that featureless entity covertly carries the characters of the male ‘master-subject’ (Haraway, 1991), it cannot successfully be employed to describe the experiences of the Other. In the essay *What is a woman?* Moi (1999) appropriates the concept of the lived body for feminist theorizing. She draws on de Beauvoir and reconstitutes the concept of the lived body as a physical body, acting and experiencing in its specific socio-cultural context. While the body is *in* a situation, meaning that the physical capacities of the material body gain meaning only in a cultural context, she argues that in addition, the body *is* a situation. For existentialist theory, situation means the physicality of the compound of facticity and freedom, and the lived body is a fruitful concept for discussing this dialectical relation. Subjectivity is always an embodied relationship and it not only bears the marks of sex, but also of other categories such as race, health or ability. These categorizations take on meaning in the interplay among (situated) subjectivities and cannot be placed outside the realm of meaning (Moi, 1999:59–83). A lived body, the situated medium for experience and being-in-the-world, is an embodied intentional relationship to the world.

Moi’s notion of the lived body does not distinguish between sex and gender or any other nature-culture dichotomy, and her conceptualization is part of a larger critique of the gender/sex divide in feminist and queer theorizing. She argues that the categories of gender, race and ethnicity are shorthand for a set of structures that *position* individuals, well suited for inquiries into structural dynamics such as discrimination or racism, but they are less fruitful in understanding *situated* subjectivity and individual experience. The individual person may live out his/her body in a socio-historical context of the behaviour and expectations of others, but individual identity and experience is better understood as radically pluralized responses and choices within that context, rather than conglomerates of generalized categories of race, class and gender (Young, 2005a).

Merleau-Ponty argues sedimentation and spontaneity to be the two essential aspects of our ‘acquired worlds’. The sedimentation of experiences gives depth and history to subjectivity and he discusses at length the processes of sedimentation in the forming of habits and character, and in orienting oneself in one’s environment (Casey, 1984; Merleau-Ponty, 2002:149-51). In relation to Moi’s lived body, a similar argument can be made concerning the sedimentation of experiences in the corporeal body. Living in a condition so profoundly affecting one’s lifeworld as undocumentedness does, causes changes in how a person relates to the world, but also inscribes physical traces in the body. Neither of these sedimentations should be understood as fixed and inert but rather as collected memories and experiences that inscribe
and reinscribe in all aspects of our beings. Bodies are fundamentally ambiguous, at once a positioned physical presence and a situated medium for experience, interacting with other human and non-human bodies. This embodied interaction is what Gail Weiss has termed intercorporeality (Weiss, 1999).

The theorization of space inscribing on bodies has mainly concerned itself with the body as text and what those inscriptions may communicate. It has engaged less with the processes those markings suggest. The relations between the positions we hold in society and the marks they leave in and on our bodies, should not be understood as deterministic, but rather as patterned (Rose, 1993). Susan Bordo has argued for more material bodies in feminist scholarship and calls attention to the contexts and experiences that make inscriptions as well as the effects that come thereof. She discusses anorexia in terms of culture crystallizing in (mainly) women’s bodies – ideals and phenomena of culture taking physical form in peoples lives (Bordo, 1993). Moi’s lived body is a fruitful development of Merleau-Ponty’s original conceptualization that invites not only interesting analyses of embodied subjectivity, but also allows for a potent analysis of how culture and power structures physically materialize as markings on bodies. In a similar manner to Bordo, I argue that undocumentedness as a legal, political and social condition and a mode of being-in-the-world, patterns experience and inscription in certain ways, crystallizing in, as well as on, people’s bodies.
This is a methods chapter, and as such it provides a methodological meta-narrative of this research project, discussing the learning process through practical, ethical and epistemological issues and considerations that have arisen along the way. A methods chapter is always a bit awkwardly placed in a thesis. It stands outside the main argument as a disconnected island in the chain of chapters, yet it is at the same time tightly connected to, and a necessary key for, all of them.

I begin by giving an overview of the guiding principles and general development of the fieldwork and describe and enumerate the methods and materials used in the project. I then continue by discussing the qualities of the ‘field’ and of ‘fieldwork’, and in that context, discuss some of the present epistemological issues. Key themes in this section are the role of the researcher and relationships with project participants, the paradoxes built into participatory observation and the importance of representation and the writing process. In the final section I consider the thesis as a finished product and the responsibilities that suggests.

Constructing mystery

Johan Asplund (1970) discusses social science in terms of creating and solving mysteries. Academic endeavours are not merely chains of events where one sets up questions that are eventually answered by the data collected for that purpose. Instead, rather like in a detective story, a riddle or rebus lie at the core of the investigation, and what questions, what methods and what materials are needed to solve the mystery are determined along the way. When working with detection, both questions and answers have to be found. Following the same line of thought, Mats Alvesson and Dan Kärreman suggest that empirical material should be thought of as a discussion partner instead of building blocks to support or reject theses (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2007). Viewed as a discussion partner, the empirical material is an aid in questioning, doubting and problematizing one’s own preconceptions and approach to research and influences how the research process develops.

A mystery approach to research requires an open attitude towards both theoretical frameworks and methods used. In certain senses this approach resembles grounded theory, where the empirical material throughout the
research is allowed to guide the continued research. However, in contrast to
the naïve fantasy sometimes implied in grounded theory, the notion that
openness is achieved by being ‘non-theoretical’ (eg. Glaser and Strauss,
1967), Alvesson and Kärreman argue for omnivorous reading and viewing
one’s material through many different theoretical lenses.

To investigate the mystery of the interactions and relations between un-
documented persons and the state, I began fieldwork at an early stage of the
research project, contacting different organizations, activists and state insti-
tutions that were likely to be in contact with undocumented persons. This
reconnaissance work went on for a few months and those interviewees were
the first witnesses to be heard in the investigation. Through their stories, I
began to know the metaphorical crime scene, the weapons used, and finally
narrow down the field of research to find the murder victim – the undocu-
mented person, dead to the world.2

The empirical material for this investigation can roughly be divided into
two categories corresponding to the two aspects of undocumentedness this
project aims to explore: the construction of the undocumented position on
the one hand, and as a situation on the other. The two endeavours com-
enced simultaneously but the initial description and representation of my
methods and empirical material is divided along the lines of these two unde-
takings. The fieldwork was undertaken during the period from spring 2008
and summer 2010, and before embarking on a more detailed discussion of
the methods used and material analysed, I list and roughly enumerate below
the types and quantity of the empirical material gathered.

- ‘Pilot interviews’ (6)
- Structured phone interviews (in two cases via email) with county
council administrators and politicians (21)
- Semi-structured interviews with hospital administrators (4)
- Semi-structured interviews with medical professionals (14)
- Visits to volunteer-clinics and observations at their meetings and
opening hours (7)
- Semi-structured interviews with NGOs working with undocu-
mented persons (5)
- Participatory observation in a sanctuary for undocumented per-
sons (circa 60 days)
- Semi-structured and unstructured interviews with undocumented
persons/families (10)
- Participation in Papperslösa Stockholm’s demonstrations (circa
10)

2 In this context, ‘dead to the world’ refers to Hannah Arendt’s claim that he/she who lives
without ability to speech or action is literally dead to the world – “it has ceased to be a human
life because it is no longer lived among men” (Arendt, 1958:176).
Exploring the construction of undocumentedness

States often emerge as unified entities in studies of migration or migrants’ experiences – they are the containers between which migrants move. States also interact with other states on the international arena, formulating policies and strategies to impede or facilitate movement over their boundaries. This tendency to equate societies with nation-states and to normalize the global inter-state regime is what is generally called methodological nationalism, a tendency that, according to Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller, “undermined more than a century of migration studies” (2003:576). By taking nations and nation-states as givens, they are also reinforced by the research criticizing those phenomena.

However, in relation to international migration, state borders are what define and make visible those movements. State legislation and policy constitute the rules of the migration-game, framing the experiences of international migrants (De Genova, 2002). In the European Union, power and influence have, during the past decade, been increasingly transferred to the supranational levels, but regulations still differ substantially between member states. The national is still a necessary level of analysis when dealing with phenomena defined by state level regulations. What is important however is to not treat states as unified, rationally ruled entities, dissociated from the everyday acts and decisions that constitute it. Treating the state as one unit camouflages the rivalling interests among political parties as well as between administrative bodies (Boswell, 2007; Coleman, 2008), the agency of individuals in policy making (Zincone, 2006) and the grinding bureaucracy behind state action (Mountz, 2010).

Power takes different shapes at different scales. Feminist methodologies, embodied and situated (Hyndman, 2004), have been specifically aimed to uncover the everyday practices that make up the state (Smith, 2005). By shifting the scale of state analysis from national and international relations to the finer scales of institutions and individuals, it is possible to reveal processes, relationships and experiences otherwise obscured (Mountz, 2004). While keeping in mind that undocumentedness and deportability ultimately originate in law (De Genova, 2002) and law-making (Foucault, 1991b), this study follows in the embodied, feminist tradition and hones in on the everyday practices of state institutions in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the undocumented position.

In order to understand how undocumentedness is constructed, produced and reproduced as a legal and socio-political position, I have inquired into the legal delineations of ‘undocumented’, and traced this legal definition (or the lack thereof) and its repercussions in administration and practice. In this manner, I investigate two aspects of the state: the state as a jurisdiction produced and reproduced through governance, and the state as a set of institutions made up by people and their everyday activities. Health care is chosen
as an example sector in order to provide a more detailed account of the bordering processes involved.

In the case of health care, it is important to note that apart from national legislation, there can be, and are, regional and local level regulations. Some county councils [landsting]\(^3\) have decided to provide health care for undocumented persons on other terms than those stipulated by law. To gain a fuller knowledge of the political and administrative processes in the formulation and implementation of these policies, I performed phone interviews with representatives of the 21 county councils (in two cases the interviews were conducted via e-mail) and went through their proceedings from the meetings where the issue was discussed. These phone interviews were mainly conducted with county council civil servants responsible for the public investigation of the policy in question. In the counties where the issue was not yet raised, I interviewed civil servants or county commissioners [landstingsråd] with responsibility for related issues. In two cases the interviews took place via e-mail. These phone-interviews were of a structured questionnaire-type and were rather brief.

A number of hospitals, working independently from their county councils, formed their own policies and guidelines about undocumented persons’ access to health care. They have taken an active part in the debate and also influenced the decisions made both in and outside of their respective counties. I contacted two of these hospitals. At Ersta Hospital in Stockholm, I interviewed the director (at the time), and the (former) head doctor, both of them playing important roles in discussions about implementation of guidelines. At Sahlgrenska University Hospital (henceforth Sahlgrenska Hospital) in Gothenburg, I interviewed the (former) head doctor who initiated the debate and was responsible for the development of the new policy. I also interviewed a nurse at the Ethics Centre at Sahlgrenska Hospital, where many of the issues resulting from this policy are administered. Those interviews were semi-structured and detailed on the issues concerning the origin, development and implications of these policies.

These interviews resulted in, among other things, a compilation and summary of county council policies and guidelines (Sigvardsdotter, 2009). The first of these policies were devised in 2006, and the processes of formulating and passing them were still underway in many counties at the time of my phone interviews in the autumn of 2009. After that, several counties have either formulated new policies or amended their old ones, and the compilation has been updated by others and myself in close collaboration (Sandberg and Fryknäs, 2010; Sigvardsdotter, 2012). At the time of my interviews, this

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\(^3\) The county council [landsting] is a regional level government, responsible for mainly, but not solely, health care provision. I will from now on use ‘county’ and ‘county council’ interchangeably. For a fuller explanation of this division of responsibilities and administration, see chapter five.
issue was relatively unheard of and it was difficult to find any information online. At the time of write up and final update of this list, policies were, in most counties, readily available on the county councils’ webpages.

Focusing on the practices including and or excluding undocumented persons in health care situations, I performed fourteen semi-structured interviews with health professionals: eight doctors, five nurses and one dentist. All of these interviews were performed with people who had first hand experience of offering health care to undocumented persons, either in a volunteer clinic, in their normal work setting, or both. The majority of them, but not all, had mainly positive experiences of providing health care to undocumented patients. It was important for me to speak to doctors and nurses with varying experiences of such meetings to hear different views on the matter, as well as the reasons and experiences behind those views. The majority of the formal interviews took place at their workplace or at an NGO-clinic, one in their home and one in a public place. I also attended, and gave a short presentation, at a seminar for GPs (general practitioners) on health care for undocumented persons. There I had the opportunity to listen to and informally discuss these issues with practicing doctors and nurses with less experience of offering care to undocumented patients.

In addition to these interviews, I have been in contact with the five volunteer clinics providing health care services to Sweden’s undocumented population. I conducted formal, semi-structured interviews with representatives for all but one of them. I was present at two clinics’ opening hours, and at another, I attended their planning meeting. I was also invited to several meetings where representatives for all clinics have gathered to share experiences and plan opinion-building strategies. These activities, occurring over the course of my two and a half years of fieldwork, have given me solid insight into the workings of their activities, their struggles and their strategies.

Exploring undocumentedness as situation

Undocumented migrants are by definition a group difficult to reach for research or other purposes. Not only are they un-registered and thus a ‘hidden population’ (Salganik and Heckathorn, 2004) but their very presence depends on concealment from authorities. For this reason, formalized strategies are generally ill suited to find respondents in this group (Paspalanova, 2006; Bloch and Sigona, 2009). The issue of access in research with undocumented persons is also often described as difficult and time consuming. It is often resolved after long periods of unsuccessful attempts with the researcher gaining the trust of one key person who then vouches for their trustworthi-

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4 The volunteer clinics generally fall within the definition of Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs). I use the words volunteer-clinic and NGO-clinic interchangeably.
ness to the rest of the community (Staring, 2009; Kalir, 2010). In my case, the task proved less difficult than I expected. Through the organizations and individual activists I contacted in the pilot component of the fieldwork, I was able to reach various networks of undocumented persons. I was introduced to the network Papperslösa Stockholm and three nuns who ran a sanctuary for undocumented persons, and these contacts seemed to lend me some credibility among many undocumented persons. On the whole, I have seldom met with any particular distrust. Through these organizations, I also managed to diversify my initial contacts with undocumented persons, and the many failed attempts have not been too problematic. The different channels have still provided me with contacts to undocumented persons with diverse backgrounds.

The origin of undocumented persons in Sweden at any given time is mainly influenced by conflicts in the world, since a large share of them consists of rejected asylum seekers. Due to protracted asylum processes, many originate in regions where the conflicts are long since over. Journalistic accounts indicate that undocumented migrants in Sweden tend to mingle mainly within their ethnic or national groups. Undocumented persons working in the shadow labour market are as an example often employed by their nationals with residence permits (Mattsson, 2008). It is a reasonable assumption therefore that general conditions and situations may vary between the various ethnic or other types of networks, and although I am not aiming for statistical representativeness, I have strived to meet undocumented persons of varying backgrounds. The most common origins of the undocumented persons in my study are the Balkans, former Soviet republics and Sub-Saharan Africa with single persons originating from other regions. From my interviews, statistics and other sources (eg. Fresk and Ganslandt, 2009; Gavanas, 2010), I am aware that there are substantial numbers of people of other nationalities. Many people from the Middle East, Latin America, Mongolia and China are living undocumented in Sweden, but I have had little contact with people from these regions.

This component of the fieldwork consisted of a mix of semi-structured interviews, unstructured interviews, informal talks and participatory observation. I conducted eight semi-structured interviews of varying depth with persons who either were or had been undocumented, in and around Stockholm and Gothenburg. I also accompanied one of my activist contacts when they were visiting two families on the verge of becoming undocumented. On these occasions there were no possibilities for proper interviewing, but I was present when they discussed their cases and their situation, and was able to present myself and ask a few questions. Over about one and a half years, I participated in demonstrations organized by Papperslösa Stockholm outside the parliament as often as I could. At these demonstrations I was able to come in contact with and talk to people, both undocumented and formerly undocumented, for informal talks and formal interviews.
In addition, I spent time in a convent where three nuns ran a sanctuary for undocumented persons. Around 35 undocumented persons stay there at any given time. The nuns are protestant, Sisters of the Holy Spirit, and the convent is situated quite close to Uppsala. I was able to visit often, staying for shorter or longer periods of time, ranging from day-visits and weekends to periods of up to two weeks. I was accepted by the sisters of the convent as a general helper-outer and child-minder, but with the clear understanding of my double aim in helping them out as well as doing fieldwork for my research project. During the time I spent there, I had ample opportunities to explain my project, ask questions and spend time with the people staying there, as well as helping out with shopping and cooking. I have fieldnotes from just about 60 days in the sanctuary.

In total, I have been in contact with fifteen families with or without children and thirteen individuals who either are, have been, or are just about to become undocumented. Some of them were undocumented at our initial meetings and have gained residence permits during the course of my knowing them. I have had in-depth discussions, sometimes on one occasion, sometimes several times with approximately half of them. The vast majority of the undocumented persons I have met have been in Sweden for long periods of time, from two or three years up to ten years. Most of them spoke Swedish fairly well, and all but three of my interviews and conversations were conducted in Swedish. Two interviews were conducted in Russian with experienced interpreters and one interview was conducted in French. My French is not advanced enough to conduct an interview on my own, but I can understand written and spoken French fairly well. The latter interview was therefore organized by hiring a French-speaking assistant to whom I explained my project and the general themes and questions of the interview. I was present when she conducted the interview in French, and we were both able to ask follow-up questions and engage in small talk before and after. Afterwards she transcribed the recording in French that I, with my limited French knowledge, was able to read. On the whole, this was a well functioning, albeit time consuming arrangement.

Fieldwork as epistemological event

In the previous section, the empirical material and fieldwork this research draws on were described in a rather matter-of-fact way, enumerating types of material, number of interviews and number of project participants. The aim of this section is to discuss in more detail the processes and events of meaning making in relation to the empirical material that comprise that fieldwork. After a note on the nature of ‘the field’, I discuss these less matter-of-fact facets of fieldwork under the rubrics Situated knowledge, Inter-views and Participation and observation.
The ‘field’ in fieldwork

Fieldwork has several different connotations, but generally refers to the collection of ‘primary data’ in a specific site, spatially and temporally separated from ‘the rest of the world’ (Bosco and Moreno, 2009). After a certain time, the researcher can leave the field and commence the processing and analysis of the collected data. This definition has been problematized by migration scholars, arguing for a transnationalizing of the field, defined in terms of flows and networks, rather than as delineated by time and space (Lin and Yeoh, 2011). This is a move from the spatially bounded field to a more fluid, socially conceptualized field – a shift equally logical and necessary in the context of research dealing with mobile persons. It is not exclusively migration scholars, however, who have remarked on the fluid and always complex social spaces that research conjures up (Till, 2001). Fieldwork seeps into the everyday life of the researcher to more or less the same degree as that fieldwork is part of the everyday lives of project participants. The field is not a neat and tidy ‘there and then’ (Hyndman, 2001), but consists of relations to other people, other places and other things, and is internalized and sedimented in one’s body like any other experience. I had no previous engagement or relations to asylum advocacy groups and organizations working with undocumented persons. Such relations were gradually initiated during fieldwork and they can therefore be said to have a distinct beginning, but the same cannot be said about their termination, neither with organizations nor project participants. Not only do project participants sometimes show up on one’s doorstep or on the commuter train on a gloomy November day, but they show up in one’s mind, in one’s dreams and in one’s emotional prism. In addition, events and experiences relating to other aspects of one’s life intrude on fieldwork. Sometimes this happens in disrupting or disturbing ways, but can just as likely make sense of what is taking place in front of one’s eyes.

My fieldwork with undocumented persons has spatially been very close to my own home and university. The sanctuary in which I have spent much time is within biking distance from where I live, and I have, except in winter, been going there by bike. The demonstrations outside the parliament building are a short train ride away. Interviews and other research related interactions have been scattered throughout my everyday life, just as my everyday life and my own private matters, to some extent, have intermingled in the time-space and relations of the ‘field’. In my case, this has been of both positive and negative. While some difficult events in my life during the past years have disrupted and disarticulated my fieldwork, they have also deepened my relationships with some of the project participants. The fact that I had ‘real problems’ that they could relate to, despite my Swedish citizenship, deepened our connections in some respects, and made me a more likely recipient of their trust and confidence.
I argue that in addition to its spatial and temporal connotations, ‘the field’ must be understood as both defined by, and include, embodied and social interconnections with the people, places and things (Weiss, 1999) that are involved in the research learning process.

Situated knowledge and the position of the researcher

The focus on the subject knower has a long and varied history, from Protagoras’ ‘man is the measure of all things’, and Descartes’ ‘I think therefore I am’ to phenomenology and feminist situated knowledge. The embodied situated knower of Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology, discussed in the previous chapter, has a close relationship to feminist epistemology where Dorothy Smith argues the body to be “the place from within which the consciousness of the knower begins, the location of her nullpoint” (Smith, 1987:88).

Location is a term used to designate a point in Euclidian space; it is an absolute point on a grid. Position and situation, on the other hand, are both relative terms. In the previous chapter, I discussed how subjects are situated and objects are positioned. A situation is the constituting origin from whence everything else is understood to be positioned. Situation therefore, and situated knowledge, refers to the partiality and subjectivity of all knowing; that there are truths rather than a truth. The focus on subjectivity in both phenomenological and feminist epistemology allows only for partial knowledge – the subject is the knower, and knowledge must always be situated. The knower here does not refer to the researcher knower only, but to every subject as a knower of his/her world. Position on the contrary, and in this context the position of the researcher, refers to the relative positions of researcher and researched, in terms of gender, age, ethnicity and so forth. These positions are products of wider social structures, and influence, among other things, the power relations between researcher and interviewees or participants, as well as whether the researcher can be considered to be an insider, an outsider, or both.

While the phenomenological conceptualization of situated knowledge has an ontological and epistemological origin, feminist scholarship originally argued for situated knowledges for political, albeit epistemologically grounded reasons. It is argued that the un-locatable, disembodied ‘view from no-where’ has been a powerful political tool for the majority producing universally true knowledge, covertly from their dominant viewpoint. And when I say their, that is not to exclude myself entirely from that majority, indeed I belong to many privileged categories – it is merely the simplest way to express that I am not a master subject (Haraway, 1991). Feminist scholarship may be understood as part of the critical scholarship project, but in contrast to critical research, which displaces itself from the centre and scrutinizes from a distance the knowledge and knowledge production of the majority, “parasitic on that which it addresses” (Ó Tuathail, 1996:68), feminist schol-
arship endeavours to reform, displace and diffuse that said centre altogether. By suggesting that we do sciences from below (Harding, 2008) to “produce different knowledge and to produce knowledge differently” (Lather, 2001:200), feminist scholars strives to transform traditional sciences to become less triumphant, more responsible and more aware of social and political contexts.

The most important feminist amendment to phenomenological situatedness is however the diversification of the learning lived body (McCall, 2009). While Merleau-Ponty’s lived body is universal and pre-personal, the knowing subject of the feminist scholarship is by necessity knowing subjects in the plural (Weiss, 1999). Different persons have different embodied experiences depending on their varying abilities, sizes, colours of skin and how those traits are understood by others (Longhurst, 2009a). In other words, the feminist embodied knower is not only situated, but also positioned in relation to others in his/her world, and gender is but one dimension of that position. Other categories into which people can be sorted, such as ethnicity, class and sexual orientation – or as in this project: residential status – all influence how we understand and are understood by the people around us. In relation to the undocumented persons I have met throughout this research project, my gender, age and ethnicity have naturally been important traits by which some of my fieldwork has been facilitated and some obstructed. As a woman it was for instance, as perhaps expected, easier for me to speak to women than had I been a man. Yet to some extent, I would argue that my position as a person with Swedish citizenship has been a trait that in many cases has almost completely overshadowed many of my other personal traits.

With situatedness and positionality as key ingredients, feminist methodology argues for an inside-outside perspective, originating in the feminist notion of women as Other, as ‘outsiders within’ the dominant institutions of society (Harding, 1991). The half insider, half outsider has a clarity of vision that the insider can never have, yet the knowledge of the context that the outsider will have to take great pains to get. As such, the inside-outside position is well suited for scrutinizing society from a critical angle. Donna Haraway on the other hand, writes that the inside-outside position of the knower is an original property of the subject: “[the] knowing self is partial in all its guises, never finished, while simply there and original; it is always constructed and stitched together imperfectly, and therefore able to join with another, to see together without claiming to be another” (Haraway, 1991:193).

The inside-outside perspective can either be understood as the only possible position, as Haraway argues, or as a position to specifically aim for as a researcher. The relative distance between a Swedish citizen-position and the undocumented position is substantial. For a person with a Swedish passport, it is difficult to subject oneself – one’s own body, personality and social situation to the set of contingencies that play upon undocumented individu-
als. This circumstance was pinpointed by one of the women living in the sanctuary. I was explaining to her why I was there and what I was doing – that I was trying to understand what it is to live undocumented. She exclaimed:

‘How could you understand what it is like to be undocumented? How can you understand our problems? You have your own apartment and a residence permit!’ I got a little embarrassed and tried to explain that it is indeed very difficult, but that I am doing my best, and if I can understand a little bit of it I can tell others, ‘because they have even less of a chance to understand since they are not here and they don’t know you.’ She paused, and eventually nodded: ‘Well, of course, you can ask me about my problems and you can ask her about her problems… yes… yes. Of course. Ok, that is fine.’ (Fieldnotes, 24th April 2009).

The limbo inherent in the undocumented situation cannot be artificially produced and I could not experience that in its entirety – when I spent time in the sanctuary, I was there by choice, they by necessity – but as my project participant also remarked, that doesn’t mean that it is impossible or meaningless to try to understand. Our partial, unfinished and imperfectly stitched selves may connect and understand also when we do not share a specific experience. Instead, events and experiences they have related may resonate with experiences sedimented in me, leading me to a better or deeper understanding of their experiences.

Such resonance can play a crucial part both in the field in connecting with project participants, as well as in the post-fieldwork analysis of the material. All parts of the fieldwork for this project have generated text, in the form of transcripts and fieldnotes, and read-through and sorting of notes and quotes were managed with the help of a Kindle e-reader. The notes and transcripts were categorized and imported to the e-reader, which allows the reader to highlight text and write brief notes that are anchored in the original document. All highlighted text and all notes are automatically copied to a separate text document. This way, I was able to read through the whole text several times with different themes of varying specificity in mind, such as ‘tactics to deal with being undocumented’, ‘negotiation of borders’ or ‘methods issues’. In this manner, I could collect notes and quotes for the different readings in different documents. Repeated readings deepened my understanding of the material and gave rise to new themes, generating new readings. Other events, unrelated to the research, also prompted new readings of the text. The themes that make up the core argument of chapter seven of this thesis – alienation and disorientation – were for a long time invisible to me. However, losing loved ones during the later parts of my fieldwork and after it was finished, made these themes stand out clearly. My own experiences of loss and disorientation resonated with what I found to be powerful underlying themes in my notes and transcripts.
Inter-viewing

There is a wide range of types of interviews employed in qualitative research and the array of interviews undertaken in this research project covers almost the whole span; from short structured phone interviews with county council administrators, to the standard semi-structured interviews with health professionals, to repeated informal conversations with undocumented persons – I applied different types of interviews to meet different research needs. The interviews reflect different types of activities and different types of material, and demand attention to different ‘interviewer effects’ and dynamics between interviewer and interviewee (Longhurst, 2009b). At the bottom of all of them however, lies the clue that the word inter-view means ‘seeing together’. This indicates the relational aspect of this method; interviewing is an interpersonal learning process with negotiation and intersubjectivity as key features in the joint meaning making.

In the phone interviews regarding the existence and content of local regulations, I had decided to use the term papperslösa [undocumented] to denote undocumented persons, thus using a vocabulary with less ideological baggage than other words available. Part of the reason for its lesser political connotations was its relative newness in the public debate, and it was perhaps not surprising that many interviewees didn’t know the term. In a few cases I had to yield to ask about gömda flyktingar [hidden refugees] or illegala [illegal immigrants] in order for interviewees to understand my question. Nonetheless I still think papperslösa was the right choice of word in these interviews. In most cases, the mere fact that I asked about such policies suggested to the interviewees that I was an activist, indirectly criticizing them for not providing care to undocumented persons. This became especially evident in how several of these civil servants repeatedly ensured me that undocumented persons in their region definitely could access the health care services they needed – something that they could not possibly know. I am convinced that this tendency to attempt to justify themselves and ensure that they were doing ‘the right thing’ in their counties would have been even stronger had I initially introduced a discourse heavier laden with notions of victimization.  

In the other kinds of interviews, this issue was of less consequence, and other more complex, considerations come into focus. In interviewing vulnerable individuals – persons with limited autonomy and possibilities to maintain independence and make personal life-choices (Moore and Miller, 1999) – methods literature often stresses the importance of building trusting relationships and choosing ‘safe’ or comfortable environments for interview encounters. A common assumption is that what can be considered comforta-

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5 I discuss in greater detail the discourses relating to different terminologies (in Swedish) in chapter four. For more, see Holgersson (2011).
ble or ‘safe’, both concerning interview environment and interview topics is fairly stable (Renzetti and Lee, 1993). This is an assumption that can be useful in some cases, but should not be taken for granted.

Especially with undocumented persons who have gone through an asylum process, one must be careful how interviews are set up and conducted. Normally, undocumented persons will have been interviewed repeatedly by representatives from the Migration Board, interrogated and had their stories and trustworthiness assessed and questioned. Having resorted to becoming undocumented means that they were not granted refugee status in that process, and thus belong to the group deemed ‘not trustworthy’ or ‘unworthy’ by the authorities. However, the bounded, somewhat formal interview situation can sometimes be a comfort for both parties – for the interviewer because it is ruled by protocol to a greater degree than other less formal research methods are; for the interviewees, because it is an established format where they can know what to expect. Similar to Nina Solomin (Solomin, 2005) who interviewed ‘boat people’ in the Canary Islands, I found that some persons expected to be interviewed, or at least that questions be asked in an interview-like setting.

Methods textbooks also often advise that the first questions in an interview should be of a simple, warming-up kind in order to establish a relationship and not introduce difficult subjects in the beginning. Although the discussion concerning what sensitive or threatening topics are has bearing on interviewing and the interview experience, the assumption that there is a clear distinction between what is safe and what is threatening is erroneous (Gunaratnam, 2003). I wanted to avoid interview situations that would remind the interviewees of the interviews at the Migration Board, partly for their peace of mind, but also for the sake of what kind of answers I would get. A person who has travelled far and or fled from difficult or horrific circumstances may have long and sometimes painful responses to general questions about background. I also didn’t want to put anyone in a situation where they would feel that they had to justify their case, and in the sit-down type interviews, I therefore focused the interview questions on the time they had spent in Sweden.

To refrain from asking about people’s background (questions like where do you come from and how and why did you come to Sweden) was challenging however – it was an almost conditioned behaviour in me to ask about a person’s background in the beginning of an interview. It took me one or two attempts to realize that questions about ‘general background’ were unsuitable for warming-up, either because background questions tended to take over the whole interview, or because they were too sensitive. This may be partly related to participants’ earlier experiences of interviews, with the Migration Board and or with media. Asylum seekers are required and expected to reveal horror stories of their lives to justify their presence. The
strongest currency they have is ‘stories of suffering’ and detailed accounts of traumatic experiences (Willen, 2010).

The interviews with undocumented persons were conducted in different settings and in most cases in places suggested by the interviewee. It is generally assumed that the interviewee can or will be more open hearted in an interview in their home, because it is ‘safer’. However, a public place with its noise and bustle may just as well be what makes for a more ‘safe’ place for an interviewee who does not want to be open hearted (Gunaratnam, 2003:172). The depth of the interviews with undocumented persons shifted with the type of interview setting, and in some cases it was clear to me that the choice of a public place was deliberate to avoid certain types of personal questions. The number of semi-structured interviews with undocumented persons was limited however – the greater share of my contacts with them was through the less structured and more long-term participant observation discussed in the next section.

Participation and observation

Ethnography is an artisanal practice that involves interpretive and political choices. On the one hand, the researcher merges into the environment, relaxing into conversations, friendships, and interactions and participating in everyday activities. On the other hand, the observer is mentally racing to register the significance of what is occurring and to conceptualize strategies to deepen that understanding (Bourgois and Schonberg, 2009:12).

The very combination of the two words participation and observation conveys the paradoxical kernel of the insider-outsider position of the situated researcher: simultaneously participating in whatever is going on, yet constantly observing and reflecting on those events one is participating in, a process often problematic and uncomfortable. Before embarking on an interpretation of interpretations in participatory fieldwork, a clarification of the relations between participatory observation and ethnography is of pertinence.

In the methods literature, participant observation is closely connected to, yet distinct from, ethnography. The former denotes the research method where the researcher is “taking part and continually reflecting on what is happening /…/ examining what people do, rather than only what they say or what they say they do” (Walsh, 2009:77). Ethnographic methods refer to a wider research approach that may include participant observation, but also other qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews and auto-photography. Ethnography, in its traditional meaning, refers to research aiming to “describe the lives of people other than ourselves, with an accuracy and sensitivity honed by detailed observation and prolonged first-hand experience” (Ingold, 2008:69). This thesis is not an ethnography in the latter sense, but an ethnography of a concept – undocumentedness – making use of a variety
of ethnographic methods. The part of my fieldwork discussed under this heading is a mix of observations and informal conversations at the NGO-clinics’ planning meetings and opening hours, participation in *Papperslösa Stockholm’s* demonstrations outside the Swedish parliament building, and the longer and shorter periods I stayed in the nunnery-sanctuary, which could be called participant observation. The observations at the volunteer clinics and the participation in demonstrations played a lesser part in my fieldwork. Those social situations were less complex than my engagements in the sanctuary, and I will therefore discuss them with less detail.

Regarding the volunteer clinics, the variety of types of information – interviews and observation in various settings – not only provided me with a rich picture of their activities and efforts, but also became an interesting exercise in piecing together narratives of the same phenomenon from different perspectives. Interviewing a representative or director of a clinic, then speaking to doctors directly engaged in the clinic’s activities and finally being present, both at clinics’ planning meetings and opening hours, gave a rich illustration of their activities and challenges. Further, it also constituted a practical example of the progression of complexity achieved from applying different research methods.

The demonstrations were important events for the people who gathered there, and played a part in building my credibility among the participants and people they knew. Also, meeting undocumented persons in public spaces drew my attention to characteristics of undocumentedness I had not become aware of in private settings, although those private conversations may have occurred in a public place. The paradoxical qualities of the undocumented condition, of being simultaneously absent and present are much less distinct in private situations. Only when we entered public space together did the contradictory features of their presence become evident to me. It was thus not the public place as a setting for fieldwork that made a difference, but rather the public space they created by speaking and acting there.

In the case with the sanctuary, I stayed there, taking part in everyday activities and spaces, food and routines, and this sitting, walking, talking and being bored in each others company gave us ample opportunities to get to know each other and discuss everything from here-and-now, to the sky, to the abyss. One key advantage of not doing only formal interviews but also spending much time with them was the possibilities for repeated informal conversations, and being able to let the topics of discussion develop at a pace chosen by the project participants rather than by me. Many conversations and discussions arose from the circumstances, and would never have come up in a planned, sit-down interview.

In a field situation like the sanctuary it is easy, at least initially, to be obsessed with group acceptance and signs of recognition and belonging. I am not alone in carefully recording in my field notes every sign or ‘evidence’ of being accepted and trusted – Amanda Coffey makes a fitting parallel to the
early period of a romance (Coffey, 1999). My indiscriminate writing down of every detail that occurred because I didn’t know what would be important later on was, I found, also not unheard of (Kleinman and Copp, 1993). While staying in the sanctuary, I devised writing routines where I spent the majority of the day with the others in the common spaces, and depending on what passed, I would make quick detours by my room a couple of times a day to write down key words and quotes. These key words I could then use as a guide when writing up my notes in the evening when I, like everybody else, had retired to my room. There are many ways of approaching fieldnote-writing, and the problems and issues related to ‘open jotting’ versus ‘private jotting’ are many, complex and ambiguous and are recurring subjects of discussion (Emerson, et al., 1995:ch. 2). As for me, writing notes was a private affair. They knew well enough why I was there, but I found it would be awkward and disruptive if I kept pulling out a notebook to write down what they were saying or doing. I would definitely find it intimidating if I were in their position.

The nuns were the primary gatekeepers of the sanctuary. They welcomed me and presented me as a combined researcher, general helper-outer and child-minder, and being of assistance to them became an important part and reason for my return visits. As time passed I became a known face and a trusted extra grown-up for the children, who in a way became my secondary gatekeepers. The first two weeks I almost only played with the children and organized activities and games for and with them. Through their trust, I slowly gained the parents’ trust, and had time to explain to them individually and in more detail what I was doing there. I had very little contact with the men in the beginning, and the family relations and dynamics were important factors influencing to whom I could talk to. With time I realized just how important my relations with the children were for my relations with the parents. Not only as a natural subject of discussion and potential conflict, but also for me to demonstrate myself as a trustworthy person. A family that arrived to the sanctuary in the middle of my fieldwork soon adopted me as their friend and discussion partner, saying, “well we see that the children like you very much, we see that they trust you, then we do too!” In one case, with parents who had an autistic son and a very shy daughter, the importance of my relations with the children reflected extra visibly in my relations with adults. In the beginning, the two children showed no interest in me, and I never had any opportunities to speak to their parents. However, one evening on the trampoline, after over a year of repeated visits, the boy befriended me. While the underlying reasons probably are manifold and complex, I knew that our new friendship was significant when I, the same evening and in the following days, had several in-depth conversations with his mother.

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6Fieldnotes, 25th April, 2009
Playing and talking a lot with the children as I have done, provided me with information about both the goings on in the sanctuary and in resident families, and I have consistently chosen to leave those things out from my fieldnotes and research.

Writing and representation

After having described and discussed the methods and materials of this research project, I now move on to the writing process. This section is concerned with writing and representation as learning processes and as analytical tools, and with language as a facilitator and barrier. I begin by commenting on the terminology concerning undocumented persons and what considerations and choices I have made in that respect, followed by a discussion about the political, ethical and epistemological issues concerning anonymity and representation of project participants. The final subsection covers writing as a learning process.

Terminology

Undocumented migration is a topic where the terminology is highly politicized and consequently rather varied, confused and ambivalent – in research as well as in media and public debates (Willen, 2010). What is more, depending on how undocumentedness is defined – legally, politically or experientially, its limits vary considerably. Even in its strictly legal definition, ‘undocumented’ is a rather fleeting category often defined in tautological terms and is subject to frequent changes (Guild, 2004). It is difficult, if not impossible, to find an unproblematic label for such a heterogeneous group, and any choice of term needs justification. In this section I discuss and explain my choice of words.

The English and Swedish terms and discourses concerning undocumented persons have many similarities but also some important differences. Throughout the research project I have used the Swedish term papperslös and the English term undocumented. Papperslös was the term used by most of the organizations I had contact with in the initial stages of the research, including the Papperslösa Stockholm network. It is a direct translation of the French sans-papier. There is no requirement to carry identification in Sweden, making the term somewhat foreign to the context, but I found it to be the best alternative. The fact that it is a term used by the group themselves and their compatriots is not in itself a guarantee for it being a self-determined or ‘good’ term. An example is tourist, the term used by the Turkish population in Rotterdam for their undocumented compatriots (Staring, 2009). For a researcher, such a term may be practicable in fieldwork and its
origin and logic are interesting in themselves, but its connotations of transience and leisure are probably far from describing the ‘tourists’ experiences of their situation. By my choice of words, I made a conscious decision to support the NGOs and the Papperslösa Stockholm movement in their cause of shifting the discourse away from the prevailing term gömd [hidden].

In English academic jargon, the terms available to describe the undocumented position range from illegal, irregular and undocumented to clandestine, deportable and non-citizen. These terms are often used as synonyms, despite their varying points of reference such as law, crime, survival tactics or identity documents (Lund Thomsen, 2010). Calling people ‘illegal migrants’ reduces them to the irregular or illegal nature of an activity they at one point (may) have undertaken, and reproduce the imagery of crime and ‘bogus refugees’ (De Genova, 2002; Schuster, 2011). There are still, however, relevant reasons for using the term ‘illegal’. Sarah Willen does so to use the language of the ‘illegal’ persons themselves, and to use the term that best describes their experience of that condition (Willen, 2007c). Shahram Khosravi has done the same in the Swedish context (Khosravi, 2010). Several of the other terms in use are relevant and do a good job of explaining the undocumented position or situation. I have chosen the terms ‘undocumented person’ and ‘undocumentedness’ for a number of reasons. Mainly because it is as close a translation as one gets of the Swedish papperslös, but also because it is widely used and understandable, as well as fairly neutral in its connotations. The word undocumentedness may seem a somewhat awkward construction in English, but it has been present in the literature for over a decade (Hilfinger Messias, 1996). To indicate ‘the condition of being undocumented’, I would argue that it is the best option.

I have also decided to talk and write about undocumented persons rather than undocumented migrants. This is partly because my focus is on their status and situation as undocumented and not on their position as foreigners or migrants. What is more, several of my project participants have lived in Sweden for long periods of time – in some cases more than ten years – and most of the undocumented children I have met were born in Sweden. These people are in a position where they have to fight for their humanity, to be part of the political community and to gain recognition as individuals with rights. Finding that a just and important struggle, I think it fitting to reinforce their personhood rather than their migranthood.

A note on anonymity and responsibility

As a category, ‘undocumented’ is held together as an entity by national legal and political structures. Those power relations are key to understanding the

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7 An elaboration on the Swedish discourses concerning undocumented persons can be found in Chapter Four.
modes of being-in-the-world possible within that residual position. These are the kind of power relations that phenomenology traditionally has failed to recognize, but what critical phenomenology attempts to attend to. As such, a thesis concerned with undocumented persons’ experiences of their situation is always a political project.

The micropolitics of their situation go far beyond what an analytical framework recognizes as relevant and are more important than a matter of representation. Ignoring the political dimensions defining the limits of their position is to expose individuals involved to great risk of the political tangle closing in on them and the ultimate outcomes of those power relations materializing. An example of the complexities of such micropolitics is Åsne Seierstad’s documentary novel *The Bookseller of Kabul* (Seierstad, 2003). She wanted to give her readers an intimate feeling for the every day family life in Afghanistan and expose the oppression of women in that context. Although writing about and aiming to criticize the patriarchal culture, she failed to recognize the role she and her book played in that structure. Writing herself out of the story and exposing the characters to the world and to each other, she put them at risk of becoming victims of those same structures she aimed to criticize and uncover.8 *The Bookseller of Kabul* is an example from popular literature and is perhaps an extreme case, but shows clearly the risks of ignoring the micropolitics of research ethics. In representing the experiences of persons in the most vulnerable of all positions, the importance of protecting their identity and integrity cannot be emphasized enough. It is not only a matter of informed consent, which can be difficult and problematic enough, but about the risks for the project participants throughout the whole research process.

Writing up an ethnography, specifically in the case of vulnerable populations, one runs the risk of objectifying and defining a group from ‘above’, but also, perhaps unintentionally, to contribute to a sort of surveillance (De Genova, 2002). During the two and a half years of fieldwork, I have formed close personal relationships with the individuals participating in my project, but this thesis is not about them as individuals, but about the position they occupy and the situation they are in. As an ethnography of a concept rather than of a group of people, this thesis is rather poor on biographical data about project participants. I claim in this thesis that the anecdotes and reflections that I quote relate to the respondents’ lived experience of being undoc-

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8 After the publication of *The Bookseller of Kabul*, Seierstad was accused by the bookseller himself for defamation and for invading the privacy of his family. A Norwegian court found Seierstad guilty of invading family privacy and commented that she had been negligent in her journalistic practices. In 2011, an appeal court in Norway overturned this ruling and cleared Seierstad and her publisher, Cappelen Damm, of invading family privacy and concluded that the facts of the book were accurate. I maintain however that her conduct regarding the publication of *The Bookseller of Kabul* has been negligent and irresponsible. For more, see for example articles in *The Guardian* by Hill, 2010-07-31 and Topping, 2011-12-13.
umented. Although not unrelated to their biographies, I argue that they can be understood independently of their biographical details. That these feelings and experiences originate in their undocumentedness, and not in their migrant experience or something completely different, is a challenge common to several fields of research (Bakewell, 2007). I also do not mean to say that everyone experiences undocumentedness in the same way, but rather that the experiences and phenomena I discuss as related to the undocumented experience, are elements that most undocumented persons experience and or have to deal with to a greater or lesser degree, and that they have their origin in their condition as undocumented.

While their biographies naturally influence how they live as undocumented and how they handle and experience that situation, the focus in this thesis are those experiences that they have in common, despite differences in background. I stated earlier in this chapter that I have avoided asking questions about background in the sit-down interviews with undocumented persons. The fact is however that I have met the majority of the undocumented project participants several times, and have at some point either asked or been told about their background. Generally, their biographies are thus known to me, and have been part of my understanding of their situation, although these details are not part of what is represented in the thesis.

In order to preserve their integrity, I have chosen not to invent names for the undocumented interviewees and participants in this research project. Representing, and stringing together pieces of individual information to form persons would necessarily to put people at risk of being exposed. This is not only an issue of authorities possibly identifying and finding them out, but several of the persons quoted in this thesis know each other, and a number of them will doubtless read it (hej!). Many of the anecdotes and quotes I represent relate experiences of a private nature that they may not wish others in their vicinity to know about. By obscuring the individuals as individuals, I not only protect their identity and integrity, but also make use of the phenomenological principle of directing the attention to the experience and flow of perception itself, rather than on the individual subjects or objects in question (Merleau-Ponty, 2002).

However, a number of problems arise when removing biographical data and making the individuals behind the quotes anonymous. Emanuel Lévinas located the origin of ethical responsibility for our Other in the face-to-face relation (Lévinas, 1969:187-247): “The face opens the primordial discourse whose first word is obligation” (1969:201). By stripping the respondents of their biographies I remove the individual context – their face in a manner of speaking. In doing so, I run the risk of reproducing the faceless migrant (Papastergiadis, 2006) as a threatening figure whom it is difficult to raise any understanding or sympathy for. The absence of a face also reproduces the invisibility and indistinctness, as well as the connotations of a shady underground attached to undocumentedness. Concerning undocumented persons,
their safety depends on their identity – and their face – remaining hidden, making it more difficult to give personal accounts of that situation. Despite this, several other authors have made important attempts at personalized accounts and biographies of undocumented persons and furnish the group gömda with ‘a face’ (e.g. Rosengren, 2009; Molin, 2010).

Fieldnotes, transcripts and the representing of quotes

The empirical material, apart from memories in my and other people’s heads, exists as pages and pages of transcripts and fieldnotes, which is what I have been working with when re-examining and analysing the project participants’ as well as my own experiences. The interviews with administrators, health care professionals, NGO-representatives, and a few of the interviews with undocumented persons, were recorded and subsequently transcribed. The phone interviews with county council staff were not, as weren’t many of the interviews and conversations during the fieldwork with undocumented persons. This means that the quotes from interviews and conversations are remembered and represented with varied accuracy. Although not being able to quote word for word the stories and anecdotes told to me without a recorder, I have decided to represent (some of) them as quotes. This is only done when I remember the conversation well, and was able to write down either key words or quotes fairly soon after the conversation took place, and when I can say, with confidence and integrity, that I am relaying a version close to what was actually said.

To make it possible for the reader to distinguish between quotes translated from transcripts and quotes recorded only in my memory and jotted down as fieldnotes, I have differentiated the representations of these two categories of quotes in the text. Where nothing else is indicated, quotes appearing either in the text or as block quotes are translated parts of transcripts. Any quote appearing inside a block quote marked ‘fieldnotes’, are translations of what I have remembered and written in my fieldnotes. Shorter quotes from transcripts and fieldnotes sometimes appear in the text, and when the context doesn’t explain where the quote originates, it is explained in a footnote not to disturb the flow of the text. The translated fieldnotes are for the sake of readability edited, shortened and/or rearranged. Where necessary, I have added a bit of context in the fieldnote-block itself. I have added dates to the quotes, in order to make them traceable in my raw notes, and to give some idea of the timing within the period of fieldwork.
Writing as learning process

I write a book only because I still don’t know exactly what to think about this thing I want so much to think about, so that the book transforms me and what I think (Foucault and Faubion, 2000 pp. 239–240).

Thoughts that dwell within the confines of the body, never uttered and never written, lead an indistinct and tangled existence (Rehn, 2006), and formulating those thoughts into words is an important step in understanding what they are. Typing them up will tell whether the line of thought works or not – this is one of the reasons why research questions go through such thorough transformations during write up (Kleinman and Copp, 1993:4). In short, writing holds an important role in the analytical process of writing a thesis, and should be taken seriously as such.

Doctoral theses in social science written at Swedish universities have shifted in form during the past decades. From generally being monographs in Swedish, they have increasingly taken the form of series of articles in English. This is mainly because of the increasing internationalization and competition where peer reviewed publications is the most valuable currency. While I hold a generally positive attitude to this development, its less obvious implications need to be highlighted. When writing is a learning process – a transformation of what I think and who I am – the language in which that takes place makes a difference. Writing in a foreign language can give opportunities to think things through with different words and in different ways, but it can also limit and dull thoughts that would otherwise have been sharp.

Writing in a language in which one has a limited vocabulary necessarily limits what one can write. And as writing is, or should ideally be, a sort of manifest thinking, a limited vocabulary limits what one can think. Another effect of not having full mastery of the language one writes in is that the attention to form – choice of prepositions, order of words, genus, casus – slows down the pace of writing and sometimes even overshadows the attention to content. In my experience, the crucial difference between writing in a one’s mother tongue and a second language can be expressed as the difference between writing and constructing sentences. When words and sentences are discrete building blocks to form text rather than parts in a flow of meaning, the form of the text constrains rather than being the creative tool it should, or could be. I would say that in my own case, the shift between constructing sentences and writing in English came just in time for write-up.

In order to push myself to write more and to push my writing beyond only the final production of a text, I started a blog. The blog was established in 2009 and for a while it worked tolerably well and I posted texts about once a

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9 http://erikasigvardsdotter.wordpress.com/

60
week. The basic idea was good and I recommend it to anyone writing a thesis, but despite good intentions, I eventually abandoned the project. It did however fill another purpose: It became a way for me to communicate some of my findings to the NGOs I have been working with. This is further discussed in Chapter Five.

Writing as ontological event

The writing and the associated learning happens somewhere (Ahmed, 2006), a seemingly banal but important statement. There are good places to write, and bad. This thesis has been written in many chairs, at many tables and with different views from different windows – elements constituting backgrounds for writing. Like all other activities and inactivities, writing leaves traces in and on one’s body; it forces the body into certain patterns of movement and into certain positions for long periods of time. In intense periods of writing, I made sure to eat certain things and at certain hours, I devised certain sleeping habits to optimise writing; my whole corporeal being, including the metabolism and the activities of the pineal gland, was oriented toward the birth of text.

Cutting off the writing process and proclaiming the thesis ‘done’, is to end one set of mental and corporeal processes and to initiate another. Umberto Eco writes that a book is a machine for interpretation (Eco, 1984), and although he is mainly concerned with novels when making that statement, in some respects that is true of all text. Varying interpretations come into being in the interaction between the text and its readers. Paraphrasing Hannah Arendt, the birth of a text is an ontological event (Arendt, 1958:247). A purely linguistic birth perhaps, but a birth that is the point in time when a new artefact is hurled into the world, where it may initiate trains of events yet unknown. Hidden away in an archive, the text has no life and can do nothing; it is reduced to black marks on white – to matter. Although the actual typing of this text, or its consumption by someone else, are not interactive activities in Arendt’s meaning, a text as proxy for the author, is capable of action. I have written this thesis you hold in your hand and have thus originally produced it. When you read it, you are also engaged in a productive process; new meaning is created in the meeting between you and my text (de Certeau, 1984). We read and write in different settings, through different discourses or jargons and with different intentions, and they all make a difference.

Analogous to the separate meaning making of you and me when reading this text due to our distinct backgrounds, experiences and beings, text and words take on different meaning in different contexts. The principles of one mode of reasoning – this descriptive and analytic account of undocumentedness – cannot be overextended and extrapolated to another, for instance prescriptive political discourse (Olsson, 1980:58b, 61b). That doesn’t prompt
me as a researcher not to engage in other modes of reasoning, nor does it give any suggestions whether I would be good at it.

In the field of forced migration research, the need for ‘policy irrelevant’ research has been noted (Bakewell, 2008). The primacy of policy relevance when formulating research projects skew the focus of research, privileging the world view of policy makers and reaffirming the categorizations of people as refugees or migrants and setting those categories before any other facet of their identities. In addition, advocacy-driven research also runs the risk of ‘talking crisis’, by overstating certain research findings in order to achieve political outcomes (Bilger and van Liempt, 2009). The situation for undocumented persons is, in general, a field with a large share of advocacy-driven research and in the Swedish context, several of the recent projects have been conducted by persons with a background in advocacy groups (eg. Sager, 2011). While I have indeed pointed to policy recommendations in some areas of this research (Sigvardsdotter, 2010), this has neither been an initial goal nor part of the formulation of the project. I have a responsibility for the arguments I make, the representations I convey and the discourses I reinforce, and I have to be careful in what ways those arguments and discourses can be used. I will return to these issues in the concluding chapter.
IV. Residuals of the Swedish Model

To approach the mystery of the relationship between the state and its unacknowledged population, the key words *state* and *undocumented*, as well as their interrelations, must be investigated. The terms illegal immigrant, non-citizen and undocumented person all take their points of reference in some aspect of the state: An illegal immigrant is defined in terms of having transgressed (national) law when crossing national borders, a non-citizen is someone who is not a member of the current political community. In the case of an undocumented person, the reference point lies in state administration and legislation, indicating that the person lacks the documents necessary to officially reside in a certain country or place. Lacking an official identity, their presence is unsanctioned and unacknowledged by the state.

The state is notoriously difficult to define, and with the state as its reference point, the meaning and construction of what it means to be ‘undocumented’ will depend on how the state is conceptualized. This chapter establishes the socio-political context in which the undocumented position is examined. Conceptualizing the state as, on the one hand, primarily a territory-population-jurisdiction triad within the interstate system (Agamben, 1998; De Genova, 2004), and as a set of institutions peopled by politicians, bureaucrats and practitioners on the other (Smith, 2006; Mountz, 2010), two different approaches to undocumentedness are outlined. In the introductory chapter I argued that the Swedish context, with its comprehensive welfare state and highly regulated nature, constitutes a critical case in the study of undocumentedness. The second part of this chapter aims to justify that claim by presenting the features of the Swedish context relevant to the present study. The last section of the chapter examines the construction, production and reproduction of the undocumented position within that context, by applying different perspectives on the state to reveal different aspects of the configuration of the category ‘undocumented’.

The category ‘undocumented’ is legally defined only through omission, silhouetted by the legally defined means of residing and sojourning in Sweden. I argue that Sweden, enveloped in the wider Schengen area with its digitized borders, is an example of a digital welfare model where the undocumented position can be understood as a residual category – like the disturbance term of a statistical model, it includes only what is not accounted for by the other categories or factors in the model. Attending to everyday bordering practices exposes how the legal omission of undocumented persons trans-
lates into administration and practice in public, private and civic sectors in the present context.

Two conceptualizations of the state

As with the case of defining ‘undocumented’, an attempt to define the state must first establish its reference points. Should the definition take its basis in what the state consists of, what it does or what it is capable of? Max Weber famously characterized the state as the ‘human community with monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force’. Others have defined the state in terms of its power structure, or its relations to other states or to its population. I begin by providing two complementing conceptualizations of the state that provide fruitful frameworks for the tracing of the construction, production and reproduction of the undocumented position.

Territory-population-jurisdiction

The nation-state, with its pairing of territory and population, is a powerful manifestation of territoriality; the imagined ideal interstate system is a mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive structure where all land and every person is assigned to and included within a series of politically defined containers (Delaney, 2009). Following from this construction, a number of assumptions ensue: that states have exclusive sovereign power over their territories, that ‘domestic’ and ‘foreign’ are two discrete realms in fixed binary opposition, and that the state is a static and timeless territorial container that encloses social, economic and political processes (Ó Tuathail, 1998).

The territorialization processes by which the state classifies and demarcates its own space, and the means by which it defines, communicates and enforces the conditions for entering or leaving the territory (Delaney, 2009), are important parts of state strategy upholding its proper locus (de Certeau, 1984). The formation of ‘insides’ and ‘outsides’ in an inter-state system has consequences for the binary notions of ‘us’ and ‘them’, as well as for the identity of the foreigner (Sassen, 1999). Unlike refugees of the time before the establishment of the inter-state system, who were considered Other in the same way as vagabonds were, refugees in the 20th century were identified as a distinctive category and the state had gained power and institutional legitimacy to exclude them (Arendt, 1968; Sassen, 1999). The first modern and lasting immigration restrictions were issued in the late 19th century – the Netherlands’ Aliens Act was established in 1849, the American Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882. General immigration restrictions were introduced in the UK in 1905 and in Canada in 1906 (Düvell, 2006:22). These early regulations were often a means to exclude ‘undesirable aliens’, often perceived as certain racial or ethnic groups, or “previous deportees, fugitive offenders,
the mad and the destitute and other ‘continental agitators’” (Couper and Santamaria, 1984:437). According to Hannah Arendt, the appearance of statelessness was a direct consequence of this development, its existence was the necessary product of a territorially-defined inter-state system (Arendt, 1968:277). The earliest occurrence of statelessness was the product of the Peace Treaties of 1919, in the dissolution of Austria-Hungary and the establishment of the Baltic States. These people became stateless in a world of states, not by way of their own mobility, but through moving borders and denationalizations.

The binary notions of inside and outside, and the imagery and legal exclusion of the Other, are important elements in the construction of an imagined community such as the nation-state (Anderson, 1983; Said, 1991), suggesting an approach to undocumentedness based on a state defined as a juridico-political construct. This abstract definition of the state, where a territory and a population are defined and bounded by a state apparatus, reproduces the notion of the state as a mysterious unified entity, but is nonetheless important in understanding the construction of undocumentedness. Bob Jessop defines the state apparatus as a set of institutions “whose socially accepted function is to define and enforce collectively binding decisions on a given population in the name of their ‘common interest’ or ‘general will’.” (Jessop, 2007:9). In this approach to the state, I focus on the collectively defined decisions and regulations of that apparatus, providing borders of the nation-state.

The population and territory defined and bounded by state apparatus supposedly coincides with its jurisdiction, but undocumentedness, as well as statelessness, originates in a mismatch in the territory-population-jurisdiction triad. Undocumented persons are not acknowledged as resident and thus not entitled to any of the legal, social or political claims available to official residents. Their deportability and unrecognized presence complicates their protection against other people’s transgressions, rendering them outside the pale of the law. Yet, they are included in the jurisdiction in the sense that they are subject to its laws and can be charged and sentenced accordingly. As an accused however, they have the same rights as any other suspect, and this illustrates the paradoxical position they are in:

The best criterion by which to decide whether someone has been forced outside the pale of the law is to ask if he would benefit by committing a crime. If a small burglary is likely to improve his legal position, at least temporarily, one may be sure he has been deprived of human rights. ... As a criminal even a stateless person will not be treated worse than another criminal, that is, he will be treated like everybody else. Only as an offender against the law can he gain protection from it. As long as his trial and his sentence last, he will be safe from that arbitrary police rule against which there are no lawyers and no appeals (Arendt, 1968:286).
Being subject to the arbitrary police rule is what Giorgio Agamben calls the state of exception; “an anomic space in which what is at stake is a force of law without law” (Agamben, 2005:39). The state of exception is a realm of absolute-law-without-law, where total and arbitrary violence reigns, suspending the distinctions between law and politics, law and violence, law and state. *Homo sacer*, the inhabitant and embodiment of the exception, subject to the force of law without law, is subject to infinite possibilities of arbitrary violence (Agamben, 1998).

In this context, the legal and political context becomes keenly relevant for the construction of the undocumented position. However, while the conceptualization of the state as territory-population-jurisdiction indicates a power structure and a function, it suggests nothing about how those structures are upheld or how those functions are performed. The next section takes an institutional view of the state, exploring practice and embodiment of law and bordering, as well as the implications this view has in terms of how the production and reproduction of undocumentedness can be understood.

**Embodying the nation-state**

Legal frameworks are never fixed or inert artefacts but are always produced and reproduced, as well as implemented and upheld, by actors. These actions are reinforced by ideology and state strategy, but nevertheless manifest as individual and embodied (de Certeau, 1984; Foucault, 1991b). Moving beyond national level regulations, institutions and organizations at other scales come into focus – regional and local institutions have autonomy in certain issues within the state organization, and beyond the national level are supranational bodies such as the EU. The various parallel structures within, of and beyond the state may have different or even opposing agendas, but common for all these various administrative and political levels – international, national, regional and local – is that they all depend on the actions of individuals to be performed and sustained.

Feminist scholars have argued for smaller scale analysis of the state and state institutions to investigate the actualities of people’s everyday lives and the embodied practices that make up state action (Smith, 1987; Hyndman, 2004). Shifting focus from the legally defined borders of states-as-containers to smaller scales of the everyday border production reveals the significance of processes, relationships and experiences otherwise obscured (Mountz, 2004:325). The early Aliens Acts in the previous section were indeed instruments for defining an ‘inside’ and an ‘outside’ but they made only a small difference in practice. It was only with the invention and introduction of the passport and actual deportation procedures that governments were able to put immigration restrictions into practice (Caplan and Torpey, 2001). These practical developments were also key in the creation of the category of deportable ‘illegal aliens’ (Ngai, 2003).
In the changing landscape of international mobility where certain groups enjoy facilitated mobility while the majority of the world’s population face restrictive migration regimes and aggressive border policing (e.g. van Houtum and Pijpers, 2007; Varsanyi and Nevins, 2007; Mountz, 2011), increasing attention has been directed towards the everyday and the embodied facets of border production (Coutin, 2000; Mountz, 2004; Newman, 2006; Adey, 2009), highlighting the importance of individual actors within law-making, bureaucracy and enforcement as components of the bordering process. These studies reveal a grinding bureaucracy of border enforcement, everyday administration and backstage ‘policy on the fly’, as well as hard work of media image management to keep up a façade of a strong state ‘doing something’ about ‘the situation’ (Mountz, 2010).

Unpacking the state and its border processes not only highlights the variety of practices involved in bordering but also the various aspects of national borders. In a break-down of their constituent parts, Andrew Geddes (2005a; 2005b) refers to the territorial, organizational and conceptual aspects of state borders, respectively defined as follows:

Territorial borders are those sites at which the sovereign capacity to include or exclude from the state territory are exercised. Organisational borders are those of institutions such as the labour market, welfare state and citizenship. Conceptual borders comprise more nebulous but no less important ideas about who ‘belongs’ and the basis for belonging to some given political community (Geddes, 2005a:324).

This breakdown is useful when exploring the diffusing bordering processes, but find the term organizational border somewhat awkward. It has been used in this meaning in a few instances (Sližiene, et al., 2002; Carrera, 2006), but more often denoting the borders between organizations in organization or computer science (e.g. Korpela, et al., 2002). Instead, I suggest institutional border as the preferred term for that category of bordering. The term institutional border has sporadically appeared in academic texts over the last few decades, in a few cases referring to institutional practices at territorial borders (Bustamante, 2008; McCann, 2008). However, it appears mainly in the present meaning, defined as what “separate[s] members from non-members and demarcate[s] institutional benefits and voice opportunities.” (Rumelili, 2007:109). Due to its less ambiguous use, institutional border is less likely to be misunderstood than organizational border and it is thus the term I use and suggest be used in this context.

The change of scale of analysis, as well as the disaggregation of border processes, proves especially useful when analysing the construction of undocumentedness. The physical presence of the undocumented highlights the mismatch between territory, jurisdiction and population that produces that position. The forms and practices of territorial as well as institutional and
conceptual borders play important roles in shaping, literally, the world experienced by undocumented persons, contouring and circumscribing their lives and possibilities. In a comprehensive welfare state such as Sweden, institutional borders play a more distinct role than in a context where membership in the political community does not entail as many social and economic rights (Düvell, 2010).

These two conceptualizations of the state, on the one hand a juridico-political construct where the legal definitions of inside and outside come to the fore, and as a set of institutions and individuals embodying everyday state action on the other, provide tools for the investigation of the undocumented position in this and the next chapter of this thesis. Before moving on to track down the ‘undocumented’ category in law, administration and practice, however, a brief review of the Swedish and European context is necessary.

The Swedish and European migration context

Sweden’s migration and migration policy are enveloped in the context of the wider European framework and more tangibly the Schengen Area. The harmonization of migration and asylum policy in the European Union was initiated in 1999 with the Amsterdam Treaty and the Tampere Programme. Issues concerning bordering have gradually shifted from being national concerns to become increasingly a supranational matter and several steps towards centralized migration policy and border enforcement have been made. The policing of the EU external borders has taken new forms, from militarization and physical reinforcement of the frontier regions (Lutterbeck, 2006), to diffusing border enforcement to include new realms and actors. Geographically, border enforcement has become externalized, leading to the involvement of countries of origin and transit in decreasing the number of migrants actually reaching the territories of EU member states (Boswell, 2003; Hyndman and Mountz, 2008; van Houtum, 2010). Border policing has also moved from the borders towards the interior of the Schengen territory. The Dublin convention, which was originally initiated in 1990, was designed to curtail possibilities for individuals entering into the asylum procedure in more than one member state. To determine which state is responsible for an asylum claim, Eurodac – a community-wide system for the comparison of fingerprints of asylum claimants – was created and put in to operation in 2003. This was one of the first digital features of the internal border control functions that has been established at the EU level, affecting the lives of both documented and undocumented migrants within its borders (Broeders, 2007; Broeders and Engbersen, 2007). The Eurodac database, together with the Schengen Information System (II) and the Visa Information System, are vast databanks, often including biometric data, established to control and manage
migration flows. They exist to sort, identify and re-identify documented as well as undocumented migrants on the basis of the digital traces of their migration trajectories.

The implementation of automated and digitized routines, feedback systems and computerized control mechanisms are part of the infrastructure and panoptic practice that narrow the gap between rule and practice, reinforcing the power of place over time (de Certeau, 1984:36). Some have argued that Fortress Europe is really a Panopticon Europe (Engbersen, 2001), where ‘desirable’ and ‘undesirable’ movements across borders can be distinguished and managed accordingly (van Houtum, 2010). In contrast to Bentham’s prison, however, the EU migration control surveillance requires constant operation, but its digital quality and functionality allows for centralized ‘action at-a-distance’ to control migrant populations (Painter, 1995). Apart from these centralized regulations and infrastructures, several issues concerning residency and immigration are still defined on the national arena.

A Swedish digital welfare state

In the light of Sweden’s long history of peace and neutrality, the legitimacy of the Swedish state has for generations been based on the provision for its citizens rather than protection from foreign powers. After World War II, during the high demand in the post-war economies, Swedish economy and economic policies were characterized by continual growth, low inflation, high employment rates and wage moderation through centralized and coordinated wage bargaining (Anxo and Niklasson, 2006). Major social insurance reforms and public pension schemes were gradually realized during this period, and the political slogan Strong Society [det starka samhället] was coined by the Social Democratic Party as the catchphrase for this optimistic, growth oriented ideology, where social security was seen as a main factor in that growth (Andersson, 2003).

The Swedish Model-type welfare state that developed in this period had a universalistic rather than subsidiary approach – comprehensive public welfare services including free education on all levels, strongly subsidized health services and unemployment insurance, childcare and elderly care, a state sponsored pension system and a high unionization rate. This welfare model was, and still is, characterized by strong emphasis on the role of public provision. The Swedish state actively de-familiarized and de-commodified welfare responsibilities, provision and needs in order to further individual independence and minimize the degree to which an individual’s welfare depend on their family situation or labour market performance.

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10 This neutrality has consisted in – among other things – not being a member of NATO, and the neutral position during the World War II. This neutrality is however much contested. For more, see (Ålmark, 2011).
(Esping-Andersen, 2002:13-14; Bradshaw and Hatland, 2006). In this situation where practically all welfare services are provided by state institutions, those institutions tend to become the only providers of such services; volunteer initiatives complementary to public provision are rare (Jeppson Grassman and Svedberg, 2007). These features of the Swedish welfare state are the practical outcomes of what political scientists call state individualism – an ideology based on equality, solidarity and individual independence – that characterize the Swedish political ideology (Berggren and Trägårdh, 2011). The important consequence of state individualism in this context is the close relationship between each individual and the state institutions that are fostered through such policies.

Sweden has a long history of comprehensive population registers; the registration of the local population by the church was codified in law in the mid-17th century. By the mid-18th century, a state institute was formed for the collection and charting of population statistics (SCB, 2009). The current population register [Folkbokföringsregistret] is an important tool in the functioning of the welfare state. It serves as the basis for the organization and administration of all rights and responsibilities of citizens, such as tax collection, health care provision, voting, school attendance and social benefits. The register is public, and its supposed universality and accuracy are preconditions for the comprehensive Swedish welfare model, and consequently also the basis for the efficiency with which undocumented persons are excluded from it.

The personnummer, which is the ID with which one is registered in the population register, is the numerical interface in all communication between residents and public institutions. When that interface is displaced or missing, communication is made nearly impossible. While the social security numbers of other states are approximate equivalents to the personnummer, there are two important differences. Firstly, the personnummer is obtained automatically at birth and is not tied to employment or insurance – it is therefore assumed to be universal. Secondly, the personnummer as a means of identification has gained a wide public acceptance, unusual outside the Nordic countries (SCB, 2007). The personnummer is used for identification not only in contact with state institutions, but also in many private and civic contexts. The properties and importance of the population register and the personnummer, in the construction and reproduction of the undocumented position, is discussed in further detail in the coming sections of this chapter.

The intimate connection between the individual and the state, and the general acceptance of the use of picture ID and personnummer as identification are two facets of a less tangible feature that is important when discussing the undocumented condition in the Swedish context. Political scientists preoccupied with ideology and political culture have paid much attention to the importance of trust and reliance on apparently benevolent authorities as a crucial ingredient in both the origins and preconditions for the efficient func-
tion of the Swedish Model (Rothstein, 2001; Trägårdh and Blennberger, 2009; Bonoli and Emmenegger, 2010). While it is argued that trust in authorities is a precondition for a universalistic welfare system to function, Sweden has also been depicted as a sort of absolute state where a high level of compliance is achieved through a strong ideology and imagery of a benevolent and providing state (Berggren and Trägårdh, 2011).

The comprehensive welfare system providing for its residents is at the same time creating an extreme gap between those who are inside the welfare system and those who are out. A context where a person lacking the ten personnummer-digits cannot communicate with institutions, be they public, private or civic, is a daunting environment in which to be undocumented. This is further heightened by the tendency toward general high-tech reliance in Swedish society. Medical registers, membership registers and customer registers, that earlier were kept on paper, are increasingly being computerized (Fransson Sellgren and Ringertz, 2010).

Undocumented migration in Sweden

Sweden has a relatively small undocumented population in comparison to other European countries. For a long time, the majority of undocumented persons were rejected asylum seekers, and over time, the geographical origin of undocumented persons did, with a certain time lag, roughly correspond with the origins of asylum applicants and the major conflicts in the world. In later years, this pattern has become less distinct. Partly, this is due to the deregulation of the labour market, which increased the demand for cheap undocumented labour (Schierup, et al., 2006; Gavanas, 2010), but also as a consequence of the fact that undocumented persons tend to stay undocumented for longer periods of time than before.

There are no actual official estimates of the number of undocumented persons in Sweden. Advocacy groups and authorities alike publish guesstimates ranging from 10 000–35 000 (Socialstyrelsen, 2010) to 30 000–50 000 (Holmgren, 2008). It is very unclear how these estimates were calculated. The only thing that is known is that currently about 8 000 persons are sought by the Migration Board for deportation, but there is no guarantee that they are all still in the country (Socialstyrelsen, 2010). A recent investigation concerning undocumented persons’ right to health care stated, after interviewing several NGOs and advocacy groups, that they had found no indications or evidence that the number of undocumented persons in Sweden is greater than 35 000 (Zelmin, 2011). These figures should be understood as indicating persons legally defined as undocumented, and in relation to the total Swedish population of 9.3 million, of which approximately 14 per cent are foreign born.

Since the mid-20th century, Sweden has been a country of net-immigration. During the decades after World War II, the growing Swedish
economy was in demand of labour and large numbers of labour immigrants arrived, mainly from neighbouring countries – their mobility being facilitated by the Nordic common labour market area and passport union established in the 1950s\(^{11}\) – but eventually also from Southern and Central Europe (SCB, 1969). During the first two decades, no labour immigration policy was in place, and prospective foreign workers could apply for residence and work permits after arrival. With the economy stagnating in the late 1960s and early 70s, labour demand decreased and the labour unions put pressure on the authorities to limit immigration. From 1965, foreign citizens were obliged to apply for work permits before they arrived, which was intended to give the immigration and labour market authorities some control over immigration influx. Substantial numbers of people did, however, arrive without having gained residence and work permits beforehand, but the majority of them were able to gain the necessary permits after arrival through the transitional rules and exceptions that were in place. By the end of the 1970’s however, labour immigration was close to zero (Lundh and Ohlsson, 1994; Hammar, 1999).

Since the mid 1970s when the restrictions on labour immigration were introduced, the vast majority of immigrants have been either asylum seekers or persons arriving though family reunification programmes. There have been few other routes to immigrate to Sweden for non-Nordic or non-European nationals; the number of persons gaining residence permit for work purposes has since the 80s until very recently\(^{12}\) been negligible (Migrationsverket, 2010a). The origins of refugees have shifted over time: e.g. citizens of some Central and South American countries after the series of conflicts and military coups in the 70s, followed by Christian Assyrians, Kurds and Iranians in the 80s. During the 1990s, Sweden also took in large numbers of refugees from the former Yugoslavia (Lundh and Ohlsson, 1994).

In the new millennium, the most common origins of asylum claimants are from the Middle East, Afghanistan, the Balkans and Somalia (Migrationsverket, 2011). However, Sweden’s refugee policy has become increasingly restrictive, particularly after the access to European Schengen cooperation in 2001 (Schierup, et al., 2011a:195-196). During the 1980s circa 80 per cent of asylum applications were granted, while in the period 2001–2006, the acceptance rate, including accepted appeals, varied between 33 and 45 per cent (Migrationsverket, 2010b). The current political situation is one of, on the one hand, harsh critique of politicians and the Migration

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\(^{11}\) The Nordic countries – Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Sweden – established a common labour market area in 1954 and a corresponding passport union in 1957, making it possible for citizens and holders of residence permits in the Nordic countries to live and work in any of the Nordic countries without having to seek work or residence permits. No passports were needed to travel between the countries. (Nordiska Rådet, 2012).

\(^{12}\) In 2008, a new labour immigration legislation was established, and the number of people gaining residence permit for work purposes is expected to increase.
Board for their restrictive policies and populist anti-immigration groups gaining support on the other (Hellström, 2010). The populist and xenophobic political parties have less influence on the political agenda in Sweden than in, for instance, Denmark, France or Belgium. The biggest populist party has only recently acquired seats in the national parliament, and is still relatively marginalized in the political debate.

The asylum-dominated immigration since the late 1970s has contributed to a situation where immigration is now often viewed as something that only cost money; as ‘charity’ that Sweden can never benefit from (Eastmond, 2011). The traditional discourse concerning undocumented persons in Sweden has, as does Swedish migration discourse in general, a bias towards victimization and pity. Rejected asylum seekers that have gone underground to avoid deportation have intermittently been present in Swedish public debate for a number of years, referred to as gömda [hidden] or gömda flyktingar [hidden refugees]. These terms convey the common assumptions that ‘they’ – the undocumented persons – live completely outside society, hidden away and absent from any context that ‘we’ – the Swedes – take part in. The passive form of the terms is symptomatic of the victimizing discourse; they are not even incapable of hiding, but must be hidden by hiders [gömmapare] and helpers [hjälpare].

Helena Holgersson (2011:ch 4) has traced two additional discourses concerning undocumented persons that have arisen in Swedish public and political debate during the past few years. While that of gömda flyktingar emphasizes their need of protection and status as pitiable and ‘deserving victims’, that of ‘illegal immigrants’ invokes the undeserving economic migrant or ‘welfare shopper’, focusing on their presence as an irregular intrusion and as a security threat. This is not a particularly common designation for undocumented persons in Swedish, and is mainly used by populist or extreme right wing politicians or media. Finally, the latest addition to the terms for undocumented persons is papperslösa, a direct translation from the French sans-papiers [without documents]. This continental import has been introduced through persistent efforts by the network Papperslösa Stockholm and other NGOs working with undocumented persons. Along the same lines as the French sans-papier movement, they wanted to change the focus from that of victimhood or illegality, to that of their legal or administrative status (Krause, 2008). This shift in terminology has been fairly successful and papperslös is, at the time of writing, a widely understood term, but its very lack of connotations of suffering and victimhood has caused some advocacy groups to reject it, and amended versions such as papperslösa flyktingar [undocumented refugees] or papperslösa gömda [undocumented hidden] show up in both legal documents and media.

This is the context in which undocumentedness is examined in this thesis. The remaining sections of this chapter engage in the legal, administrative and practical aspects of how the undocumented position is constructed, pro-
duced and reproduced. The two definitions of the state presented in the beginning of the chapter provide the tools with which to understand these processes.

The construction of the undocumented position

The most important legal element in the construction of Swedish undocumentedness is the Swedish national population register, regulated by the Population Register Act and administered by the Tax Agency. It contains data on names, personnummer, address and family relations of all persons resident in the country. The Tax Agency explains registry in one of their brochures with the succinct argument:

You have to be accurately registered in order to claim your rights in society. You vote and pay taxes in the municipality where you reside. You are eligible for social welfare and benefits only if you are registered (Skatteverket, 2007:1).13

Upon registry in the population register, a personnummer is issued, to “every living born child in this country … if the mother is registered, or if the father is registered and is a legal guardian. Also a child born abroad to a registered mother shall be registered”.14 Foreigners are registered when they acquire a long-term residence permit, generally longer than three years.15 These digits, literally ‘person number’, consist of a person’s birth date indicated with six digits, plus four digits comprising a birth number and a control digit. It thus has the format: YYMMDD-NNNN. The original function of the personnummer is as the ID-number of a person within the population register, but its practical uses are much wider than that. It also serves as a numerical interface for all contacts with societal institutions, and is, as such, the key to all practical participation in society. It is also a symbol of belonging and being regarded as a person, and thus an important part in both conceptual and institutional bordering practices. In the Swedish context, registry in the population register is the legal and only definition of residency; the address on which a person is registered is where he/she resides. Unlike many countries like the UK, the US or Spain, it is not possible in Sweden to provide pieces of mail as ‘proof of address’. Any institution needing address or identity data

13 “För att du ska kunna ta vara på dina rättigheter i samhället är det viktigt att du är rätt folkbokfördd. Du röstar och betalar skatt i den kommun där du bor. Du som är folkbokfördd har rätt till sociala förmåner och bidrag.” Folkbokföringslagen 2§
14 The full quote in Swedish is as follows: “Ett barn som föds levande här i landet skall folkbokföras om modern är folkbokfördd eller om fadern är folkbokfördd och vårdnadshavare. Även ett barn som föds utom landet av en kvinna som är folkbokfördd skall folkbokföras.”
15 This does not include diplomatic contingents, their families or their servants.
via a person’s *personnummer* find that information in the digitized and publicly available register.

Asylum seekers are, despite their often-protracted asylum processes and residence of several years in the country, (Migrationsverket, 2009) not registered in the population register until they are granted refugee status and or obtain a long-term residence permit. They are thus not considered residents in a certain municipality or county the same way residents are, but are affiliated with the Migration Board. During this time, they are assigned a *samordningsnummer* [co-ordination number]. These resemble *personnummer* in format, but are visibly distinct in that the number 60 is added to the digits indicating the day of the birth date (Skatteverket, 2006), thus distinguishing itself as an impossible birth date. Like *personnummer*, the *samordningsnummer* is issued for the purposes of state institutions needing to handle and register information about an individual, but it signifies other rights and another type of belonging in Swedish society. In a practical every-day perspective of a registered person however, a *samordningsnummer* can be used as a numerical interface almost in the same manner as a *personnummer*.16

Apart from residing, there are a number of ways of legally sojourning on, or visiting Swedish territory. Since 1957, residents of the Nordic countries can enter, live and work in Sweden with neither residence nor work permit. Citizens of EU countries can move freely within the EU and stay in any member state for up to three months, provided that they can identify themselves. After three months they need to register with the migration authorities, but do not require a residence permit. Depending on the nature of their stay, they will eventually be registered in the population register. Most EU citizens17 are also free to work in any other EU country without applying for a work permit. The right to reside in another EU-member state is conditioned on whether the individual can sustain him/herself economically, but an EU citizen cannot become irregular as regards his/her entry, residence or economic activity in another member state (Guild, 2004). This is not entirely clear however, and both formerly as well as recently, EU nationals have been deemed to be irregularly residing in Sweden or in other member states on a number of occasions. The deportations in 2010 of Romanian Roma people from France is perhaps the most notable example (Davies, 2010). Also Sweden deported EU-citizens in that year, mainly to Romania and Slovakia (Persson, 2010; Stiernstedt, 2010). The reason given was that they were begging, and thus not fulfilling the requirement of ‘sustaining themselves in an honest way’. This was later deemed a faulty interpretation of present regulations (Justitieombudsmannen, 2011).

16 When I henceforth write of *personnummer*, it can be assumed that *samordningsnummer* can be used for the same purposes, unless otherwise indicated.

17 This is regulated by the Directive 2004/38/EC. Transitional regulations exist for some newly accessed member states.
Persons designated third country nationals – non-Nordic, non-EU citizens – generally need a visa to enter Sweden – either at first entry or for visits longer than three months. Longer sojourns require different types of visa or residence permit based on their alleged activity, such as studies or work.

Thus when residents, sojourners, visitors etc. are defined, the silhouetted residual space constitutes the undocumented position. The Population Registration Act 4§ states that, “A foreigner who is required to hold a residence permit should not be registered if he/she lacks such a permit, and there are no exceptional reasons for registering him or her.” There are a number of ways to end up in this residual category. A person may be overstaying his/her visa or residence permit, or never got one in the first place. They may be visitors, tourists or exchange students overstaying their visa, because of (irregular) work opportunities, a romantic relationship or something completely different. Some are family members of Swedish residents, not seldom elderly parents that come to stay with their family. Others may have arrived at the border as asylum seekers, with or without the help of smugglers (more likely the former), either with their own, with forged, or without ID documents (more likely one of the latter). After having had their asylum application rejected they have become undocumented by not showing up for their deportation.

While penal law defines different types of behaviour as unlawful and illegal, migration legislation generally defines the types of migration that are legal, and what is not mentioned is either unsanctioned or unlawful. Thus, the categories of ‘irregular entry’ or ‘irregular residence’ are generally expressed in implicit rather than in explicit terms. The few exceptions that exist, in Portugal and the UK for instance, the definition of illegal residency or entry are diffuse and often tautological. Neither irregular entry nor irregular residence is not, strictly speaking, outlawed in Sweden. Instead, being undocumented is to be outside law; to dwell in an omitted, legal grey zone (Guild, 2004).

The distinctions between being undocumented and for instance an asylum seeker are rather diffuse in the Swedish context, and there are several in-between categories. After a final rejection of an asylum application, it is still in some cases possible to plead impediments to enforcement [verkställighetshinder],18 and while that application is under consideration one is still within the realm defined by law. Persons who are unwilling to return to their country of origin cannot be deported unless certain agreements exist between the two states in question. Sweden was for this reason for a long time unable to deport Iraqis who didn’t return voluntarily. These ‘undeportable’ persons are also still acknowledged by law, but are, for instance, not allowed to

18 Impediments to enforce the deportation [verkställighetshinder] refer to practical or diplomatic obstacles that render the deportation impossible or unsuitable. It can be the state of health of the deportee that makes him/her ‘non-transportable’, or a diplomatic situation where the country to which he/she is to be deported doesn’t admit persons who do not return of free will.
work. Although legally distinct, living under these circumstances can be rather similar to being undocumented.

Legal categories are, like ethnic or national minorities and majorities, the products of modern state procedures such as statistics and legislation; tools for controlling, mapping and defining the population (Appadurai, 2006). In the current equation however, those unaccounted for are the worst off. Absence of numbers is part of the same repertoire, and keeping individuals out of the ‘gaze of the governor’ is simply another way of keeping people in their place. The criminally charged belongs to one legal category to which certain rights are connected and can be claimed. Outside law, no such claims can be made.

In the Swedish universalistic, digitized and register-friendly welfare state, the undocumented position can be compared with the disturbance term of a regression model. A model of the type \( y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \beta_2 x_2 \ldots + \beta_n x_n + \varepsilon \) always contains a disturbance term \(-\varepsilon\) representing the variation in the imagined total population that cannot be accounted for by its dependent variables. This kind of model is an ‘ideal’ construct, corresponding to the juridico-political construct of the state. Transferring the analogy to an observed sample or the practiced and embodied state, the disturbance term materializes as residuals – as undocumented persons. The \( \varepsilon \) of a regression model is not a sign of the model being inaccurate, it is, on the contrary, one of its constitutive parts. Similarly, Hannah Arendt claimed that statelessness is symptomatic of the inter-state system, not a sign of it having failed. In today’s context, undocumentedness seems to be one of the primary types of the included-yet-excluded elements inherent in a legal and political body such as the state.

(Re-)producing the undocumented position in practice

The legal status of the undocumented person is that of a residual, unaccounted for in legislation. The reliance on personnummer, the public population register and computerized registering techniques have far reaching consequences for how public, as well as other institutions can handle undocumented persons. This section attends to the role of administrative routine and related practices as bordering processes, and their role in producing and reproducing the undocumented position.

Every officially present individual is represented by a digital equivalent in the population registers. The personnummer is a sign of belonging, of being part of the welfare state and being eligible for its provision. With the propensity of increasingly computerized administrative tools, it has, in many cases, become technically impossible for a receptionist or cashier to serve a person who cannot produce an ID-number, or for a doctor to create a medical recording in their name. Some transitional solutions have been devised in, for
instance, health care. When new-born babies are in need of care before they have been assigned a *personnummer*, or when a tourist or an unconscious person without an ID arrives to an emergency room, a *reservnummer* [reserve number] can be generated, so that they can be registered as patients before their numerical identity is assigned or confirmed (Socialstyrelsen, 2012).

The population register and the *personnummer* have long since had a far wider usage than the administrative purposes of public bureaucracy. In realms of society wholly unconnected to welfare provision and its specific matters of membership and contribution, the lack of a *personnummer* may make services unavailable to undocumented persons. In many cases where a customer or member is to be registered, *personnummer* is a ‘required field’ in the digital registry forms, and without it, it may be impossible, or at least very complicated, to create an entry or carry through a transaction. I have met with numerous examples of situations, from study circles to schools to walk-in clinics where administrators have been unable or unwilling to provide certain services, not necessarily because the prospective member/pupil/patient was undocumented, but due to the fact that they could not be registered. One activist gave an example from her attempts to help undocumented persons access primary care at the local health clinic. They had been refused by the receptionist several times, who said that she was concerned about ‘doing something wrong’ when registering the patient, and they could therefore not see the doctor. Another example from the private sector can be found in Helena Holgersson’s study: an undocumented woman wanted to change the battery in her wristwatch, but the shop was unable to accept her as a customer since she had no *personnummer* with which to be registered (Holgersson, 2011:178-9).

Having passed the hurdle of the initial contact, other administrative issues ensue. A dentist who provides dental care *pro bono* for undocumented persons gave me a detailed illustration of the technical issues arising from undocumented patients’ lack of ID-number. The patient records at his clinic are digital, and he claimed it to be impossible to create files for his undocumented patients. To complicate matters further, a personal record is necessary in order to take X-rays of the patient’s teeth, as the X-ray software can only be accessed from within the patient’s file. His solution to the problem was to use his own dental record for their X-rays, filing their teeth as his teeth in the computer and keeping paper based records. Consequently, this dentist has ended up with a wide array of sets of teeth filed under his own name. Thus, by providing dental care to persons without official identities, he has ironically blurred his own, should his dental records be needed to identify him some day. Later during my fieldwork, I spoke to another dentist working with the same computer system. She had found a way of generating *reservnummer* for her undocumented patients, and was thus able to create individual digital files for them and X-ray their teeth as *their* teeth.
In the end, it turned out to be technically possible to X-ray undocumented teeth as undocumented teeth, but the general obscurity of such routines and practices significantly complicate their contacts with and access to official institutions.

Apart from the technical and administrative issues like the above, the general reliance, habit, and expectation of the use of personnummer as identification also creates hurdles when a personnummer should not be necessary. According to the Communicable Diseases Act, HIV-tests should be available to anyone, anonymously and free of charge. Swedish public radio conducted an investigation into the implementation and accessibility of anonymous tests. Their study showed that despite the present legislation, more than half of the 75 contacted health centres denied the radio’s test-patient an anonymous test (Sveriges Radio, 2009). Common responses were of the nature ‘at a health clinic you always have to identify yourself’ or ‘we can’t help you unless you provide your personnummer’. This example is not strictly related to undocumented persons, but illustrates the point.

An example from my fieldwork relates to the mass vaccinations Sweden undertook in 2009 to prevent a swine flu epidemic. For reasons of public health, anyone who wanted it should be vaccinated free of charge. The national decree specifically indicated undocumented persons as included in the vaccination program. Despite this specific mention, I met a man who had been denied vaccination at several different health centres:

He had gone with three other undocumented guys to a health clinic for the vaccination. They were rejected because they could not identify themselves. They went to several different health clinics but had the same answer everywhere – they needed to fill in their personnummer to be inoculated. In the end, the man went back on his own to the first health clinic, wrote a made-up name and a made-up personnummer and had the shot. This was possible only because the administration of this particular vaccination program was paper based (Fieldnotes, 9th December 2009).

In this instance, access to vaccine was denied because he could not provide a personnummer, not because he was undocumented. Ideologies define what exists and what doesn’t, and guide practice accordingly (Therborn, 1980). I argue that these examples are manifestations of a dominant ideology of benevolent authority and the assumption of total inclusion in the all-comprising population register. That which is not registered does not exist and a transaction not registered is not valid. The health centre as a place for welfare provision reinforces this ideology, but the reflex to ask for identification is also strong beyond state institutions.

This ideology and its related practices, paired with the increasing computerization of administration, are key elements in the exclusion of undocumented persons from society and the production and reproduction of the undocumented position.
Conclusion

This chapter has developed two conceptualizations of the state as tools for the investigation in the present and the next chapter of the construction, production and reproduction of the undocumented position. It has also established Sweden as a context characterized by universal and comprehensive welfare provision highly reliant on digitized registers and records, where undocumented persons are defined in law only by omission. As such, the undocumented position can be likened to the disturbance term in a regression model: constitutive of the whole and representing that which is unaccounted for by the ‘proper’ categories, materializing in the observable realm as residuals. Being officially absent has far-reaching implications for how a person can navigate in society, as the personnummer is needed as a numerical interface in communication with a wide range of institutions. In this way, the otherwise inclusive welfare state with high ambitions toward human rights issues paradoxically creates a particularly barren and difficult environment for undocumented persons, effectively shutting them out from public, private, and civic actors. In the next chapter, I illustrate these bordering processes in greater detail by concentrating on the health care sector, tracing the reproduction and reinforcement of the undocumented position in legislation, policy and practice related to health care provision.
Health is a fundamental necessity for all living things, and exercising power over populations through their bodies – through public health and reproduction measures, management of housing and migration – lie at the centre of modern society power structures (Foucault, 1978; 1991b). Taking care of its citizens’ bodily well-being has always been one of the key provisions of the welfare state (Moran, 2000) and, as such, inclusion and exclusion in health care are highly charged biopolitical issues.

Legislation regarding the health care responsibilities of state institutions parallels migration law in that it defines who has which rights and responsibilities, and how and among whom welfare services should be distributed. Any group not included falls outside the scope of the law and forgoes those rights, responsibilities or eligibilities. The fact that undocumented persons fall outside any defined category of residents is in this context of critical import: their presence is unsanctioned and unacknowledged; they are officially absent. However, in the context of health care their corporeal presence becomes irrefutable. A public debate concerning undocumented persons’ lack of access to health care was initiated in Sweden in the early stages of this research project. Doctors protested against the bordering function they had been assigned, stating bluntly that “Discriminating undocumented persons in health care causes suffering and death” (Ascher, et al., 2008:title). Nowhere else do the consequences of their physical non-recognition come into sharper relief.

Beginning with a brief account of the political discussions about health care for undocumented persons, the related institutional borders delineated in national and regional regulations are reviewed. I then give a detailed account of how those borders are reproduced as well as negotiated through routines and practices at hospitals, health care centres and NGO-clinics where encounters with undocumented patients take place. Finally, I discuss some of the direct consequences of their officially absent yet physically present position on undocumented persons’ health and lives.

A political prelude

In 2007, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to health, Paul Hunt, published a report criticizing Sweden for not presenting accessible health care
for undocumented persons (Hunt, 2007). In the same year, another report categorized Sweden, together with Austria, as the most restrictive countries in the EU concerning health care provision for undocumented persons (PICUM, 2007). This was the starting point for a political and public discussion about undocumented persons’ access to health care, but also about their situation and living conditions generally.

Part of this discussion relates to, and was prompted by, the establishment of the Health Care for Asylum Seekers and Others Act. As earlier mentioned, a large share of undocumented persons in Sweden is thought to be rejected asylum seekers. Many argued that this group – individuals who had recently been included in the group under consideration for the new legislation – should be granted the same level of subsidized health care. The legislative proposal was passed without any amendment, but the question was raised, and has lingered as a political topic on both national and regional levels.

When the law proposal concerning asylum seekers’ eligibility for health care provision was presented by the Department of Justice and the Minister of Migration and Asylum Policy (henceforth Minister of Migration), the discussion revolved more around those omitted in the act than those specified as its target group. The bordering-issues raised, related to a wide spectrum of concerns – of not attracting “welfare shoppers” and irregular migrant workers into discussions about the consistency of policies regarding deportation and welfare provision. The Minister for Migration remarked in parliamentary discussion that:

… it is my firm opinion that Swedish society must send consistent signals. … There are problems with offering people who lack [residence] permits access to the Swedish welfare system … A system where some authorities are required to execute deportation and expulsion and other authorities at the same time should offer these people full health care may be seen as inconsistent.21

The focus on consistency is a well-trodden path in Swedish politics. Policies concerning migration and welfare have been argued to be based on a desire to be principally congruent rather than on pragmatism, and the Swedish legal culture does not tolerate diversions from the norm in such issues (Düvell, 2010).

In migration policy generally there are many interests and actors involved (Coleman, 2008). Several examples from other countries indicate the fre-

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19 Lag (2008:344) om häls- och sjukvård åt asylsökande m.fl.
20 This concern – that foreigners would be attracted to Sweden to usurp the welfare system – was initially raised by Göran Persson, the social democratic prime minister at the time, in an interview on public radio in November 2003. He brought up the issue in relation to the accession of several Central and Eastern European states to the EU.
21 Tobias Billström, Minister of Migration, Parliament Proceedings, Tuesday the 20th of May 2008.
quent presence of inconsistent legislation concerning undocumented persons’ status. For instance, while Israel was intensifying internal border control to find and deport undocumented workers, all children of those same workers had compulsory school attendance from the age of four, and undocumented women working (illegally or semilegally) were entitled not only to free health care if pregnant, but also to a ‘birth bonus’ and ‘birth pay’ equaling two months pay (Willen, 2007b; Kalir, 2010).

Relating to the Swedish context, Helena Holgersson makes the important observation that the presence of non-citizens exposes sensitive points in a universalistic welfare state that are much less pronounced in a subsidiary or workfare model. Anyone inside the Swedish welfare system is not only provided a minimum standard, but the highest standard of welfare available. Asylum seekers are, to a certain extent, included in this high level of provision, but if they are rejected and decide to stay, they are, in an instant, *on principle*, ultimately excluded from everything (Holgersson, 2011:85). By ignoring the reality of undocumented persons’ presence in Sweden, and instead pointing out the importance of just asylum trials and the undesirability and risks of a parallel health care system or a shadow realm of society, a policy of not providing health care for undocumented persons can, and has been, cast as based on humanitarian grounds (Holgersson, 2011:86-89).

Undocumented persons’ access to health care was an issue that divided most political parties, and the debate was subsequently contentious. The arguments in favour of subsidized health care for undocumented persons were many and varied, but mainly based in the human rights charters Sweden has ratified.22 Albeit not legally binding, Sweden has agreed to act in accordance with them. The objective to act accordingly is present in the Health Care Act 2§, in stating the aim of health care to be “good health and health care on equal terms for the whole population.”23 Medical personnel argued that excluding undocumented patients would be conflicting with medical ethics, and that they, as medical professionals, would not act as border guards. Their job is to see to the needs of the patient, they argued, and residential status could not override that (Ascher, 2005; Flodin, 2008).

In 2010 a long awaited government investigation was initiated to consider the options and political implications for health care provision for undocu-

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22 *International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1976, Article 12*, claims every person’s right to “the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health” and the responsibility of all state parties to create “conditions which would assure to all medical service and medical attention in the event of sickness”. This is also included in the European Social Charter, 1961 (as amended), Article 11.

Other conventions that also emphasize health care as a specifically important issue are The Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, Article 24; International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1965, Article 5(e)(iv); Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 1979, Articles 11.1(f) and 12

23 *Hälso- och Sjukvårdslagen 2§ ”Målet för hälso- och sjukvården är en god hälsa och en vård på lika villkor för hela befolkningen.”*
mented persons (Zelmin, 2011). The investigation concluded, and suggested, that the undocumented should be offered health care on the same terms as the rest of the resident population. The reception of the document was mixed. Several of the smaller political parties, also of those in the government coalition, welcomed the suggestions made by the investigator. The Moderate Party [*Moderaterna*], the major party in the ruling coalition and The Minister of Migration, were, on the other hand, very displeased with its conclusions and initially suggested that the investigation be entirely rejected. At the time of writing, the investigation has been latent for more than half a year, and no action has been taken in any direction on the matter.\(^\text{24}\)

**Institutional borders in health care regulations**

Before moving on to explain and discuss the regulations with bearing on undocumented persons’ access to health care, a brief explanation of administrative and organizational context is necessary. The responsibilities for health care are divided between state, county and municipal levels. The state is responsible for overall control, legislation and policy, while the 21 county councils [*landsting*] – one of the regional level political and administrative institutions – are responsible for implementation and provision. The responsibility for elderly care and some other types of long-term assistance are delegated to the municipalities, and will not be discussed here. Health care is the major area of responsibility for the county councils and they have a similar political structure as the national level with more or less the same political parties represented.

**National regulations**

The regulatory basis for health care provision is the Health Care Act, stipulating that the county councils’ hospitals and subcontractors are responsible for providing and financing health care for county residents. Residents are, in this case, defined as those registered in the population register on an address in that county. The financial arrangement is decentralized, mainly based on county taxes and, to a lesser extent, on patient charges and state grants. Patient fees are set locally, but generally an appointment with a general practitioner costs the patient around 150 SEK (approximately 15 Euro).

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\(^{24}\) The present conservative-liberal government coalition, which is in minority position, recently formulated an agreement on migration policy with the Greens (in opposition), where health care for undocumented persons and education for undocumented children were to be included. One of the motivations behind this agreement was to take a proactive stance against the populist Sweden Democrats (Eriksson and Idling, 2011), which has played the role of balancing power in parliament since the elections of 2010. In the end, the issue of health care provision was excluded from the agreement, and it is still a controversial matter.
There are also subsidies for drugs on prescription. Non-residents are eligible for a varying array of health care provision, depending on where they are from. EU citizens are entitled to the same types of care as Swedish citizens to the same subsidies, provided they are insured in their home country.

Asylum seekers’ eligibilities to health care are codified in the Health Care for Asylum Seekers and Others Act. The act concerns (1) asylum seekers, (2) persons who are granted a temporary residence permit on the basis of an asylum application, (3) persons held in detention and (4) persons with temporary residence permits for the purpose of being witness in court. These groups are entitled to “care that cannot be deferred, maternity care, abortion and contraceptive advice” and pay a template fee for consultations and drugs on prescription, currently 50 SEK (approximately 5 Euro). Asylum seeking children under the age of 18 (henceforth, ‘children’ refers to persons under the age of 18, unless otherwise stated) are exempt and are entitled to the same range of health care services as resident – that is registered – children. Rejected asylum seekers are covered by these regulations also after a deportation decision is made, until the moment they are deported. However, if a person belonging to category (1) or (2) is rejected but ‘hiding’, thus obstructing the execution of the deportation, they are expressly not covered by the Health Care for Asylum Seekers Act. Again, children in such situations are exempt and eligible to the same types of care as resident children, except that these subsidies do not apply to medicines. Finally, undocumented persons who have not sought asylum but are residing in Sweden without necessary permits, including children, are not mentioned, and thus not included.

For persons who are not registered residents, asylum seekers or EU citizens, the Health Care Act 4§ stipulates a minimum level of health care that should be offered to everyone: “If a person sojourning in the county without being resident there needs immediate health care, such care shall be provided by the county council”. Immediate care is here to be understood essentially as the care given in emergency rooms. In the case of Swedish residents seeking care in another county but their own, it is understood as care that cannot be deferred until their return to their own county. In the cases where no other county (of residence), institution, EU country or insurance company is financially responsible, the individual is required to cover the actual cost of the immediate care received. These costs differ between counties, but examples of costs can be seen in the table below.

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25 In addition to these subsidies, there are limits to how much a person can be liable to pay for health care or prescribed drugs per year.
26 “Om någon som vistas inom landstinget utan att vara bosatt där behöver omedelbar hälso- och sjukvård, ska landstinget erbjuda sådan vård.”
Table 1: Comparison of subsidized and non-subsidized care in 2005: costs for the patient (Läkare utan Gränser, 2005:9). NB: Prices may vary between counties and clinics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of health care/drugs</th>
<th>Prices for Swedish citizens*</th>
<th>Prices for undocumented persons and tourists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visiting a doctor at an emergency room</td>
<td>260 SEK**</td>
<td>2 000 SEK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit to a GP at a health centre</td>
<td>140 SEK **</td>
<td>1 400 SEK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit to midwife during pregnancy</td>
<td>0 SEK</td>
<td>500 SEK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child delivery without complications</td>
<td>0 SEK</td>
<td>21 000 SEK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insulin treatment for diabetes type I</td>
<td>1 800 SEK per year***</td>
<td>Circa 13 000 SEK per year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 100 SEK equals approximately 10 Euro.
** Public health insurance covers any costs exceeding 900 SEK per year.
*** This is the maximum anyone is required to pay for medicine per year.

Single doctor appointments are within a price range that undocumented persons may be able to manage, especially if they have a social network or charity organization to turn to for assistance. In general however, it can be argued that access to health care for undocumented persons, or anyone with limited resources can be deemed to equal his/her access to subsidized health care.

The county councils are free to provide any care to anyone at its actual cost, given that they can fulfill their responsibilities in terms of provision, waiting times and quality for the county residents. The Local Government Act 3§ regulates any subsidies that a county council can establish for others but their own residents: County councils and municipalities are “not allowed to take any action that has negative consequences for their residents, unless there are exceptional reasons for such action.” In the present case, this means that the county council may not subsidize any services (health care) for non-residents (undocumented persons) as this has negative consequences (less money in the treasury) for the members (the residents). Individual exceptions can be made with support of the ‘exceptional reasons’ sub-clause.

This is how the regulations are generally understood – a member of a municipality or county council is someone who is registered there. Mats Tjernberg has argued that based on tax-liability and economic contribution to a state, these regulations can be construed otherwise. There is often a lack of congruence between tax liability and rights to welfare benefits, and a person who is liable to pay tax should, according to the Local Government Act, be included as a member of the municipality. Any person who, by staying in a territory is liable to pay tax, Tjernberg argues, should not be excluded from

27 “Kommuner och landsting får inte fatta beslut med tillbakaverkande kraft som är till nackdel för medlemmarna, om det inte finns synnerliga skäl för det.”
the social welfare system, including undocumented persons (Tjernberg, 2010).

In contrast to some other countries, it is not unlawful to assist or provide health care to undocumented persons in Sweden. German, Danish, and Norwegian immigration law prohibits anyone from employing or assisting undocumented persons (PICUM, 2003; Scott, 2004). It is unclear however, whether this includes medical assistance, as it has never been tried in court. Only Norway has specifically excluded health care from the ban on assistance. This is an important factor for NGO-clinics working with undocumented patients. Where the legal status of their clinics and work is uncertain, their activities become much more precarious and significantly impeded.

Apart from explicit entitlements or lack of such, regulations concerning secrecy and the duty to report are two other issues fundamental to undocumented persons’ access to health care. In Germany for instance, all state officials including health care professionals, who attain information about an individual without a valid residence permit must report it to the Ministry of Interior. This prevents undocumented persons from accessing any assistance through public means, also that which they are legally entitled to (Scott, 2004). Swedish state employees have no such duty to denounce,28 and in relation to health care, protection of the identity and integrity of the patient is the general rule and can only be broken if he/she is suspected of a crime with a minimum culpability of one year.

In sum, Swedish national legislation sanctions the provision of emergency care at its full cost for undocumented persons, based on the minimum level of care that no one must be denied. Undocumented persons are the only resident group in Sweden not eligible for affordable health care. In countries with public/private or private insurance solutions, there is usually at least a theoretical possibility for an undocumented person to acquire such insurance (PICUM, 2007). Albeit seldom an option in reality for most people in other places due to administrative or financial reasons, the Swedish context doesn’t even offer the theoretical opening for private health insurance.

Regional policies

The scalar levels in state administration may seem straightforward, with larger administrative and political containers containing the smaller ones. Nevertheless, what the hierarchal structure implies in terms of organization does not necessarily correspond to the division of labour or normative structure of power relations within that organization. Due to specific distributions of competencies, the national level has a higher influence on determining the

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28 For persons working with social assistance, there are some regulations that can be interpreted as a duty to denounce persons without residence permits, but this is not especially targeted to undocumented persons, as is the case with the German, Danish and Norwegian cases.
legal framework for the entry and stay of foreigners, while regional and local levels of government may have significant influence on policies concerning integration and distribution of welfare services. In Germany for instance, one of the countries in Europe with the most restrictive handling of undocumented persons, the federal states have on their own decided to grant undocumented children the right to schooling (Laubenthal, 2011). In the Swedish case, a similar breakdown to the regional level reveals unruly county councils forming their own policies concerning undocumented persons’ access to health care, sometimes in line with, sometimes in opposition to, existing national regulations.

When the issue of health care for undocumented persons showed up on the national political agenda, it had already been an object for discussion in some of the counties, as a practical, but also as a political and administrative issue for some time. The lack of explicit national regulations prompted them to form their own policies and guidelines on the subject. The proactivity in formulating a policy concerning undocumented persons’ entitlement to health care depended to a great extent on how pressing the practical issue of undocumented patients was in the county. By autumn 2009, when I made a first survey of the existence of such policies, 17 out of 21 county councils had formulated or were about to formulate a regional policy and or guidelines. The issue was raised by a wide array of political parties, both left and right wing, and from the parties forming the county government as well as the opposition. All parties but the Sweden Democrats29 were represented as initiators of the suggestion to form a local policy, albeit the Left, the Greens, the Christian-Democratic and the Liberal parties being the most vocal.

The regional policies vary in form and content but can roughly be categorized into three groups: regulations that equate the entitlements of undocumented migrants with those of asylum seekers, regulations that extend undocumented migrants’ access to health care from ‘immediate’ care to ‘immediately necessary’ care, and stressing that the patient’s need of care must be primary to economic concerns, and finally regulations that clarify how the national legislation already in place should be understood. The distinction between immediate and immediately necessary care is unclear, but most counties who made this shift interpret the latter to more or less equal the entitlements of asylum seekers.

The Norrbotten county council made the decision to extend undocumented patients’ access to health care from immediate to immediately necessary care. Their proceedings stated that: “the county council’s possibility to provide health care [should not] be limited by a duty of the county council to

29 ‘All parties’ here indicates all established political parties who are also represented in the national parliament. There are other local parties of varying political colour that have been either enthusiastic or reluctant to formulating such a policy.
judge whether a person has the right to be in Sweden or not.”

Stockholm county council did not make a political decision, but their guidelines, formed on ‘the civil servant level’, fall into the same category of policy as Norrbotten. In a phone interview, a civil servant stressed the non-political nature of the policy so as to not stretch the Local Government Act’s restrictions on subsidies. The Region of Skåne formed an early policy incorporating rejected asylum seekers in the asylum seekers category and in the asylum seekers’ health care budget. Other undocumented persons – those who had not previously been asylum seekers – were explicitly excluded from the target group for the policy. The guidelines instructed the person at the reception desk to ask the patient whether he/she had sought asylum. If not, they were not included in the group eligible for subsidized care. Several other county councils adopted this policy, and while Skåne eventually amended its policy to also include other undocumented persons, many of the other counties still have policies only including part of the undocumented population. In whichever form however, this last category of policy is in conflict with the Local Government Act, as they include generalized subsidies for non-members. Örebro was one of the few counties that adopted guidelines to clarify the implications of national legislation. Their argument for doing so was the simple statement that ‘we have to follow the law’. If the national legislation would change, they would change their policy too, they argued.

Since 2009, the most important change has been the wider awareness of the presence of undocumented persons and the acknowledgement of a need for routines, whatever they may be, for their health care provision. A few county councils have established new or amended policies and many have formulated specific guidelines and incorporated them into their handbooks. Sörmland county council have recently taken the step to grant “all asylum seekers and undocumented persons continuously present in the county” access to health care services on the same conditions as its registered residents. The most indicative sign of the greater awareness of the issue is how much easier it has become to get hold of these guidelines. A search process that in 2009 took a couple of weeks and many phone calls could two and a half years later be completed in a few hours.

The main reason put forward by the county councils aiming to extend the rights of undocumented patients was indignation over the border function that health care regulation was indirectly encumbered with. They understood it to be in conflict with medical ethics, human rights and the integrity of

30 County council board proceedings Norrbotten 2009-02-05.
31 County council board proceedings Sörmland 2011-09-06 states that: “Från och med 1 januari ge asylsökande och papperslösa som stadigvarande uppehåller sig i Sörmland rätt till sjukvård, tandvård samt habilitering och hjälpmedel på samma villkor som för personer med medborgarskap eller uppehållstillstånd.” At the time of writing however (March 2012), this change has not made it into the instructions for practitioners.
health care provision. The vacuum in national legislation allowed for local and regional regulations.

In sum, the vast majority of the 21 counties have passed policies and guidelines to the effect that the rights to health care for undocumented persons should be expanded. Elsewhere, I have argued that in whatever form, codifying the entitlements of undocumented persons and introducing guidelines explaining the related administrative routines is an improvement from the previous situation. The greatest hurdle for undocumented persons to access health care, perhaps second to their fear of detection, is the lack of knowledge and functioning routines available from those who are to provide it (Sigvardsdotter, 2010). As long as there are no regulations in place, difficult ethical and practical decisions are transferred down through the administrative structures, and assigned to the secretaries, doctors and nurses meeting undocumented persons in their work or in their spare time.

With few exceptions however, these policies, whatever their content, have been poorly communicated to those who are supposed to implement them, and, as a result, their direct practical import has been rather limited. In the sense that the debates around them have raised awareness however, they have been of greater import. These policies have been important also for another reason. They were early attempts to officially acknowledge, make visible and include a residual category in public regulations. The problems concerning definitions were correspondingly great, and solved with varying success. Some of them are distinct examples of how the gömda discourse has had direct consequences on regulations: rejected asylum seekers are perceived as deserving while those who have not sought asylum are assumed to be ‘illegal immigrants’ and consequently undeserving. Others only mistakenly included only part of the undocumented population. Sörmland, who amended their policy in 2011, updated their definition of the targeted group to asylum seekers and undocumented persons who are ‘continuously present in the county’, which is the most inclusive definition among them. Still, ‘continuously present’ can, in a strict interpretation, be understood as resident, thus registered, or require that patients have to prove their continuous presence. In that case, the definition is suddenly turned into a very restrictive one.

This summary of national and regional regulations highlights the complexity of the issue, in terms of its political and regulatory confusion, as well as the difficulties of defining undocumented persons as a group and the consequent issues that arise when trying to target inclusive regulations at undocumented persons. The only regulations that definitely include a residual group such as undocumented persons are those that exclude no one.
Border negotiations in local administration

In order to place in sharper relief the administrative practices and practical difficulties that arise when attempting to include a residual group such as undocumented persons, this section focuses in one more administrative level – to the individual hospital. The first entity to pass and implement a local policy was the Sahlgrenska University Hospital (henceforth Sahlgrenska) in Gothenburg. It is a hospital administratively and financially contained in the Västra Götaland Region county council. The hospital board decided in 2006 to develop a policy, a guideline and an educational programme on how to receive undocumented persons as patients in emergency rooms and surgeries. The (former) head doctor told me:

What made me so upset was partly their [the undocumented persons’] situation, but also that they clearly perceived the hospital as part of the system of police authority which we … [had to] make sure that we absolutely were not.

The standards to be expressed in the local policy were to “make sure that we followed the [human rights] conventions that Sweden has ratified”. The immediate care of the Health Care Act was expanded to ‘immediately necessary’ care, and as in the case of the county councils, the new term was not entirely clear but generally understood as distinctly wider than the acute, life saving interventions that immediate care refers to. The financial settlement was such that if the patient were able to pay cash, they were asked to do so, but if not, as was usually the case, the hospital administration would make sure that a routine was in place to prevent those debts from being sent to collection. Instead, they could be forgiven on an individual case basis, in compliance with the Local Government Act.

The head doctor who brought up the issue in the hospital board was responsible for the legal concerns regarding the policy. On an administrative and practical level, they needed “routines for the registration of these people in the computer system, and there are so many tinsy, minute, little things that one has to know for it to work.” In order to succeed with all of these things, they involved

…the registry people, the person in charge of ‘medical personal records’, and naturally the economy administration. Who else? I don’t remember. But I do know, there was so much /…/ red tape on all of these bits, you know, one has to do everything in a certain way. One has to press exactly the right key [on the computer], and then all of this, the legal clauses concerning secrecy and when [it is allowed to] call the police and all that. /…/ But then there were all of these bits necessary for this whole thing not to slip when these patients actually showed up.

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32 Former head doctor, Sahlgrenska Hospital, interviewed August 25th 2009.
33 Former head doctor, Sahlgrenska Hospital.
Their guidelines were extremely detailed, detailing point by point how to create a *reservnummer* for the patient, whom to contact for additional information, and whom *not* to contact, to avoid anyone calling someone for assistance and inadvertently giving away someone’s identity to the migration authorities. The guidelines were distributed to the emergency rooms and clinics to ensure that anyone working at the hospital with a chance of encountering undocumented persons in their work would have access to the information and instructions. The Ethics Centre at the hospital was given the task to educate doctors and nurses working in positions likely to come in contact with these patients. This way of spreading information about new guidelines and sensitive topics was considered successful and has been repeated in later information campaigns.

However, despite the massive information campaign the Rosengrenska clinic who provides health care for undocumented persons in the Gothenburg area have, since the adoption of these guidelines, had a number of incidents where undocumented persons were denied access to health care that they, according to the policy, were entitled to. They eventually began giving paper copies of the guidelines to every undocumented patient they remitted to the Sahlgrenska hospital. Thus they ensured that the person at the hospital reception desk would always have access to the instructions. They have had many calls from volunteers or undocumented persons in other parts of the country, asking for assistance or advice on health or health care matters. The compilation and summary of all county council decisions, policies and guidelines that I completed from the phone interview survey enabled them to adopt this strategy on a wider scale. With access to all county council policies, they could simply email the policy document to be printed out and brought to the local hospital by the prospective patient.

Everyone I have spoken to is in agreement that administration is the greatest hurdle for undocumented persons to access health care; the NGOs engaged in health care provision generally refer to this problem as ‘the old lady at the reception desk’ [*tanten i kassan*]. Even for the group of undocumented children who by law are eligible for the same kinds of care as Swedish children, the administrative difficulties arising from not having a *personnummer* often hinder these children from accessing such care.

In the present system the costs for undocumented patients (except rejected asylum seeking children) stay in the local budget – it is the local hospital or health centre that can forgive a debt or decide to send it for collection. As the concentration of undocumented persons vary greatly throughout the country and within towns and cities, these costs are unevenly spread, and despite the costs being minor in a broader perspective, a small number of patients in need of expensive treatment may cause serious financial problems for a local clinic. In general however, the costs for providing health care for undocumented patients are low, and the recent public investigation concluded that it would be not only more humane but also more cost-efficient to offer subsi-
dized primary care to undocumented persons, as preventive and proactive care is less expensive than the acute care at the advanced stages of a condition (Zelmin, 2011). However, with the deregulation of health care provision, increased competition and the new, computerized registration systems that record and accumulate data on efficiency, number of patients and kinds of treatments, administrators may become nervous about being criticized for accepting patients that the clinic cannot be reimbursed for. Part of the same general development is that patients are increasingly expected to enroll with a particular health clinic, and each clinic only accepts patients who are listed with them. To be listed, a *personnummer* is needed.

These administrative and financial issues are direct effects of the exclusion and omission of undocumented persons in legislation. A person lacking *personnummer* is efficiently shut out from crucial assistance that he/she has legal entitlements to, simply because the computer systems cannot handle them as existing individuals, or the people handling the computer systems don’t know how to do it. By omission then, an efficient wall is built around welfare services, locking undocumented persons out.

Attempts to include undocumented patients often include administrative acrobatics to make the digital welfare state bend to these people’s basic needs. I have heard from people working in hospitals, in my interviews and elsewhere, of a great variety of solutions to be able to provide care without having to put a bill in the patient’s hand that they will never be able to pay. One of the larger hospitals had several cases of asylum seeking patients that were rejected but needed continued care not to become dramatically worse. The hospital established a fund in the memory of a patient who died, and this fund has since then been used to cover some of the costs for undocumented patients. A maternity ward at another hospital started to send the bills for delivering undocumented babies to a default address where it ‘wouldn’t bother anyone’.

These tactics can only function informally, and I have neither proof of these stories being accurate, nor an inclination to make investigations into whether they are, announcing them openly would force them out of their informal operation. There are however enough of these stories to indicate that this type of tactics are likely practiced.

When visiting the hospital

As shown above, there are an infinite number of complications that can arise when an undocumented person attempts to see a doctor. I accompanied an undocumented woman to a doctor’s appointment and was able to witness some of them. The visit was arranged through the Red Cross who had issued a referral and booked an appointment with a specialist. The Stockholm coun-

34 Fieldnotes, 1st July 2009
ty council’s regional policy made it possible for us to visit the hospital during its regular hours, and the particular hospital we went to had established administrative routines for undocumented patients. When we arrived, we found that they were forewarned of our coming, but they were soon confused by the complicated and unfamiliar routines. There were many extra boxes in the electronic registration form that had to be filled in due to my companion’s lack of personnummer. One of them required a country code:

‘Where is she from? Kosovo? Is that a country? Or is it? Is it now anyway? Do you know the country code for Kosovo? No? We need to enter a country code here, we need to enter the country code for Kosovo. We do that for all foreign patients.’

The din attracted more staff, and four secretaries and nurses gathered around the screen. My companion started to get a nervous, but was saved by the doctor’s arrival, and the nurses hastily decided that they could register her as ‘unknown nationality’. While she saw the doctor, I inquired into their routines for undocumented patients. It turned out that they had had a notice about this special visit a couple of weeks previously, and had on purpose called the internal help desk to ask for particular administrative instructions (Fieldnotes, March 23rd 2010).

In essence, they had done everything right – there were routines in place, they had gathered as much information as there was. Still, there were numerous questions asked and great confusion at the visit. To a Swedish patient, a similar situation would perhaps be annoying, but for her – undocumented and deportable – it was a rather frightening experience, despite being accompanied by a person equipped with ten digits.

Once past that hurdle however, there are still secondary effects impeding the contact and interaction between the doctor and the undocumented patient. While there are certainly doctors and nurses reluctant to provide care to undocumented persons for personal or political reasons, or for fear of doing or assisting in something illegal, this seems not to be the most common reason for such unwillingness. One of the reasons that seem most common is that undocumented patients’ position outside the regular system drastically decreases the doctor’s control over the consequences and progression of an initiated treatment. There are the uncertainties about whether the patient will be able to obtain the prescribed medication – it may be expensive and there are no subsidies even for the children that are entitled to subsidised health care. There are uncertainties concerning the doctor being able to reach the patient after the consultation for follow-up, and consequently uncertainty regarding the continuation of the planned therapy. There are also uncertainties concerning the possibilities to refer the patient to the right specialist. In addition, there may be the communication issues common to all non-Swedish speaking patients. Further, in a highly specialized health care system, doctors volunteering at NGOs or receiving undocumented patients at
their own hospitals or clinics may often be asked to diagnose and treat patients with symptoms originating in issues they haven’t seen in professional practice for years. The medical responsibility for the patient’s life and well being, is an important parts of the professional medical ethics, and for some doctors and nurses, these uncertainties may add up to conditions they are unwilling to face.

Twilight clinics

The organizations and volunteer-clinics providing care to undocumented persons are aware of the uncertainties haunting their activities, and work hard to minimize them. “Actually I don’t really like these sorts of shadow activities, but what can we do?” one doctor working in one of the NGO-clinics said. They all stress the importance of patient safety, continuity and quality of the care provided by trying to adhere to as high standards as possible of professional requirements, record keeping and drug prescription.

There are six organizations or networks in Sweden, providing health care for undocumented persons. They are of varying size and are organized in different ways. The first one to establish was Médecins de Monde (MDM) in Stockholm in 1995. Four of them – MDM in Stockholm, Deltastiftelsen in Malmö, Rosengrenska Stiftelsen in Gothenburg and the newest one, Tinnerökliniken in Linköping – have walk-in clinics with volunteering doctors and nurses once every, or every other, week. One clinic in Stockholm – run by the Red Cross, is not actually a clinic but a network organized around a hotline where undocumented persons can speak to or see a nurse, and be remitted to someone on their list of volunteer doctors with varying specialties. Finally, one was established as a volunteer clinic at Ersta Diakoni, a privately run hospital in Stockholm, but the doctors there are now incorporated in the Red Cross network, and accept patients at their normal, paid, working hours. In terms of their activities and aims, their modus operandi has been similar.

All of these organizations are expressly working toward their own abolition – a situation where undocumented persons can access public health care and they won’t be needed anymore, but in the meantime they fill the gap in which undocumented persons fall. In a few cases these lobby activities have consisted in collecting money to pay the actual price of a certain treatment or therapy, to raise awareness of what these persons are expected to pay, and to underscore the problem in general. The clinics often also play an important social role for undocumented persons. One of the organizers of the Rosengrenska clinic described their weekly activities like this:

So... between five thirty and nine or ten when we close, /.../ one can see the dentist, one can see the doctor, one can see a counsellor, one can see the opti-
cian and have free glasses, one can get clothes for the children, one can eat, one can bring food home. Yes, and the children can play in the basement, and one can be of help, they can themselves be a resource in the general care and caring here. Do some interpretation for someone, talk to someone, give advice or just meet. Because the social bit, the community here... sometimes I compare it with... I can feel that this is something equivalent to a gay bar you know, because one has an identity that others... that one cannot openly show. One has to manage and to protect oneself. But here, it is nothing strange... If [the people here] are not undocumented now, they perhaps were, or maybe they will become, or they know someone who is. Here is a permanent condition of undocumentedness.

The clinic she works for is only responsible for the medical part of these activities. They have been active since 1998, and early on they understood that catering only to health care needs for these persons was insufficient – “Their health problems are interwoven with their whole life situation”.

As result, they have worked actively to pair up with other organizations. Examples are Vision for All that provides vision screening and glasses for those who need them, a medical student association, IFMSA, that organizes games and pottering for children, an Emmaus second hand shop providing clothes, and a person who was undocumented just a few years ago, now helping to collect food from restaurants and grocery stores every week.

Porous borders and osmosis

The connections between public health care and the NGO-clinics are closely knit. Doctors and nurses have ordinary employments in the official health care system, which means that their voluntary work is often an unpaid continuation of the working day:

Well, when I got my [nurse] certificate I started assisting at the clinic. And it just became a thing, that on Wednesdays, when I was done at my job at [the hospital], I would just go here and continue. I did that for three years.

The feel of it is different though, especially when patients are admitted quietly after opening hours, or in the often crammed and chaotic circumstances in the NGO-clinics. One of the doctors involved in the Ersta Diakoni volunteer clinic described the shift from seeing undocumented patients at night in his spare time, and eventually being able to incorporate them in his daytime schedule.

When it happened outside working hours, it was more of an enthusiasts’ activity and we, the doctors had no pay for staying after work to do that. But, I mean, the patients still have the same problems, but it becomes a different

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35 Fieldnotes, 13th February 2010
36 International Federation of Medical Students’ Associations
experience for the doctor. Now, when it is incorporated in the schedule, it becomes as any other patient really. It defused the whole thing very much… I think… because back then... we were here after hours, it was getting dark outside and getting very late in the evening and the whole building was empty, and so on. Now, it is as any other clinic, and that is really great actually.

The spaces used for health care provision for undocumented persons are varied. Only one clinic has its own premises; the others make use of borrowed rooms, used by other people for other purposes at other times of the day. One clinic borrows the offices and adjoining rooms of a local church. Once a week, “the priests and deacons clean up their things in their offices. They let complete strangers sit by their desks and let people in, /.../ to the breaking-point!”

One clinic uses the premises of a privately practicing doctor. They are not sure that the staff peopling the rooms in daytime know that they are there at night, and they make sure to leave everything in exactly the state they left it. They are allowed to use the equipment they need to do ECG tests and collect blood samples. Afterwards they cycle with the blood files to the lab at the central hospital for analysis. The private clinic is billed for the blood work, which is its direct financial contribution to the budget of their twilight clinic. The blood tests are marked with birthdates and an abbreviation, not a personnummer as in the normal case. Intermingled with the other files in the lab, the blood from undocumented veins is stored and analysed by the same people, with the same equipment as any properly marked blood. Sometimes the interconnections become intimate; warping the identities of patients. One doctor recalls the following episode:

I once had a patient who became pregnant, and it would only have complicated her situation more. It was too far along … to have a medical abortion [surgical abortion was the only option]. We solved it… she came to me at the obstetrics department, and she had her abortion in another woman’s name. But the other woman … well, you know, she was there. This was on a Sunday when I was on call. The anaesthetist and I … everyone involved were in agreement, this is a person with this and this name, but it is actually another. And, if she started bleeding or anything, that was very important, so that she had the right blood type.

Places, doctors, nurses, equipment and patients take on dual identities in the endeavour to provide health care to those who are officially absent but whose corporeal presence require the same looking after as anyone properly present. In many places there are no alternative routes to health care, no volunteer clinics to turn to. Yet where there are, they make use of and act in the same spaces as official care. At hospitals after hours, at private clinics at twilight, they can, with luck, be diagnosed and treated by the same doctors who are prevented from assisting them at their day-job. The walls around

37 Interview, NGO clinic representative, August 26th 2009
health care institutions may be hard and solid, made from legal omission and lacking administrative procedures, but they are constantly perforated. Yet, these points of care are seldom straightforward or uncomplicated. Expensive specialists at daytime spend evenings conducting diagnostic primary care they have not practiced for years, rooms fitted up for certain medical procedures are used for completely different purposes. Medicines prescribed for others, because of over-prescription or otherwise, find their way to the store-rooms of volunteer-clinics and into undocumented patients’ mouths. Connected, interrelated, parallel, but imperfectly so; there are many uncertainties, deficiencies and shortages forged by the displacement of health care provision from the official realm to the spaces of nonexistence that undocumented persons inhabit.

Undocumented patients

Regardless of efforts to include undocumented persons in policies and administrative routines, fear of being reported and deported is the most potent impediment for undocumented persons to seek health care, in Sweden as well as in other European countries that actually offer affordable health care to undocumented persons (PICUM, 2007). The fear of approaching health care institutions is deeply rooted; the instances where patients have been reported to the authorities, intentionally or by accident, are well-established stories among undocumented persons (Ascher, et al., 2008; Holgersson, 2011). The options for receiving health care are mainly at any of the volunteer-clinics, or through being remitted elsewhere by them.

Nonetheless, there are occasionally, in some places not seldom, undocumented patients showing up at emergency rooms or clinics without any prior contact with the clinic or any organization. In those instances, the ‘old lady at the reception desk’ is decidedly the most frightening gatekeeper. Sometimes it works out as it is supposed to. At other times patients, including women in labour, are denied at the door because they cannot be registered or because they cannot pay cash.

There are examples of tactics for undocumented persons to initiate border negotiations in health care on their own. One example was given me by a man I spoke to at a Papperslösa Stockholm meeting. After the demonstration, we kept company towards the train station. I had explained my research project to him at an earlier occasion, and he was interested. It was cold and windy, with sleet whipping our faces and I asked him a few questions while we walked, thinking it an absolutely useless interview situation.

…but at a street corner he started telling me what happened five years ago when his whole family was undocumented and his wife was about to give birth to their youngest child. When it was time, they went to the hospital. He
knew the desk would be trouble, and strode straight past the reception and into the maternity ward and stopped the first doctor he could find. He told her that they were undocumented and that his wife was in labour. The doctor made sure that they got a room and that they got the assistance and care that they needed. The doctor had instructed him to seem stressed out or tired or absent minded and say he’d get back to them every time the administrators at the reception wanted any information from him, and after the baby was born and the doctor had the time, all of the administrative things were solved. The baby girl was ill and his wife had to stay for fifteen days at the ward. When she left they got a huge bill, but until then everything was calm and easy. ‘And now she is five years old, plays football and has become a Swedish citizen, but she was born undocumented and had a bill for her delivery.’ (Fieldnotes, 4th November 2009)

There are ways for undocumented persons to access healthcare, there are tactics to be employed and there are organizations the volunteer to provide necessities. These are however all arbitrary, not based in rights, subject to individual doctors’, nurses’ and administrators’ compassion and judgement. Undocumented persons run risks of the same injuries and diseases as anyone else, but have very few means of remediying them. At one of my visits to an NGO clinic, I wrote the following fieldnotes:

When I ask the volunteering doctors at the clinic what are the most common problems undocumented patients have. ‘Actually they have more or less the same health issues as any Swede, but there is an overrepresentation of stress related and psychosomatic issues, also when you have accounted for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. We have some cases of seriously high blood pressure, and this often in rather young persons too. Other issues that come up more often among these patients are certain types of repetitive strain injury or injuries that appear in work related accidents when for example construction workers or cleaners don’t have access to good protective equipment or are working very long hours and never rest.’

‘And another thing: they usually come very late to see a doctor. And I have heard the dentists that we have here say the same, in some undocumented patients you will find symptoms and conditions seldom seen in Swedish patients, simply because the disease or injury has not been seen or treated by a doctor at a stage where Swedish patients normally seek help. I hate to say it, but it is good education for us’ (Fieldnotes, 26th August 2009).

These statements are in line with the results from a study examining the health care needs among undocumented persons seeking assistance with the Red Cross. The most common diagnostic categories among them were pregnancy, bone, joint or muscle issues and psychiatric conditions. They estimated that about half of the patients seeking care there should have seen a doctor at an earlier stage of their condition. Several of the injuries or conditions would have been simple to remedy at an earlier stage, but were complicated by the deferred consultancy. Many pregnant women came for their first check-up very late in the pregnancy (Fresk and Ganslandt, 2009).
Deferred treatments may complicate a condition, but in some cases the delay or neglect or refusal of the patient has severe consequences. One of the interviewed doctors relayed the case of a young man with diabetes who was refused care at the hospital, as it was not considered an emergency and he could not pay the full costs of his care or medication.

I had a patient who... a 20 year old guy who was diagnosed with diabetes, diabetes type I that is, and he was in a very bad state, he was hospitalized in intensive care during a week or so. And after that, the situation wasn’t that acute anymore, so they just sent him home with instructions for how he should take his insulin – without insulin, and without any idea what he was supposed to do, and that is a pretty complicated therapy. When people get that kind of diabetes they are usually called to very frequent check ups and follow-ups to discuss dosage and how to do and so on. I mean, it is not considered emergency care, but at the same time, it is very harmful for this young person to have his blood sugar oscillating up and down like that. He is all the time at risk of his condition becomes acute and he ends up in intensive care again. So, drawing those dividing lines is impossible. /.../ Some interpret acute as more and some interpret it as less. Some interpret it in a way that this guy with diabetes absolutely should get help, because with insulin... you get very sick and it is very deleterious to the body, badly controlled diabetes gives damage to eyesight, kidneys and shortens life expectancy considerably. Others interpret [acute] as indicating only immediately life-threatening conditions.

The medical profession matter-of-factly states the effects of not having access to necessary health care services – discrimination of undocumented persons causes suffering and death (Ascher, et al., 2008). A more careful and obscure language is generally used within social science. Discrimination, borders and law inscribe people’s bodies, or the physiology and morphology of bodies are shaped by the practices indicated by politics and law (de Certeau, 1984). Michel de Certeau speaks of billyclubs, handcuffs and the witness box making marks on peoples’ bodies. In the case of undocumented persons in the Swedish context, the institutional borders excluding undocumented persons through omission – constructed, produced and reproduced in law, administration and practice, directly and indirectly carve their traces in and on the undocumented person’s body. Being subject to the insecurities of undocumentedness and, in addition, suffering the exclusion intimated by law, has serious effects on the materiality of the body. Borders are etched onto their bodies, not only as text to be read by others, but in effects that cause ‘suffering and death’.
Conclusion

Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die?\textsuperscript{38}

The above lines have been several times quoted in the debate concerning health care provision for undocumented persons, stressing the obvious fact that undocumented persons are just as much persons as those who are equipped with \textit{personnummer}, and consequently have the same basic body functions and the same basic needs.

This chapter has given a detailed account of how institutional borders are constructed and reproduced in the health care sector. Health care is a relevant example both in terms of its bio-political import in the Swedish welfare state and because it acutely highlights the consequences of the official absence and corporeal presence that signify the undocumented condition.

As undefined by law, undocumented persons are not, and in some senses cannot, be entitled to any health care services but the rudimentary minimum that must not be denied anyone. Several county councils and hospitals have formed policies specifically targeting undocumented patients, but these policies still have problems devising an inclusive definition of the group ‘undocumented’. The lack of official identity and the consequent lack of \textit{personnummer}, paired with the increasingly computerized registration and record keeping, causes administrative complications for registering undocumented patients and requires detailed instructions and routines in order to be functional. Most health care for undocumented persons is provided in or through NGO-clinics that are closely interconnected with the official health care system, both spatially and in terms of their personnel, equipment and activities.

Undocumented persons generally have the same health issues as the Swedish population in general, with some overrepresentation of stress related issues and repetitive strain injuries, but the lack of access to health care makes their initially simple conditions more complicated, and can cause serious complications for the patient and for health care professionals.

\textsuperscript{38} The Merchant of Venice, Act III, scene I, 57-65.
VI. Presenting absent bodies

Through the course of the past two chapters, several aspects of the undocumented position, its construction and how it is reproduced have been uncovered. The undocumented position, legally defined through omission, originates in a mismatch of territory, population and jurisdiction – like a disturbance term unsettling the order of the inter-state system. As such, the undocumented position is not accounted for. When shifting focus to the observable realm of embodied practice, however, that position materializes as corporeally and socially present undocumented persons, meeting and interacting with public officials such as health care providers. That said, while the mystery of state-undocumented interaction becomes less of a mystery, other questions arise. The lack of official identity matching their physical presence – especially in a context where that identity is crucial for everyday interaction – endows the undocumented position with paradoxical qualities. Their interactions become displaced and oblique, indirect and under-the-table: no transactions or work undertaken by them leave traces of their presence or activity.

This chapter therefore inquires further into the properties of that paradoxical position, scrutinizing the present-absent condition that it invokes. Taking a starting point in the spatiality of undocumentedness, I show how the presence-absence nexus manifests itself in people’s lives in various ways, as well as how that condition can be negotiated and resisted. Apart from being invoked through legal and administrative omission, absence is also part of undocumented persons’ everyday tactics. Where detection may mean detention and deportation, concealment and disguise are employed to avoid the surveillance practices and policing of the state. However, concealment doesn’t necessarily mean removal. Undocumentedness is not inscribed as recognizable signs on the body, and concealment can be practiced in plain sight by pretending to be someone with a right to place. This kind of presence doesn’t lend itself to action or speech, however, and undocumented persons are thus deprived of the capacity to appear, which humanly and politically is the same as being deprived of reality itself (Arendt, 1958).

Albeit world-poor – poor in terms of freedom, action and significance (Schaap, 2012) – resistance is possible in the undocumented position. This chapter also shows how undocumented persons, by using their politically absent yet physically present bodies as vehicles for struggle and resistance, can find possibilities for recognition and action – if only fleetingly – in public space.
The *where* of undocumentedness

On the straight question ‘what it is’ to be undocumented, he thought for a while and then said that it is like living in the shadows. ‘It is the same place as criminals are, but they at least have chosen it – undocumented persons are there because of nothing. Yes, it is not like living in the real world, but beside it. And it conditions everything.’ (Fieldnotes 25th August 2011).

There engagement with absence in human geography has been limited and the recent interest in embodiment, perception and material culture has tended to emphasize presence. Further, the interest in absence has to a great extent attended to absence as a temporal relation – not only referring to that which is not there but to that which used to be – and how that is re-presented, or how it slips away (Wylie, 2009). Dydia DeLyser attends to what the absence of certain things allows for in terms of imagining what used to be there (DeLyser, 2001); the recent interest in the spectral (Maddern and Adey, 2008) also mirrors this temporal dimension of absence.

In this case, however, presence and absence coincide – absence is not invoked through time but by law and administration. The starting point for this discussion of the undocumented position in terms of presence and absence is the Arendtian understanding of presence as appearance. In Arendt’s meaning, public space is where subjects appear to and recognize each other, interact and speak to each other. To be deprived of that, she writes, is “to be deprived of reality, which, humanly and politically speaking, is the same as appearance” (Arendt, 1958:198-9). In the upsurge of scholarly interest in the touchy-feely qualities of experience (Longhurst, et al., 2008; Paterson, 2009; Dixon and Straughan, 2010), one could argue this eidetic focus to be a weakness in her theorizing. I will conversely argue that it is fitting in the present context, as it plays an important part in several aspects of the undocumented condition. State control and governmentality is to a large extent based on visual tools, and “the tools of the weak are those which already exists as strategies of the strong” (Cresswell, 1996:164). In other words, the tactics employed by the undocumented are moulded on the strategies of the state, and their tactics corresponding to surveillance are clandestinity and concealment.

Politically and socially speaking, the dividing line between a citizen and an undocumented person is the power to define public space. Being undocumented is to live alongside citizens, unable to act – that is to appear, to speak up and claim rights. In the same way that a citizen ‘is a polis’ and marks with his/her presence the potentiality of public space, an undocumented person is an inverted polis – public space warps at his/her touch.

Susan Coutin touches upon these characteristics of undocumentedness in coining the ‘space of non-existence’ as the space inhabited by undocumented persons – denoting a “borderland [dividing] the legal and the illegal, the
legitimate and the illegitimate, the overt and the clandestine. Legality is spatialized in that those who do not exist legally are imagined to be ‘outside’, in an ‘underground’, or ‘not there’’ (Coutin, 2003:172). However, undocumented persons do not only inhabit these spaces – they constitute them. Unable to appear, to the point where their invisibility renders them absent from, or outside and beyond the spaces citizens inhabit – it is their own physical presence that in a particular legal, political and administrative context conjures the space of non-existence and the non-polis.

![Figure 1: A Möbius surface. Photo: David Benbennick, licensed under Creative Commons license: http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en](https://example.com/mobius_surface)

The non-polis is not a position straightforwardly dichotomous to the polis. Albeit its inversion, it is rather a Möbius inversion – each other’s opposites on a Möbius surface – paradoxical and fleeting, where “spaces that would be mutually exclusive if charted on a two-dimensional map – centre and margin, inside and outside – are occupied simultaneously” (Rose, 1993:140).

**Identification as warping device**

I ask her if there is somewhere she feels safe, or something that she can do to feel safe. She is quiet, thinking. After a little while she laughs and says,
‘Well, if I have an LMA-card\(^{39}\) in my pocket, I will feel safe anywhere’ (Fieldnotes, 1\(^{st}\) June 2010).

*Personnummer* and identity documents are the administrative tools by which a person in Sweden can confirm his/her identity; it defines a person as an officially present, resident person. Its function as numerical interface between the individual and all kinds of private, public and civic actors, forces undocumented persons to ‘come out’ as undocumented in all kinds of contexts and situations. The lack of identity document or *personnummer* does not only obstruct contacts with the postal service, the train company and DVD-rentals. The consequent exclusion from using those services bars undocumented persons from receiving packages from family and friends, from travelling to those family members, and from keeping in contact with them through online social forums.\(^{40}\) A woman told me how she hadn’t seen her daughter and granddaughter in a long time:

They live two hours off by train. They have had a lot of problems and have been undocumented for four years, but now she thinks that they have applied for asylum again and that they are legal, she is not sure. She cannot afford to visit her daughter and it would be too risky – any kind of transport is risky – she doesn’t dare, she said (Fieldnotes, 5\(^{th}\) May 2010).

Some transactions are possible with a foreign identity card but that is risky too, and a *personnummer* or *samordningsnummer* is needed for most things. I asked the woman if there was something that she could do without the ten digits. “Nothing!” She exclaimed, and her voice grew strong. “You feel unnecessary, like a thing. Without the four last digits, well you need it for everything. I can’t become a member anywhere.”\(^{41}\) The perpetual asking for identification in all transactions doesn’t necessarily make them impossible. It is in some cases possible to by-pass the requirement of *personnummer* or to use a fake ID-card, but the fact that the question is always asked means that exposure is intrinsic in every transaction. And while that risk may not always be based in an actual or probable threat of being reported or apprehended, managing that risk of exposure is still part of everyday life as undocumented. Any such contact is a reminder of the barriers between the spaces open to the majority and the Other spaces to which the undocumented are expelled.

The need for concealment in interaction with ‘proper’ spaces and ‘properly’ present persons is reminiscent of being in the ‘closet’. A nurse working for one of the NGO-clinics often equates the clinic to a gay bar – a place where being undocumented is the norm; where those who for the rest of the

\(^{39}\) The LMA-card (Lagen om Mottagande av Asylsökande) identifies a person as an asylum seeker, and thus as someone officially present. It is not an ID card, but can in some instances be used as one. The card has to be renewed every six months or more.

\(^{40}\) Facebook, being a foreign social online network, is an exception.

\(^{41}\) Fieldnotes, 5\(^{th}\) May 2010
week must hide a secret can for an evening be part of the majority without making any efforts to pass as someone else. Queer geographers have paid attention to the paradoxical characteristics of the ‘closet’. Paradoxically, many gays and lesbians may occupy powerful positions in their professional lives but can feel marginalized in other dimensions of life. Often after ‘coming out’, the world may sometimes seem more closed than from within the ‘closet’, notwithstanding its bounded imagery (Valentine, 2002). Concealing a part of one’s social identity inserts paradoxical qualities to space and distorts one’s interaction with the world.

The need for disguise also opens up situations where the rules of social interaction are distorted by the prospect of exposure. I accompanied an 11-year-old undocumented boy to the dentist. He had a bad cavity, too big for a filling, and they had decided to remove the tooth – it would be coming out soon anyway. He was very frightened of this prospect, and this was a first visit to plan the procedure and to look at the dentist’s ‘things’.

We sat in the waiting room and my charge was nervously talking, animatedly, about the fish in the aquarium opposite us. He liked my recorder, and we made little recordings, about what we were about to do, about being nervous, about dentists.

A woman entered and sat down across from us. She started talking to him, no doubt because she could see that he was nervous and she kindly wanted to distract him. She asked the usual questions: What was he about to do at the dentist? Surely, it is going to be all right, she said. And what grade was he in? He looked at me, and after a pause he said that he was going to start third grade after the summer. He didn’t go to school but was taught by the nuns and the parents in the sanctuary, and there weren’t really distinct grades there. The woman continued to talk to him. So, what school did he go to? He repeated that he was going to start third grade, and looked at me again, begging for help. I didn’t know what to say, I knew no names of the primary schools there, and I couldn’t think of a way to make her stop talking without it sounding very strange. She mentioned the name of a school and asked if it is that one. He nodded. Who is your teacher? He only looked at her, mute. At least his nervousness is understandable, I thought, we are in a dentist’s waiting room after all. After a while he said a name. I have no idea what name he came up with, maybe his last teacher before he became undocumented. Perhaps you know my son, said she, he is your age, and she showed him a picture in her wallet. No, he didn’t recognize him, he said, and quickly rose and came to sit by me again.

He snuggled up in the sofa and whispered in my ear that he had been lying, but that he had to! He couldn’t trust her, and maybe she would call the police if she knew. I whispered back that it is ok to lie sometimes, that it was ok, but that he need not be afraid of the woman, she seemed very nice and she couldn’t possibly know, and even if she did, she would not call the police. At this moment, a nurse we knew from our last visit came by and we got to follow her to a smaller waiting room especially fitted up for nervous children. We were very relieved to leave the very nice woman by the aquarium (Fieldnotes, 31st July 2009).
Having to hide, not one’s identity, but the fact that one doesn’t have one, upsets the notions of right and wrong, benign and harmful, up and down, left and right. Interaction warps and becomes crooked: what is said by one person, intended as a friendly question, can become a threat and a question of life and death for the other. Sitting with the kind woman would have been
pleasant, had my companion not carried a secret that must be guarded at any
cost. In addition, I also had to teach my charge that lying – within the con-
finces of the sanctuary something very wrong – still can be right, even to nice
ladies attempting to comfort you.

Exposure and vulnerability

Albeit officially absent, undocumented people’s presence may be officially
recorded somewhere – in Eurodac or in a register of deportation orders – but
that identification remains indistinct as long as they stay out of contact with
the authorities. Indistinctly present, they are still subject to the laws of the
country in the sense that they can be charged for their transgressions. These
same laws, however, cannot protect a person whose presence is. A crime
committed against a person who is not officially there has not officially hap-
pened – if the victim cannot reveal his/her presence, the crime will also re-
main unrevealed. Outside jurisdiction and without an official identity, integ-
rity of any kind becomes a luxury.

“Hidden refugees have exactly the same right to protect their identity or
integrity, /.../ [but] there is a widely spread idea that that they don’t.” said
one interviewed nurse. That is true in the health care sector, but also in other
situations. All volunteers and representatives for NGO-clinics stress the im-
portance of professionalism and secrecy when working with undocumented
persons. Yet, at one of the NGO-clinics’ opening hours, when I asked about
the most common conditions among their patients, I was given a thorough
answer, with specific patients pointed out to me as examples of various med-
ical problems. This sort of situation has not been a common occurrence dur-
ing my fieldwork, but on a number of occasions, volunteers or activists have
recounted to me or to others the ‘stories’ of undocumented persons present –
stories that often included very sensitive details. These situations were diffi-
cult for me to disrupt or escape, and much more so for the undocumented
persons concerned. This strategy is part of the gömda discourse, and often
effective in opinion-building, raising awareness of and pity for undocument-
ed persons’ situation. It is usually done in their interest, to bear witness to
what they have endured and spread information about practices of the Migra-
tion Board. Of course, that may not make the person involved feel any better
about being ‘outed’ in the short term.

Working for their cause, some activists sacrifice the integrity and individ-
uality of the undocumented persons they work with, and being dependent on
their assistance, undocumented persons have no choice but to endure to be
exposed and presented as the victim. These are complex and contradictory
situations where right and wrong, violence and benevolence are inseparable.
These activists have assisted many undocumented persons by talking to doc-
tors, lawyers and Migration Board representatives, and have not seldom suc-
cceeded in improving their situation. Yet, the discourse of victimization and
indiscriminate exposure is of a violent sort, frequently reducing gömda to the bare what-ness of their being.

The integrity of undocumented bodies is as arbitrarily protected as any other realm of their lives. Having no possibility to complain if assaulted or abused, undocumented persons are an easy prey for exploitation. Once, an activist presented a woman to me by recounting the details of her recent rape, before I had even learned her name. She and I talked for a long while, about all kinds of things, and she spoke very little about the recent events, and only indirectly. She spoke of the young women who used to work for her in her home country:

Especially the girls, she said, they were extra vulnerable. ‘I told them: you must not be dependent on any man, because you can get into awful trouble, and your lives will be ruined. And then... I had to leave, to flee, and God knows I would go back if I could, it was a very good life, an exciting life. But look at me now’, she said with a half smile, ‘now it is me in the street, dependent on men for housing and work’ (Fieldnotes, 5th May 2010).

Housing for a single undocumented woman is one of the most difficult things they have to confront. Most people who offer her housing are well aware of the vulnerable situation she is in. She must live somewhere, and she said that more than once, she had had no choice but to consent to living conditions where other payment than the monetary fee was asked for. The potential violence of detention and deportation, and the exploitation that their exceptional condition renders possible, constitute the cruder kinds of impending violence of that condition. The paradoxical qualities of the undocumented condition insert a subtler kind of violence as an element of benevolence, intermingling and confusing exploitation and benefit, exposure and protection.

Abiding by absence – “Have you anywhere to hide?”

The absence and presence of the undocumented condition can be configured in a variety of ways, and ‘hiding’ is but one of them. When undocumented persons are visible in the media, they are often illustrated with pictures of drawn curtains and shadowy rooms, dark silhouettes, no faces. These news articles and images are building on the gömda discourse and strengthen the idea of ‘they’ never being visible among ‘us’ (Holgersson, 2011). Many undocumented persons don’t recognize this way of living at all, but the template ‘hidden’ person does have some reality behind it – it is not entirely untrue simply because it is a cliché.

I accompanied an activist to a small Swedish town. It was summer, hot and dusty. We were going to visit a family whose last appeal to their asylum ap-
lication had recently been rejected. They lived in a sparsely furnished but orderly apartment – their name was neatly printed on a sign on the door. We had lunch with them and discussed their options, it was clear from their state of mind, their stress levels and introvert panic that no kind of return was an option. The police had visited them after their rejection, but had refused to give a fixed date for their deportation; they had simply said that they would ‘come to fetch them when it is time’. My companion told them that there were no reasons for immediate panic; ‘they are not likely to come before the end of the month, we’re in the middle of the holidays now, but you may have to hide. Have you anywhere to hide?’ Yes, there is somewhere to hide, they said, they had made some preparations. ‘We can hide in our friend’s house for a while, and then we’ll see.’ (Fieldnotes, 26th June 2009).

‘Being hidden’ generally means this: not leaving Swedish territory as directed by the Migration Board, but rather leaving through a loophole for a parallel existence in someone’s spare room, second home or in an apartment sublet in a fake name. Hiding, or being ‘hidden’ as the gömda discourse suggests, is a last resort; it is the desperate survival tactic in a negotiation where one participant – the state – has a near total domination, but it is also a weapon of the weak. It is a kind of resistance without coordination or planning; a situational self-help tactic that avoids any direct confrontation with authorities (Scott, 1985:29).

Some of these undocumented persons hiding dare not leave their often-changing homes, for fear of detection – “We had to sit in his flat, and it was ‘shhh shhhh’ all the time.” When they do venture out, many avoid contact with other people. One woman who had been undocumented for two years explained:

I was terrified someone would start talking to me. They would always ask many questions, questions that are perfectly normal to ask – where we were from, where we live and other things. But I was terrified. And in the laundry room, if someone came, I got scared to death, they were maybe going to ask something, and I had no idea what to answer.

A practicality forced upon an undocumented person and a tactic for survival, hiding is, in a way, to abide by the imposed absence, be it in another way than authorities suggest. Removing oneself from other people’s gaze and minimizing ones interaction with other people – to delimit one’s life world to enclosed, uncomfortable spaces – is to absent oneself from the world.

This manner of absenting oneself from society is employed by some, sometimes, but is far less common than generally assumed. However, the dominant discourse of hiding and being hidden can in some measure facilitate certain kinds of interaction and mobility for undocumented persons. Albeit many undocumented persons describe how they feel their lack of

42 Fieldnotes, 22nd May 2009
permit advertised in their movements, on their foreheads and in their clothes, 
undocumentedness is not a visible feature of a person’s look. Walking down 
a street, they can walk and talk as if they were somebody else, as if with 
someone else’s body, protected by the assumption that no undocumented 
person would ever be in view (Holgersson, 2011).

Disguise – or hiding in plain sight

An undocumented worker may buy, forge or borrow a work permit in order 
to ‘pretend to exist’ (Coutin, 2003). Similarly, in a more subtle manner, any 
undocumented person can pretend to exist by taking on the guise of someone 
with a right to be present. By acting in a manner as not to draw attention or 
to show fear, an undocumented person can blend in and move relatively 
freely. Impression management (Goffman, 1990), or simply paying attention 
to how one appears to other people and making efforts to manipulate those 
impressions, is something that everyone, to some degree, practices in the 
social interplay of everyday life – people are externally polite even though 
they are angry and avoid advertising embarrassing facts about themselves 
when meeting new people. One of the common critiques of Goffman’s con-
ceptualization of human behaviour through theatrical metaphor is that his 
emphasis on monitoring and management of the ways people appear to oth-
ers is exaggerated. Helena Holgersson argues that, although this critique is 
valid in many cases, when it comes to undocumented persons and their exe-
rions to pass, Goffman’s model of impression management may be well 
suited. To constantly make efforts to pass as someone with a right to place, 
she remarks, is indeed ‘a full time endeavour’ (Holgersson, 2011).

When I ask a representative of Papperslösa Stockholm what their tips are 
for staying under the radar, their response is centred around looking ‘normal’:

Wear nice clothes, don’t look worried, look happy, and smile all the time. … 
Never travel on the metro without a valid ticket. Never linger in a public spot. 
Don’t loiter in Sergels torg, Medborgarplatsen, places like that. If you have 
an errand there, go and do it and then leave. … Keep your eyes open. Learn-
ing the language is most important.

Some other tips I have picked up are based on (second hand) experiences of 
drug dealers in St Petersburg: ”If you carry flowers, no policeman will both-
er you; the police will only check you if you act suspiciously. If you look 
normal, you can do or be anything and get away with it.” Whether it is 
possible to ‘look normal’ or ‘pass’ as someone with a right to place depends

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43 Sergels torg and Medborgarplatsen are two large squares in the central parts of Stockholm.
44 Fieldnotes, 29th April 2009
to some extent on a person’s cultural and social origins and colour of skin, as well as on context.

Stigma is a visible mark on the body of a disreputable social position, but has – both in everyday language and in Goffman’s conceptualization – come to signify both the visible sign and what they signify. The meaning of stigma
is always socially constructed; it is a social identity that is discrediting in a certain context, where it may result in discrimination. A stigma can be more or less perceptible, as a visible mark, skin-colour, or as certain behaviours that can be noted by others.

Undocumentedness, as such, is not something visible; it can be concealed from others, unless specifically asked to present identification. Signs of other categorizations such as a ‘foreign look’ or a ‘suspicious behaviour’ may in certain contexts awake suspicions of ‘undocumentedness’. Barak Kalir noted in his ethnographic research among undocumented Latinos in Israel that they, who by their skin-colour often can pass as Israelis, were less prone to reveal their lack of permits by demonstrating for undocumented migrants’ rights, than were the more conspicuous groups from African countries. Through their ability to pass, they had more to lose on outing themselves as undocumented (Kalir, 2010).

The Swedish Aliens Act states that a “reasonable suspicion” of a person’s lack of residence permit must exist in order for a police to engage in internal border control, and that suspicion must not be based solely on skin-color. Research on the practices of internal border policing has shown, however, that a ‘foreign look’ often serves as a first profiling tool for carrying through internal border control protocols, and that it in practice often is enough to constitute such a suspicion (Hydén and Lundberg, 2004). Thus, deportability should be understood as a racialized condition. Undocumented persons with less of a ‘foreign look’ are less at risk of subjugation to internal border control protocols, as the suspicion of being undocumented is conditioned on a prior categorization as ‘immigrant’.

Racism or discrimination in other realms of society is another thing completely. There are instances where undocumented persons are discriminated against because of their foreignness, their skin-colour or language. I would argue, however, that the undocumented experience is in most cases beyond discrimination. In order to be discriminated one has to have rights that can be violated. An undocumented person who aims to avoid contact with social institutions and other people in general has few chances to be discriminated against, as he/she already is an object of the ultimate discrimination: lacking the right to have rights.

Being undocumented pushes people into a clandestine life in an attempt to be invisible to authorities, but the fear of being apprehended and deported also introduces a feeling of being under constant surveillance, which functions as a disciplining mechanism (Foucault, 1991a); the exposure and deportability of undocumentedness demands unconditional submission. For instance, greater things than a fine are at stake for an undocumented person if apprehended on the metro without a valid ticket. The informants in Shahram Khosravi’s study of migrant ‘illegality’ in Sweden say they would never

45 “anledning att anta” Aliens Act Chapter 5 6§.
risk leaning on a car, should the alarm go off, and “one does not even dare to jaywalk.” Ironically, the ultimately excluded exemplifies in such instances the impeccable citizen (Hiemstra, 2010; Khosravi, 2010:99). However, being subject to an absolute exclusion from society may also have the opposite effect. One interviewee told me that the ever-present feelings of being cast out and cast off fostered in him a complete alienation from society and a feeling of “Just fuck it all! Just fuck it! It would have been so easy to become a criminal. I didn’t, but it would have been very easy.”

“They can’t see that I don’t have documents”

Although many undocumented persons have a feeling that their lack of documents is advertised in their appearance, undocumentedness is not a stigma visible on the body. It can be concealed by avoiding certain places and situations where identification is asked for, and by managing one’s appearance and behaviour, in order to blend in. The situations to be avoided are numerous however, and wall the agency and possibilities for interaction that may be available to undocumented persons.

Figure 4: Biking. Photo: Author

46 Fieldnotes, 29th April 2009
I often cycled to the sanctuary where I spent much time during fieldwork with undocumented persons. One evening while I was staying there I went out cycling and met one of the men living there.

We met on a small road with virtually no traffic, just farms and orchards – a Swedish rural idyll. We stopped to talk for a while and suddenly a police car swished past us. For a moment we stared at each other, and after the initial shock we both started laughing. I asked if he got scared. ‘No.’ he said, ‘Or, well, a little, but not like before. They often drive past me when I’m out biking, but they never stop, they can’t check everyone. I do get a little adrenaline rush sometimes when I meet them. But it is better now after I talked to them, you remember?’

He was referring to another discussion we had a couple of months ago, where he told me of a dark and cold winter evening in Stockholm. He had visited friends there and got lost on the way to the Metro station. There were few people out and he couldn’t find anyone to ask for directions. ‘Then I saw a police car standing in a street corner, just in front of me. I got scared and almost started to run, but then I thought No! They can’t see that I don’t have documents, I should ask them. And so I did. I knocked on their window and asked for the nearest Metro station, and they pointed me in the right direction. As easy as that. No one can see that I’m undocumented, I can walk around like everybody else’.

He admitted that being out on the roads is a bit risky, but always being indoors makes him sick he said. ‘Always being in one place, always being passive.’ Sometimes he went biking to the small town close by, just to walk around among people. ‘That gives me some strength. The first time I biked there, it was as if two tons of garbage fell off my back. … It’s good to be able to go there, maybe once a week. At the same time, it is difficult to approach or talk to people. But… that’s secondary’ (Fieldnotes, 4th August 2009).

By practicing impression management, concealing any signs of being undocumented and by leaving no traces – not doing or saying anything except what is expected and normal – it is possible to pass for a person with a right to place. In this way, one becomes overtly camouflaged, using the same logic employed by other groups to obscure different types of resistance or transgression (Garrett, 2009). This inconspicuous presence bears all features of tactics in de Certeau’s sense of the word (de Certeau, 1984). Operating incognito on territory where one is not recognized can never yield any crops for future struggles or long term goals; wherever he/she goes, public space is locally annihilated, leaving the undocumented persons’ presence as ineffective as a cut-out silhouette.

As long as the guise of someone with the right to place can be upheld, the undocumented person can enjoy some freedom of movement. There are some agency and some choices possible within the constraints of this disguise, but that doesn’t mean that he/she has the ability to appear to others. In the moment the undocumented person opens his/her mouth to speak – speech in Arendt’s meaning – the borrowed guise shatters. This freedom of movement
is in one sense a mere illusion of freedom – it is just as much a forced movement. The undocumented position offers no right to residence – also when still and at rest, he/she is not settled.
The being absent and being present are tightly and complexly interwoven, knowledge and social interaction will seep through the Möbius band. A couple who had got a final rejection to their asylum claim and decided to ‘hide’ told me about what happened when they were looking for a place to stay. They stepped off the train in Uppsala, because they had been told that they could seek assistance from the local church there.

In Uppsala, they had no idea where to go or what to do. They asked a woman in the street how to find the church. The woman was very obliging and showed them how to find the Uppsala Cathedral, ‘it is not very far, and easy to find’ she said. All tourists come to see the cathedral in Uppsala, and she could not imagine that they were looking for any other church, or for any other reason. ‘Good luck!’ she said, when she left them. ‘We realized that she thought we were tourists, and also that the cathedral wasn’t the best place for us to go, but she was so nice and she smiled, and although I know she had no idea why we were there or what we were about to do, her ‘good luck!’ felt very good all the same’ (Fieldnotes, 28th July 2008).

They found the right church in the end, and although the well-wishes were intended for an entirely different endeavour, and for people they were not, it penetrated to them and their object all the same. The relationship between the physical presence and the silence surrounding the absence of official identity was tangled in several dimensions, merging not only centre and margin, but also absent and present.

Joint, anonymous presence

Despite their official absence and dependence on concealment, gömda, papperslösa and illegala are discussed in the political and public debate. They are discussed but they do not discuss – in the same way as they are ‘hidden’, not hiding. With few exceptions, they are mentioned in the plural indefinite form,47 to the extent that the terms gömda and papperslösa have become a standard phrase – several undocumented persons I have met refer to themselves and others with the plural terms: ‘I am papperslösa’; ‘She is gömda’. Undocumented persons are present in the public debate as an indistinct group, indicative of the impossibility for undocumented individuals to be visible as themselves. Only combined anonymous presence is possible.

While they themselves cannot employ this indistinct presence to act or speak, NGOs and advocacy groups make use of it in their opinion building. The convent-sanctuary is situated on a small hill with surrounding fields, and has hosted undocumented people almost continuously for over 30 years. By the parking lot stands a large sign saying “Alsike Convent is a Safe Haven

47 Gömda and papperslösa are indefinite plural forms of the words göm and papperslös.
for Refugees in Need. Genesis 4:15 Matthew 25:35.” The nuns emphasize that they are not ‘hiding’ people: “This is a sanctuary. We have made the decision to be open about what we do, that way we can participate with credibility in the debate about asylum policy and the situation for undocumented persons.”

In the early 1990s, this transparency precipitated a police raid, and the undocumented persons staying at the convent were captured and detained. However, the media were more than willing to report on police cruelty and families being separated, and the public outcry eventually forced the police to retreat and return almost everyone that they had removed from the sanctuary. After that, the nuns and the police negotiated terms on which they could continue having undocumented persons staying on their premises. Their relationship is, according to the nuns, quite good. As long as the residents in the sanctuary remain on the convent’s premises, the police will not bother them. The nuns are therefore very reluctant to let anyone go outside their

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48 The bible phrases are the following: Genesis 4:15: “But the Lord said to him, ‘Not so; anyone who kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over.’ Then the Lord put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him” and Matthew 25:35: “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in.”

49 Fieldnotes, 6th June 2008
grounds, unless it is deemed absolutely necessary. Only a small path over the fields behind the house is considered safe. The police have agreed not to make investigations into who is staying in the sanctuary, and as long as they don’t know the identities of any of them, they will not bother them. They have been in contact with the police for other reasons, and this has worked out as agreed. When interviewed in the media, the nuns talk of their activities in vague temporal terms; perhaps undocumented people are living under their roof at the present time, perhaps not. There are no named and approachable undocumented individuals, only an anonymous undocumented group in an unspecified temporal setting. The undocumented persons living there cannot speak, act or interact as individuals, but can lend their joint presence, albeit unspecified, as legitimation for the nuns’ arguments in the migration debate.

Other organizations have taken similar precautions and employ similar tactics of acknowledging undocumented group presence, but disclosing neither time, place, nor identities. One health clinic is officially mobile, and is open one evening a week, maybe in the same place every time, maybe not. But it is there somewhere, and groups of undocumented persons visit it every week, their presence giving authority to the arguments of the organization running it. Médecins du Monde (MDM) operate a similar clinic from an undisclosed address in Stockholm. It was only after I had made an appointment for a visit and an interview that I was permitted to know where their clinic was situated. When I arrived, however, it was not difficult to find the right place, as a large sticker on the door announced their presence. When I asked the representative about it, she responded that “Yes, our address is secret … But we have the MDM mark on the door. I guess that in some way we still want to show that we are here. And our neighbours probably have an idea about what we do. It is a kind of compromise.”

Individuals acknowledged as present are identifiable, approachable, detainable and deportable. Groups of undisclosed individuals, however, can be acknowledged as present, yet remain nameless and diffuse. Claiming their presence, or rather having someone else claim it for them, can be done without disclosing the identity of any individual. Accordingly, they remain nameless – uncertain in space, time and number – in the opinion building of NGOs, as well as in this thesis. This may not much strengthen their individual options and possibilities for action or interaction, but it is the basis for an ‘activism by proxy’, in that the acknowledgment of their group presence allows others act and speak for them.

Gaining appearance
Rejected asylum seekers who become undocumented absent themselves through not leaving for another country as stipulated by the authorities. They
embark on a parallel existence – remaining physically present, while vanishing from registers and radars. They may be seen in the street or they may be talked about, but their unacknowledged presence doesn’t lend itself to appearance. Stripped of their political subjectivity – their individual who-ness – they are reduced to either an indistinct papperslösa-category, or a story of suffering and bare life. But, the what-ness of being is not hermetically divided from the who of the political subject. Analytically, they are separable, but ontologically, they are two facets of the same, rooted in the birth of the unique person. Several examples of resistance in the state of exception have been studied and described (Krause, 2008; Bailey, 2009; Ellermann, 2010).

Geography and embodied practice are inherently unruly and flawed. The previous chapters have offered several examples of how that which is neatly organized in law or theory, can be unruly and chaotic in practice. Undocumented persons, as the ultimate embodiment of such an irregularity, find loopholes formed and opened by distortion and erosion of the official strategy. By using their politically absent, yet physically present bodies as vehicles in struggle and resistance, possibilities for recognition and action, if only ephemeral, open up. Despite the fact that their presence is unrecognized, and they as individuals should be unable to interact or speak as themselves, acknowledgement and recognition happens, and when it does, it is with the explosive political power of the ultimate Other (Harding, 1991) or the conscious pariah (Arendt, 1978b).

Sarwar takes a risk

On a few occasions, media reporting about undocumented persons have told other stories than those featuring drawn curtains, seclusion and isolation. One of the most striking examples is an article about an undocumented man who worked as a cleaner in one of the public buildings in Stockholm. He is there, identified with his picture and his own name in the rubric: Undocumented in Sweden – One day with Sarwar (Granestrand, 2008). He was interviewed about his life in Stockholm as undocumented, what kinds of places he lived, his everyday goings-on, and how he came to, as an undocumented person, work in a municipal office. The aim was to give a face to undocumentedness, a risky thing, but “Sarwar is interested in taking a risk” (Granestrand, 2008). The article did not say exactly where he worked but it was possible to identify the building from the images.

I met Sarwar and asked him what happened afterwards. He said that the day after the article was printed, the police were waiting for him at his workplace. This was expected, however, and planned for. The interview had taken place while he was undocumented, but not published until the statute of limitations on his deportation order (from four years previously when his asylum application was denied) was expired and thus allowed him to apply for asylum once again. So, that morning he could show the police his LMA-card as
proof that he was again legally staying in Sweden. This way it was possible to give undocumented persons a face, without risking him being deported when sought out. This example shows both the impossibility of revealing one’s identity as undocumented, and the fact that it actually is possible, in the event an opportunity can be seized.

Demonstrating presence

Inspired by the French sans-papiers movement Papperslösa Stockholm was formed in 2006. They started demonstrating on (most) Wednesdays outside the parliament building in Stockholm; the events were called simply Denna Onsdag [This Wednesday]. They were initially fighting for a general amnesty for undocumented persons, after a temporary law had been adopted in order to regularize certain groups of undocumented persons – families with children who met certain conditions. A secondary aim, tightly conjoined with the first, was to raise awareness of undocumented persons’ presence and conditions and to establish papperslösa as the term used for all undocumented persons. Despite the limited scale of these demonstrations, their impact on public and political discourse has been substantial. Through them, the undocumented have taken active part in the categorization and naming of

Figure 7: Papperslösa Stockholm demonstration. Photo: Author
themselves. By ignoring the risk of exposure they have entered into public space and established papperslösa as an officially present category, forcing their surroundings to acknowledge their existence in Swedish society.

Papperslösa Stockholm is not a registered organization and can therefore not themselves apply for demonstration permits. Instead, three national political parties have taken turns applying for the organization. For a long period of time, they were demonstrating almost every Wednesday at 5 p.m. outside the parliament building in Stockholm, presenting themselves:

This is our 147th demonstration – we are Papperslösa Stockholm; we are still here!50

The people showing up for the demonstration were a mix of undocumented persons, former undocumented persons, activists and politicians. Some passers-by also stopped to listen. Politicians in the national parliament, representatives of different organizations, as well as the undocumented persons themselves, took turns to speak. One of the undocumented speakers tried to describe to me the feeling of standing there, so close to the ruling body of the state where his presence was neither allowed nor acknowledged. He did never specifically say that he, himself, was undocumented at the time, but he spoke of “we – the undocumented, and we – Papperslösa Stockholm. To face his fears – “and to actually speak to people!”51 – was something he had found very powerful. At the 147th demonstration quoted above, the speaker of the day was a Green Party parliament politician. She grabbed the microphone and updated the crowd on today’s discussions in the parliament immigration policy group:

‘And by the way’, she says. ‘Tobias [The Minister of Migration] has invented a new name for you guys. “Tillståndslösa”. 52 He is quite an inventive guy, don’t you think?’ We laugh and applaud her (Fieldnotes, 9th December 2009).

She is not the only one who spoke to the undocumented persons in the audience, rather than about them, as is so often done in other fora. By speaking to them, their presence was acknowledged and reasserted in public, and undocumented became, for a minute, a local norm.

For a short window of time, while they stand together under the Papperslösa-banner, their presence as individuals ceases to be a secret. By engaging in political action, speaking and interacting in public, they appear as themselves – as political subjects – casting off the invisibility cloaks of bor-

50 Fieldnotes, 9th December 2009
51 Fieldnotes, 25th August 2011
52 Tillståndslösa means approximately ‘permitless’, and this new term was according to the Green Party politician invented as an alternative to his previous use of ‘illegals’, without letting the undocumented define the terms of the discussion.
rowed semblance. Their present bodies, albeit legally, politically and administratively unrecognized, are vehicles for ‘breaking out’ of their silhouette-shaped non-polis; for defining and plunging into public space. Only with such acknowledgement of their presence is there a possibility to claim rights, and not only receive generosity from the compassionate-minded. Again they reassert themselves to the onlookers: “We are here! We are still here!”

I often stayed to try to chat with some of the members after the demonstration, but frequently encountered difficulty. When the time-slot for the demonstration was over, the undocumented members usually disappeared quickly while members with permits packed up the gear. It remains a fragile, ephemeral presence. They are still legally and digitally absent, and as soon as they disband, the public realm closes around them, until 5 p.m. the next Wednesday.

Conclusions

This chapter has investigated the absence-presence nexus of the undocumented condition. Being physically present yet officially absent places undocumented persons in a paradoxical space, multidimensional and Möbius, where centre and margin, up and down, benevolence and violence diffuse and intermingle. In this spatial context, the relations between absence and presence, visibility and clandestinity also tangle.

The tactics available for resisting and manoeuvring in this paradoxical position are moulded on the structures and strategies creating their position. The official absence imposed by the authorities is countered with concealment and disguise, but also with a struggle for visibility and recognition. Through these various tactics and acts of resistance, absence, presence and their interrelations take different configurations. In the struggle to keep their presence indistinct, undocumented persons may conceal themselves altogether through ‘hiding’ or ‘pretending to exist’ by taking on the guise of someone with a right to place. When it comes to action and speech however, this presence is as ineffective as were they cut-out silhouettes from public space. The citizen is characterized by his/her inherent potentiality of acting in public space; undocumented persons constitute an inversion of that potentiality. Wherever they go they are expelled – cut out – from their environment and from public space.

In public debates, undocumented persons are present as an indistinct and anonymous group, never speaking, but spoken of by others. Their physically present bodies, however, can be used as vehicles for struggle and resistance, forcing their way out of the undocumented silhouette non-polis and appearing to others, as themselves, temporarily taking hold of reality.
VII. Undocumented lived experience

The legal and socio-political setting in which we exist, play important roles in how we live and experience our lives. The chapters of this thesis have successively added complexity to the concept of undocumentedness by exploring its legal and political construction, its practical and embodied reproduction and its spatiality – marked by the contradictions and paradoxes of the undocumented absent-present condition. Having reached thus far in the understanding of what the undocumented position is – what that condition consists of and its consequences – produces questions about what undocumentedness means. What is undocumentedness to those who are undocumented? In what way does being undocumented affect the experiences of everyday life? Is there an undocumented mode of being-in-the-world? Being denied one’s political subjectivity and reduced to the what-ness of being, walking down streets disguised as someone else – what are the consequences of this in terms of embodied lived experience?

When describing essential structures of undocumented experience, it is important to note that that does not mean ‘universal’. Rather, I argue that what I describe as undocumented modes of being-in-the-world constitute basic structures of experience related to undocumentedness. They are present either as something that is experienced to a higher or lower degree, or as negations, having been dealt or struggled with. The ambiguity and fear that characterize their situation produce disorientation in time and space and the disciplining and impression management undocumented persons undertake in order to ‘pass’, are important facets of the undocumented experience and are, I argue, alienating forces of the undocumented life world.

The first sections of this chapter illustrate these points, drawing on arguments from the previous chapters and fieldwork, as well as feminist and queer engagements with phenomenology. The middle section of the chapter describes and discusses how disorientation and alienation inscribe in bodies and how undocumentedness as an embodied situation may linger, as habits and somatic reactions, in the bodies of previously-undocumented persons. The third section of the chapter explores the tactics and orientation devices that undocumented persons can employ to engage in the world as subjects and counteract disorientation and alienation.
Timelessness and ambiguity

One of the basic conditions of undocumentedness is ambiguity. Similar to the asylum process, where neither the person applying nor the authorities know the outcome of the final decision (Brekke, 2004), the unknown timespan of being undocumented – the tangible potentiality of exposure and detection at any time – makes for an uncertain foundation for plans, activities and relationships. The uncertainties that asylum seekers and undocumented have in common are, despite their inherent notions of unsettlement and restlessness, relate to stasis and waiting – waiting, but not knowing what comes next. In the upsurge of academic interest in mobility and nomadism, little attention has been paid to stasis, until recently (Conlon, 2011). In While we are waiting – a report about asylum seekers’ experiences – time stretches and becomes unpredictable and unmanageable (Brekke, 2004). Jan-Paul Brekke argues that what asylum seekers in protracted asylum cases experience is directionless time, a state where the future is experienced as highly unpredictable and uncertain; where the individual has no power to influence, stabilize or better their position.

In addition to the insecurities of the future, the connections with their past and their place of origin may also be problematic for an undocumented person. This is perhaps specific to forced migrants who have been persecuted in their place of origin and for whom contact with their families and friends can put either themselves or others at risk. Their situation in exile, then, is to some extent cut off both from their past and from any projection of their future selves; they are confined to the ‘grey mass’ of the present:

‘Time is just a grey mass when you’re undocumented, a grey nothingness that eats your life if you don’t take precautions. In general… I think that the conception of time, or perception of time perhaps, is very different now when I’m not undocumented anymore. To have plans is a fundamental part of being human’ (Fieldnotes, 25th August 2011).

Fear and magic

As a deportable being, an undocumented person is at risk of being ‘exposed’ in many different everyday situations and any risk of detection is a risk of detention and deportation. Certainly, not all undocumented persons walk around with a constant anxiety, or limit their movements or interactions for fear of detection, but several of the participants in my project testify of some degree of fear and reveal tactics they have devised in order to deal with that fear. In some cases these fears originate in experiences in their place of origin, but it is a common misconception to believe that the dividing line between those who fear to return and those who don’t is drawn between rejected asylum seekers and ‘other undocumented’. There are many reasons
apart from persecution – social, economic or private reasons – why someone may fear a forced return to their place of origin. Furthermore, forced migrants are sometimes advised by smugglers not to seek asylum, while other migrants may see migration and seeking asylum as their only option, though they are not forced migrants in the conceptual framework of Swedish migration authorities.

Where phenomenology is concerned, all experiences and emotions are intentional, meaning that they are of or about something. Perception is always perception of something; emotions are always directed towards something or someone. In consequence, our emotions also orients us in certain ways towards or away from those objects (Ahmed, 2004). By embodied incantation, the objects our emotions are ‘about’ take on the qualities of that emotion (Sartre, 1948). The fear of forced return is of ambiguous intentionality. It is not necessarily directed toward the place of origin but more likely toward what is going to bring about a return. The fear of exposure and detection imbues any context of risk with fearful qualities. Police cars become fearful objects and the potential police car behind any street corner renders street corners frightful. The potential risks – unknown in scope and magnitude – directs fear in all directions and whatever the probability of being reported, it makes for a diffuse, low-level uncertainty in every interaction or transaction. Distinct or indistinct, fear is an inhibiting factor in undocumented persons’ interaction with their surroundings:

‘You’re often afraid when you’re undocumented, but that fear is an irrational fear, and it is very very easy… it is almost impossible not to let it govern your life.’ We go on to speak of what fear does to one’s experiences. He says that, ‘it is fear that isolates you, it is a weird sort of isolation. You can talk to people… The things you are afraid of are so unlikely. You think that people can see that you are undocumented, always, but in fact it is extremely unlikely that anyone will guess. And if they guess, it is extremely unlikely that they will report you. But, one limits one’s social interaction anyway, thinking that everything is risky’ (Fieldnotes, 25th August 2011).

I gave a few examples in the previous chapter of how fear of exposure – of drawing attention or not being able to answer normal questions – induce people to shrink from situations where they have to talk to neighbours or others who didn’t know, and shouldn’t know, about their undocumented status. In this way fear becomes an isolating force. Where fearfulness becomes characteristics of anything and everything – the neighbours, street corners, local transport, grocery stores – a person orientates away from all those contexts and interactions, estranging themselves from their environment.
Alienation and becoming an object

Efforts to pass (Goffman, 1968) as someone with the right to place, constitute an important part of the repertoire of tactics that undocumented persons employ on an everyday basis. As soon as an undocumented person ventures out among people, he/she must passively or actively take the guise of someone else. While to some extent protected by the gömda discourse and by making sure not to draw attention, an undocumented person can blend in and move rather freely. In a phenomenological light however, some existential points of passing and impression management come into sharper relief.

Borrowing the argument made by Iris Marion Young in her classic essay *Throwing like a girl* (Young, 2005c) I suggest that the objectification and alienation that Young recognizes as the basis for what others had called ‘feminine motility’, has bearing on the everyday passing that undocumented persons practice. Young’s essay was first presented in 1977 and while her feminism is marked by the feminist discourse of the 70s (Young, 2005b:10; Chisholm, 2008), her phenomenology of alienation is by no means dated. She draws on the existentialist phenomenological traditions of Sartre and de Beauvoir, where Sartre attends to the role of the Other and the experience of being ‘looked at’, as a process of becoming an object. In interplay with others, he argues, we either regard them as objects and retain the power of definition – of ourselves as subjects and of the world as seen from our perspective – or, we regard the other as the subject with power of definition, rendering me an object in-itself or for-others. In his view, any social interaction takes the form of a stare-down – we cannot be subject and object at the same time (Solomon, 2000c).

Young, on the other hand, who also draws on Merleau-Ponty, argues that this simultaneity is possible and that the subject who refers to him/herself as an object *in-itself or for-others*, is split. The split subject is simultaneously subject and object, positioned and situated. Through that divided and contradictory relationship, the subject’s transcendence becomes overlaid with immanence. Young argues that feminine bodily existence and comportment are marked by three contradictory modalities: ambiguous transcendence, inhibited intentionality and discontinuous unity (Young, 2005b:27-45). Shortly put, these modalities are symptoms of self-reference, objectification and alienation that, according to Young, originate in the subordination of women and from being treated as Other.

Alienation as a concept has a wide and long history within sociology and social psychology, as well as a range of other disciplines. It has, among other things, played an essential role in Marxist scholarship, where one of the central arguments is that the capitalist system deprives workers of the determination of their own lives and destinies, and of the right to conceive of themselves as acting subjects. Alienation includes dimensions of powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, social isolation, cultural estrangement and
self-estrangement. Alienation refers to a relation, or lack of relation, between a subject and some aspect of his/her environment (Geyer, 2001). In phenomenological philosophy, alienation generally signifies a shortfall of the human being to engage in the world – the subject being distanced from the world rather than living in it. While Young focuses on self-reference as the main alienating and objectifying force, Weiss argues that the resulting alienation and immanence lies not in self-reference but, rather, in a ‘socially referred’ bodily existence. The relationship with the body for many women is mediated through “seeing their bodies as they are seen by others, and by worrying about what they and these (largely invisible) others are seeing” (Weiss, 1999:46-7).

Bodily motility, like perception and emotion, involves intentionality. Embodied intentionality “projects the aim to be accomplished and connects the body’s motion toward that end in an unbroken directedness that organizes and unifies the body’s activity” (Young, 2005c:37). For a split subject, this mutually conditioning relation between aim and enactment is severed, resulting in an inhibited motility and constricted trust in one’s own capability. The final modality of the split subject is that it “stands in discontinuous unity with both itself and its surroundings” (Young, 2005c:38). In contrast to a transcendent embodied experience, where the body, as situation, medium and capacity, extends into space, the split subject is ambiguous and discontinued – the body seems to end at its fingertips.

The similarities of the symptoms of the two types of situations are several. While the feminine comportment that Young originates in an acquired desire to please, to ‘look nice’ and be seen as a proper, feminine woman, the objectification of an undocumented person originates in a fear of drawing attention and a desire not to be seen. Practicing concealment and disguise transforms a person’s relation to his/her environment. One formerly undocumented person explained how being undocumented is to cut the communications with one’s surroundings.

‘When you are undocumented, you cannot communicate with your surroundings, you cannot do what everybody does. I mean, we tend to – not that we should – but we tend to compare ourselves with others, with our friends. And, because your social networks are so limited, and because there is not much that is possible to do, that sort of judgement, or comparison isn’t possible anymore.’ And he continues: ‘As an undocumented person, it is easy to get stuck in a vicious circle. But it is not necessarily a downwards spiral, it is inward’ (Fieldnotes, August 25th 2011).

An invisible stigma such as undocumentedness may be easy to hide in brief encounters, but more difficult to disguise over time when continually in contact with the same people. As more personal topics of conversation arise, the lack of identification and the consequent barriers in society necessarily come closer to or tangent the conversation. Avoiding such conversations may work
for a time, but only by paying attention, and only with effort. I have given a couple of examples of such avoidance tactics, but they can also be found in other studies. Some of the undocumented interviewees in Helena Holgersson’s research (2011) who, through their work or other activities, came in continual contact with the same people, made up stories about themselves in order to guard their secret. In some cases they even did research on for instance the Swedish school system to be able to construct a plausible, coherent life-story.

Undocumentedness builds barriers for communication and interaction, as well as other initiatives. One woman told me that “when I have a residence permit, I will learn how to ride a bicycle.” As long as she was undocumented, she felt she could do nothing, achieve nothing, learn nothing. Another project participant told me how her self-esteem and confidence in her own capabilities completely vanished during her time as undocumented. Others have expressed a feeling of all initiative and action being pointless or impossible; life has to wait until the day when they have residence permits and their ‘real life’ can begin. While they are undocumented, they are just “…being here, hiding here … one can only sit here, sit there. Here is a place only for sitting.” The exclusion from all institutions and debarment from any (adult) education that several interviewees have mentioned is only part of what causes standstill in their lives. I argue that in the undocumented position as ultimately excluded, a more profound experience of impossibility and absolute lack of horizons propagates. Feelings of unreality and of detachment – of the world and everyone in it moving on and oneself standing still and “just getting older”, reveal an alienation that is difficult to put into words. This topic has been a thread in many of my conversations with undocumented persons and is best illustrated in the following extract from my fieldnotes from a conversation with a woman who had gained her residence permit about a year previously.

She had been undocumented for about a year and she said that ‘It wasn’t my life – it was like a hole in my life. I cannot really say what happened to me, I couldn’t explain it. I could not have imagined that life could be like that. But it was like a war of identity in me. There was an identity war when I was undocumented, and then another when I got the permit. When you get that which you have been reaching and reaching for, you yearn and long and hope for it, and suddenly you get it, it is like it just melts through you. It just slipped away. Had I continued to be undocumented, I’d have gone insane. [My residence permit] was the last train out of it for me’ (Fieldnotes, 26th August 2009).

53 Fieldnotes, 2nd May 2009
54 Fieldnotes, 2nd May 2009
55 Fieldnotes, 5th May 2009
Experiences of alienation and objectification are likely to be more pronounced in forced migrants who are frightened of returning to their place of origin and practice more caution and isolate themselves more from other people for fear of being exposed or reported. I have only spoken to a few undocumented persons whose migration has not been forced in nature, and fewer who do not fear the consequences of a return, and have no empirical material suggesting such a difference. However, in Heidi Moksnes’ ongoing research project *Living Without Rights: Undocumented Migrants and the Boundaries of Citizenship*, she has met and interviewed Latin American undocumented persons in the Stockholm area, whose migration to Sweden has been more or less voluntary and they have to some extent known the conditions for which they have left their home. Her impression has been that many of them experience the extreme exclusion from Swedish society as much more severe than expected. She also found that it affects them more than they had anticipated, impressing on them a feeling of being cut off from everything around them (Moksnes, 2012).

**Disorientation and discomfort**

Undocumented objectification is not merely a matter of constantly being aware of oneself as one appears to others through efforts of passing. This section moves from discussing undocumented experiences of exclusion in terms of objectification and alienation, to focus on the spatial dimensions of these experiences.

The focus on situation and intentionality in phenomenology raises important questions about direction and orientation. The question “What does it mean to be orientated?” (Ahmed, 2006:1) appears deceptively simple at a first glance but unfolds in multiple facets and dimensions at closer scrutiny. If we know where we are when we look around, we are orientated. When we know what to do in order to get from this place to another place, we are orientated. Orientation means to have bearing, but we are also orientated towards things in our worlds – objects, goals, people. While there is direction between a subject and unfamiliar objects, orientation requires familiarity. It requires an established relationship between the subject and recognized things – things we apprehend and comprehend when we see them; they give us anchoring points. In Sara Ahmed’s words: “[the] question of orientation becomes, then, a question not only about how we ‘find our way’ but how we come to ‘feel at home’” (Ahmed, 2006:7).

Ahmed emphasizes the close linkage, or sameness, of the subject and her world when arguing that spaces are not exterior to bodies but that, rather, they are “like a second skin that unfolds in the folds of the body” (Ahmed, 2006:9). To feel at home in one’s home is not to be fixed or fixedly anchored in that place, it is about becoming a part of a space and able to comfortably
expand ones body in it. In conclusion, being orientated is to be comfortable and “so at ease with one’s environment that it is hard to distinguish where one’s body ends and the world begins. One fits, and when fitting in, the surfaces of bodies disappear from view” (Ahmed, 2006:134).

Gail Weiss attends to the same argument when discussing intercorporeality as continued embodied interactions with other human and nonhuman bodies – our orientations – in the on-going construction and reconstruction of our bodies and body images (Weiss, 1999:5-6). If orientation and being at home requires a comfortable intercorporeality, disorientation is, in contrast, an uncomfortable experience. Disorientation means failed, or rather oblique, orientations: bodies engaging with objects that do not extend their reach and inhabiting spaces that they don’t ‘fit’ into and, thus, don’t extend their shape. Disorientation makes “what is here become strange” (Ahmed, 2006:160).

Applying this argument to the undocumented situation, however, the line of thought must be reversed and allowed to flow in the opposite direction, beginning at the origin of experience. Undocumented disorientation does not originate in objects or orientation devices pointing in wrong directions, but in the fact that the undocumented subject’s here is neither acknowledged nor visible to the legal, political and social context with which it interacts. The human and nonhuman bodies with which to interact – possible orientation devices and anchoring points – may be in physical proximity to the situated undocumented subject, but the situation, the here, is displaced, disturbing and disrupting that interaction.

Undocumented persons may walk the streets and move around fairly undisturbed by the their irregular residential status. Protected by the gömda discourse and the consequent assumption that undocumented persons are not to be seen in the street or behind the counter in a pizzeria, they can take on the guise of having a right to space. In that disguise they can orientate and engage with their surroundings, but those surroundings are not theirs. The interactions are not between them as a subject and their world, but between their disguise – an object – and the world. They can move freely but cannot establish engagements over time, cannot stockpile orientation devices or anchoring points. They must make do with the opportunities of the present moment (de Certeau, 1984). Orientation only makes sense as bi- or multidirectional relationships between a situated body and positioned objects in space. When the here is displaced, that orientation will always be disturbed and directions distorted.

When we lose our bearing and orientation fails us, we become nauseous; we cannot sink our feet into the ground, stand still and orientate – we experience an existential seasickness. Merleau-Ponty discusses the effects of disorientation on the body. He refers to an experiment where a person sitting on a chair has a view of things going on in another room through a mirror that makes that room appear tilted. That person, it was found in the experiment, will eventually – despite having firm anchoring points in view with which to
orientate herself and her body – experience the slanted room as ‘upright’, and things appearing ‘actually upright’ outside the mirrored room will be experienced as oblique or queer. He concludes:

We remain physically upright not through the mechanism of the skeleton or even through the nervous regulation of muscular tone, but because we are caught up in a world. If this involvement is seriously weakened, the body collapses and becomes once more an object (Merleau-Ponty, 2002:296).

It is our involvement in and with the world that keeps us upright, and it is the weakening of this involvement that causes the collapse of the embodied subject into an object among objects. By not engaging with the world – because of exclusion or because one is turned away and estranged from it – the subject turns into an object, experiencing only function-to-variable relationships between itself and other objects. That is, in Hannah Arendt’s words, to be dead to the world.

Undocumentedness inscribed

The past sections in this chapter have dealt with various elements of the undocumented experience – ambiguity, alienation and disorientation. I have argued that these are essential structures of the undocumented life world. In this section, I shift focus to some of the more palpable, corporeal elements of undocumentedness and how they inscribe in and on the undocumented lived body.

With Foucauldian and feminist scholarship, the ancient image of the body politic – that the state and politics can be understood through an analogy with the body – was turned inside-out: Politics can be read through bodies, power struggles take place in and on bodies (Foucault, 1978; Bordo, 1993). In this tradition, the body was released from its baggage of ‘nature’ and determinism and became acculturated and socially constructed, an important step in the feminist project. However, a secondary effect was the suspicion of essentialism and determinism in any inclusion of corporeal or material realms; the theoretical reduction of the body left postmodern feminism with a rather cerebral, esoteric and, ultimately, disembodied body (Davis, 1997:14). In the 1990s, Susan Bordo wrote of anorexia as a crystallization of culture in (mainly) young women’s bodies and thus dealt with bodies as more than a surface for inscription and meaning making, but also as a site for inscription through social violence. In the past decade however, a ‘new materialism’ is developing within feminist scholarship and within human geography generally (Whatmore, 2006) that considers matter and bodies not only as they are formed by language, culture and politics but also as non-deterministic formative agents in the phenomenal world (Frost, 2011). In this
theoretical context, I consider how bodily inscriptions and reactions of undocumentedness produce bruises from a form of legal and political violence.

In chapter five, I described some of the effects of undocumented persons being excluded from health care services and also briefly discussed the health care situation for undocumented persons. The medical conditions more common among undocumented patients than the population in general are to a large extent stress related: high blood pressure, psychosomatic problems and psychological issues such as depression and anxiety. While these trends should not be understood as determined or directly caused by undocumentedness, they can be understood as patterned physiological responses to the condition of being undocumented. A nurse at the Red Cross characterizes the situation like this:

Sometimes it is like this, they have contact with Swedish authorities, they have set their hopes in getting a residence permit… they consider themselves persecuted and have valid reasons to be here, and then they are rejected… and this goes very hard on some of them, after being here for so many years, like, legally, and then they have to go back. But, they oscillate between hope and despair. And I think that this is where we can discern a difference, that the former asylum seekers, they can be very, like, mentally worn down from that process, and are in a very bad mental condition. /…/ a person who has not sought asylum is here… is aware of the premises of their presence here /…/ they have not set their hopes to something Swedish, to Sweden, but they still live under a constant stress, to be found out. But they have not been worn down by this process – the asylum process. But this is not true of everyone.

Turning to medical and psychological accounts of asylum seekers’ and immigrants’ health, several studies show that the social factors of exile are just as important, or in fact more important, than the presence or experience of trauma in their places of origin (eg. Gorst-Unsworth and Goldenberg, 1998; Sundquist, et al., 2000). The sociologist Aaron Antonovsky argues that the sense of coherence in life – the ability to make sense of events in one’s life and feelings of meaningfulness and manageability – are important factors for a person’s mental well being (Antonovsky, 1987). In Antonovsky’s account, these traits are understood as achievements or traits that a person can possess, that will render them less fragile in stressful or traumatic situations. If turned inside-out, focusing on circumstances rather than people’s reactions to them, this framework can be used for characterizing a person’s living conditions. How comprehensible or chaotic is it? How difficult is a situation to make sense of, or to make meaningful? And to what extent can a person influence his/her life and future? The more haphazard and chaotic a situation and the less power a person has to influence it, the greater the psychological strain.

Brekke notes the high occurrence of depression, insomnia and concentration problems among asylum seekers in Sweden, as well as a prevalence
among his interviewees of near catatonic ways of spending time. He argues that these physiological conditions are related to the uncertainty, directionless time and loss of autonomy that characterize the asylum process (Brekke, 2004). Sarah Willen’s critical phenomenology of ‘illegality’ includes accounts of similar somatic reactions (Willen, 2007c) and my fieldwork gave ample examples of similar experiences among undocumented persons in Sweden. One undocumented person in the sanctuary commented: “Here, you know, everyone takes medicine, but I don’t want to. It is normal to react to this kind of very stressful situation. The natural way of things is that the body reacts.” Cut off from one’s past and one’s future self, disorientated in both space and time by disrupted timelines, paradoxical spatialities and a constant need to practice impression management, makes the ‘identity work’ of constructing and reconstructing one’s self or body image as part of that identity a difficult task (Johansen and Carlsson, 1984; Merleau-Ponty, 2002).

Reorientation and assembling of the split subject is not instantaneous after gaining a residence permit. Orientation requires familiarity, and familiarity encompasses a significant temporal dimension. Several of the undocumented persons I have met continuously during my fieldwork have legalized their residence in some way or other. In some cases, they have gained residence permits, either as recognized refugees or through the new labour immigration legislation. One person downplayed his permit and said that it wasn’t important. A few people experienced acute somatic conditions after regularizing their residency. Many people mention how undocumentedness lingered in their bodies and in their habits, like a phantom limb. Their eyes could see the residence permit glued to the passport, their hands could feel it and they could intellectually understand it, but their movement patterns, alertness, insomnia, stress-related headaches – what Willen calls ‘somatic modes of attention’ (Willen, 2007c) – lingered or even increased after they received their residence permits. One woman described it like this:

‘And you know, it wasn’t instant happiness when I got my residence permit, it is not easy just because you’ve got a permit. My sister asked me why I wasn’t happy now when I had the permit, but it takes time… I don’t know. For me it took a year after I got the permit. I had difficulties sleeping, and I had terrible headaches. But then there were two things that made things change. I got a job, and I started playing volleyball again. I used to play before, in my country, and when I started playing, that’s when the headaches disappeared and I slept much better’ (Fieldnotes, August 26th 2009).

This indicates that the experiential limits to undocumentedness are much wider and much more diffuse than its legal definition. A representative from Papperslösa Stockholm argued that in some sense, every person who is at risk of becoming undocumented – those who got their final rejection on their
asylum claim but have pleaded ‘impediments to enforcement’, those who are awaiting their final decision to an asylum claim, everyone waiting for a decision of expulsion or inclusion – share the undocumented experience. Everyone with the potential of becoming undocumented, he argued, is undocumented.

Escape at a high cost

In the Swedish context, it is not uncommon among undocumented persons, especially those who are forced migrants, to carry memories of traumatic experiences from their place of origin or from the journey, sometimes manifesting in the form of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). In this section, I describe and discuss a specific type of psychological and somatic response among asylum-seeking and undocumented children in Sweden called Pervasive Refusal Syndrome.

Pervasive Refusal Syndrome, sometimes called Depressive Devitalization or paediatric catatonia – in Swedish media *apatiska barn*\(^\text{57}\) – is a psychiatric condition in children. It is described as the most extreme case in a wide range of refusal symptoms (Nunn and Thompson, 1996), and can manifest in lengthy ‘limbo’ conditions, like in an asylum process, or under circumstances of “hopelessness, helplessness and an uncertain time perspective” (Bodegård, 2005:337). The symptoms are described as “a profound and pervasive refusal to eat, drink, talk, walk and engage in any form of self-care” (Lask, 2004). Although often associated with asylum seeking children in Sweden, where it was first defined (Lask, et al., 1991), similar symptoms have been described in other contexts, where physical injury or illness, abuse, loss of loved ones or a combination of such factors, experienced as traumatic and inescapable events (Jaspers, et al., 2009; Wright and Beverley, 2011; Dhossche, et al., 2012). Most individuals developing Pervasive Refusal Syndrome are children, the majority are between eight and 20 years of age, but there are examples of younger children, as well as adults. Most of them are the eldest or a single child and have often first hand experience of traumatic events from the place of origin and migration. Their asylum process has often been protracted over several years. Frequently their parents are in need of or are receiving psychiatric assistance and the children have often, in these cases, experienced that their parents are also helplessness and without hope (Sundelin and Lindberg, 2005; Jaspers, et al., 2009).

A substantial number of children in, and after the Swedish asylum process, have shown symptoms of this kind. The public and political debate concerning this phenomenon has been intense at times (Tamas, 2009; Johansson Blight, et al., 2012). ‘Anecdotal evidence’ formed the foundation for a government investigation concluding that a majority of these children

\(^{57}\) Approximately: apathetic children
were either feigning or drugged by their parents (Hessle, 2005). These conclusions have later been totally refuted as conjecture based on rumour, and any such assumption against the three families that I have met, with a total of five children with refusal symptoms, is completely out of the question.

Experientially, undocumentedness is a far wider phenomenon than its legal (negative) definition. Although this syndrome relates to asylum seekers in a higher degree than undocumented persons, it is still relevant for the present study. As such, it illustrates an extreme psychosomatic response to uncertainty, hopelessness and loss of autonomy. Pervasive Refusal Syndrome constitutes an ultimate and life-threatening manifestation of alienation and escape, where children completely detach from the world and render themselves objects. These are my notes from a visit with one of these families:

This afternoon, I visited a family on the verge of becoming undocumented. The family consisted of mother, father and three children. All but the husband were at home when we arrived, but it was very quiet in the apartment. I asked to use the bathroom. It was as neat and tidy as the rest of the apartment, blue floor and wallpaper, stacks of diapers on one of the shelves, a diaper bin in one corner. But the children in this family were between ten and eighteen! A special tilted wheelchair with support for head, shoulders and legs – quite a small one sits in far corner of the bathroom. This is part of the answer to why it was so quiet in the house (Fieldnotes, 26th June 2009).

The children in this family were all in bed. At first they stopped going to school. Then they stopped going out. They ate less. Then they kept to their rooms, after a while to their beds. They had one by one, step by step, tightened the inward vicious circle and shut themselves away from the world. By the time we visited them, two of the children were completely withdrawn from the world, silent, still and completely unresponsive. They were fed gruel three times a day through a naso-gastric feed. The eldest girl was still responsive to some degree but stayed in bed in the dark and had refused all food for the past week. This family had received a final rejection of their asylum claim and were preparing to plead ‘impediments to enforcement’. Their children were too unwell to be moved and they would not be able to access any proper care, nor help from family or friends, in the place to which they were to be deported. All of this was quite separate from their original fear of deportation relating to the reasons for their initial asylum application.

The smiling children in the family portraits in the living room stood in sharp contrast to the unresponsive, force-fed children in their bedrooms. The activist with whom I came to visit was there to review their case. A discussion arose about what turgor meant – that was how the responsiveness of the
children was indicated. It turned out to be a measure of skin elasticity\textsuperscript{58} – no other kind of response to sound, touch or sting was recorded that would suggest a level of communication.

Sartre’s understanding of emotions and bodily responses to emotions as escape suggests a phenomenological understanding of some of the aspects of Pervasive Refusal Syndrome. Through embodied, emotional responses, we can magically transform our experience of the world, in order to experience or escape a situation. But there are limits to “my magical action upon the world; I can eliminate it as an object of consciousness, but I can do so only by eliminating consciousness itself.” (Sartre, 1948:62-63). Seen from an existential phenomenological perspective, Pervasive Refusal Syndrome can be understood as an escape from an unbearable world, physically remaining in it, but annihilating all sensation of it. It is a survival tactic with severe and life-threatening somatic symptoms, but experientially, it is an escape; a tightening of the ‘inward vicious circle’ until all sensation is barred. In one sense, it is a person’s total submission to the alienation of prescribed absence, yet in another, he/she is as present as ever.

\textsuperscript{58} Skin turgor is determined by monitoring the time it takes for the skin of the forearm to return to position after it is lightly pinched.
Orientation and anchoring devices

There are many ways of being undocumented. I have argued in this chapter that some of the main ingredients of the undocumented experience are ambiguity, alienation and disorientation, present either in themselves or as negations – as conditions they struggled with or have overcome. The strategies and tactics to deal with these conditions carry as much meaning as the positive manifestations of the same (Abu-Lughod, 1990). As demonstrations of the disarming of that which need be dealt with, tactics and tricks delineate conditions of undocumentedness from a different starting point. However, these tactics also indicate the microphysics and workings of power and resistance in the embodied and personal realms of life (de Certeau, 1984).

This section is concerned with the struggles of negating and obviating the undocumented condition and the gleams of hope amid disorientating ambiguousness. There are different ways of counteracting the alienation and disorientation of undocumentedness. Although all had some sort of response to questions like ‘where do you feel safe?’ or ‘is there anything you like to do that lets you forget your legal status?’, not all project participants have been able to devise obviating tactics.

It should be noted as well that to become present does not, in this chapter, mean to appear in front of others, to speak and act, but to find one’s bearing and ‘feel present’ and orientated, to unite the subject and to feel ‘at home’. The tactics are clustered in three categories – social interaction, narrowing of horizons and physical exercise.

Social interaction

*The invisible child* (Jansson, 2004) is a children’s story about a little girl, Ninni, who lived with, and eventually escaped from, a bitter and sarcastic old woman. Irony and sarcasm made Ninni uncertain of what was actually real and she started to fade, literally, until she became completely invisible. Ninni ends up with the Mumin family – a family of white big-nosed trolls – who, by being straight and quite kind, allow her to regain some certainty of the order of things. After a time, she has become almost entirely visible again, only her face remains diffuse. It is only when Ninni laughs for the first time – she has in a peevish moment bitten the tail of one of the Mumins so that he jumped with shock and fell into the lake – that she becomes entirely opaque and solid again.

Everyday social interactions can be petrifyingly distressing for undocumented people, for fear of being discovered, or alienating due to the constant necessity of concealing or lying about certain parts of ones social identity or existence. Under certain circumstances however, they can become some of the most comforting situations. When interaction with other people can be ‘normal’ – talking about things other than their ‘problems’, with people who
already know about their situation, spending time where no concealment is necessary and ‘you don’t have to be on your guard’ – it can become a moment of rest. In these moments, for a while, they can forget that they are undocumented and simply be themselves, as themselves. One undocumented woman explained that,

We had Swedish friends who helped us, and it is a very fantastic family. … and we were invited to their home and we had so much joy and playing games and music together, we did so many nice things, eating and talking … I mean, we forgot what we had behind [us].

Situations where no concealment or impression management has to be practiced mends the split subject. True points of orientation may be at least temporarily devised or found, and the split subjectivity of socially referred objectification is temporarily suspended (Weiss, 1999; Young, 2005c). It is difficult to view oneself as a useless thing when someone is involving you in an honest, joyful conversation.

Narrowing one’s horizons

Territorialization on the individual level is to mark out places through acts and milieu markers. By establishing a relationship between one’s person or body and a certain place, to make them familiar and make claims on them, at least temporarily, is to create points of familiarity and orientation and a way of establishing places of comfort. This type of embodied territorialization can be acted through visual signals, by saving a seat or arranging our things or our body in such ways that signal or signify a claim, through sound like humming or whistling, or by scent by for instance smoking (Wise, 2000). Habitual postures and habitual places have comforting and restful properties that are part of the process in establishing bodily equilibrium, or unity in our body image (Weiss, 1999:18-19). These things can, as such, act as anchors in a wider life situation over which one has no power.

Territorialization on wider scales is generally discussed as means of keeping others out and indeed some of the bodily performances of claiming space also has as its primary aim to keep others away from ‘my place’. In the comforting function of home-making, however, there is also an element of ‘keeping oneself in’, or ‘keeping oneself together’. This is illustrated with an example from my fieldnotes from the sanctuary:

I went into the kitchen to get a cup of tea before retiring to my room for the night. One of the women was there, and we were both reaching for the refrigerator to get milk for our cups of tea. Her hair was wet and she smelled nice of shampoo. We haven’t spoken much before, just the small talk of everyday things. Suddenly she said: ‘You know, Erika. I have a place, my own place. And that’s the bathroom when I take a shower. When I close the door, my
only thought is that now, this is only mine!’ She laughs. ‘I only breathe and think that this half hour, or hour, it is only I.’ I smile, and I say that I can imagine that that is restful for her. ‘Yes, my thoughts usually have to be there, there, there and there, but in the bathroom; they are only there, in the bathroom. Yes, exactly so’ (Fieldnotes, 28th June 2009).

The sanctuary is a relatively safe place to live as undocumented. The buildings and the convent’s grounds are felt to be safe by most, especially for families with children – the knowledge that the children have friends around and can live fairly normal lives there – is comforting to many parents. But the often-crammed living conditions are nonetheless stressful and the possibilities of private moments are, for most residents, extremely limited. To appropriate the bathroom and the shower and the hot water and the fresh smell of shampoo for an hour, shuts out the unruly yonder, distressing past and unpredictable future, and shuts oneself in; it helps to keep oneself together.

Similarly, Antonovsky has argued that narrowing one’s horizons to achieve a world that is more comprehensible and manageable is practicable also in a wider, social or existential sense (Antonovsky, 1987:22-24). In a world that seems incomprehensible and unpredictable, one way of preserving a sense of coherence is to narrow one’s scope and set of concerns to include only the things that seem manageable and controllable. This redefinition of one’s realm to regain a feeling of control can concern either the temporal, spatial or social expanse. Handling loss of autonomy over one’s life in the overarching, wider issues of life such as place of abode, country of residence, life and death, can be dealt with – or rather, the experience of powerlessness can be dealt with – through focusing on narrow, practical tasks that can be managed and successfully achieved. These are my notes from a Wednesday in spring 2009, after one of the weekly Papperslösa Stockholm demonstrations.

I went to the grocery store after the demonstration, and after the checkout, I ran into one of the undocumented men. I had only briefly greeted him at the demonstration, so I stopped and we talked for a while. I asked how things were going for him. ‘Well, it is difficult’ he said and smiled bleakly. ‘It’s ok as long as you’re busy, but when you’re out of work and have time to think and reflect, then it is much harder.’

When you focus on practical things, organizing a demonstration, fixing this, fixing that, those things are accomplishable, they are practical problems that can be solved. But if you start thinking about the general situation, that which has been partly operationalized in the practical tasks, then you are overcome by the unsolvable and the unaccomplishable. I think it might be something akin to being in grief. To organize the practical things, funeral, obituary, cleaning, can be a relief; it is something to have influence over. Through practical, manual labour, the overarching, abstract horror can be kept at bay (Fieldnotes, 19th April 2009).
Narrowing down of one’s horizons – spatially, temporally or socially – are ways of making the absurd bearable, or at least less unbearable. The narrower field of vision makes orientation less difficult and the experiences of disorientation and alienation less pronounced. The range of practices and practical tasks undertaken by the project participants to keep in check the uncertainties and unmanageability of undocumentedness are many. Cleaning, organizing things, cooking, playing with or teaching children, working whichever informal job one happens to possess at the moment are some examples – “because when you’re done with cleaning, you can just sit again, and wait”.

The questions of one’s legal status and uncertain future that one has no power over are suspended, and reference points and goals closer at hand that are possible and achievable form temporary orientation devices.

Being in my body

‘The doctor offered me medicine, but I don’t want it. To go out for a walk is my medicine, and I think that it is better. When I come back I am a little calmer’ (Fieldnotes, 23rd May 2009).

Physical exercise has, in itself, physiological calming effects in the form of release of endorphins and is often recommended to decrease negative stress or depression. The importance of physical activities and bodily labour as a means of coping with situations cannot be understated. However, beyond bio-chemical processes within, the body is also a place to be at home, and we use our bodies as means of marking milieus in creating comforting homelike places around us. To be in one’s body and to balance ones bodily equilibrium – to achieve unity of body-image and transcendent fluid motion – are embodied qualities of being-at-home.

Motility and physical activity are important factors in the reaching for unity of the body image (Young, 2005c) and consequently also for orientation. Being in motion – walking, running, biking, dancing or playing football – is also to further narrow one’s focus. By fully engaging in that activity, focus and body may merge, restoring momentarily bodily equilibrium – “The best thing ever is to bike with a head wind. Then I am never nervous."

The equilibrium can however be shattered and thrown far off balance in a second; the shift from relative harmony to chaos and confusion can be swift. An illustration of the ephemeral nature of that equilibrium includes one of the most memorable moments of my fieldwork in the sanctuary:

I wanted to withdraw to my room, but I heard that there were people in the parking lot. They were playing football, mainly dads and children, mostly

59 Fieldnotes, 1st July 2010
60 Fieldnotes 30th of July 2009
boys but girls too. I went over there and talked to one of the dads standing on the side. He said that they sometimes play football, grown-ups and children, behind the house on the lawn and that it is much fun. I don’t like football, but I was lured into the game and soon enough I was running back and forth on the gravel, chasing balls and children. At least three balls were present on our pitch, some soared high, some lower and slower. Fights arose and dissolved as waves of aggression and calm. Someone fell, started crying desperately, got distracted by one of the balls and rose to run after it. The joy of movement was something I had forgotten. We were joined there and then in the dusk, ignoring our sorrows and problems. It was chaotic football as bodily labour, as joy and as relief.

Suddenly there’s a sound, a car, it came down the driveway and entered the parking lot, the noise of tires on the gravel and the bright headlights fill our senses.

In a second, I was alone on the parking lot with the car and some of the dads who knew the driver. All children had vanished, into the bushes, into their apartments, into their mothers’ arms, far away from the constantly anticipated police-car (Fieldnotes, 24th April 2009).

There is a wide array of tactics and tricks with which the disorientation and alienation of undocumentedness can be dispelled. Unity of body image or bodily equilibrium are in themselves never fixed states, we are perpetually moving towards such equilibrium in our ever-changing bodies. Young argues that the tendency of ‘throwing like a girl’ is a consequence of the ambiguous transcendence, inhibited intentionality and discontinuous unity that have their roots in the split of the subject (Young, 2005c). In a related, in some ways opposite but by no means contradictory argument, I suggest that physical exercise and bodily movement – kicking as well as throwing balls – can be a means of reuniting the subject and reconquering bodily unity.

Conclusions
Inspired by critical, feminist and queer contributions to phenomenological thought, this chapter has added an existential dimension to the account of undocumentedness in the Swedish context. I have argued that the paradoxical condition of being both absent and present, the fear and anxiety of being apprehended and constantly worrying about one’s appearance are objectifying and alienating forces of undocumentedness. Further, the official absence of the undocumented subject, the displacement of the undocumented here, paired with conditions of ambiguousness, uncertainty and powerlessness, renders the undocumented situation a disorientating experience. I argue that these are fundamental experiential structures of being undocumented, and that these experiences inscribe and linger in bodies in various ways.

Corresponding to these experiences are tactics and orientation devices that undocumented persons employ in their everyday lives in order to counteract disorientating and alienating conditions. These consist of, firstly, so-
cial interaction with people whom they can engage without having to hide part of their social identity. Secondly, narrowing one’s horizons – spatially, temporally or socially – to make sense of an absurd and ambiguous situation. By identifying and engaging in accomplishable tasks and contexts, orientation becomes less difficult. The embodied territorialization of spatially narrowed horizons, through enclosing oneself or marking one’s place, is to exclude all but that which is familiar. However, it is a territorialization that is not so much about keeping others out as ‘keeping oneself together’. Finally, motility and physical activity are important factors in establishing unity in body image and can be understood as a further narrowing of focus to the own lived body-in-the-world. Being in motion and fully engaged in that activity can be a means of reuniting the split subject and reconquering bodily equilibrium.
VIII. Conclusions

This thesis has provided an ethnography and critical phenomenology of undocumentedness. By approaching various aspects of the undocumented condition – its construction as a legal and socio-political position in society, its paradoxical spatiality and character of absent-present condition and its existential dimensions of alienation and disorientation – I have successively drawn up a complex and multi-layered illustration of what undocumentedness is and means in the Swedish context.

‘Undocumented’, as a category, takes its reference point in state legislation and administration. Through applying a dual conceptualization of the state – on the one hand a territory-population-jurisdiction triad within an interstate system and, one the other, a set of institutions peopled by politicians, bureaucrats and practitioners – the undocumented position emerges as a category defined in law only by omission, produced and reproduced through rigid administrative routines and related practice. The residual category of the legally and officially absent emerges in the observable realm as undocumented persons whose corporeal presence becomes irrefutable in contact with health care institutions. An investigation into the interface between state actors and undocumented persons within the health care sector reveals how being formally absent but physically present renders interaction with institutions, as well as with individuals, oblique and displaced.

I have argued in this thesis that the undocumented absent-present condition gives rise to a paradoxical spatiality and a deprivation of the capacity to define, and to appear in public space. Outlining various configurations of the presence-absence of undocumentedness, however, I have also shown that despite being denied their political subjectivity, undocumented persons can engage in embodied action and – at least temporarily – appear as themselves and claim rights. Turning, in the previous chapter, to the existential and phenomenological dimensions of the undocumented condition, I have suggested that alienation and disorientation are key elements of the undocumented mode of being-in-the-world, and that undocumentedness inscribe in various ways in and on undocumented persons’ bodies.

This final chapter brings together the main lines of thought and highlights the key contributions of this thesis. I also indicate some questions for further inquiries within the fields of research that this thesis is part of.
Research in Sweden on the undocumented condition

Immigration and integration policy, as well as the experiences of immigrants, are well-researched topics in the Swedish context (eg. Andersson and Molina, 2003; Kamali, 2006; Bengtsson and Kugelberg, 2009). In this research context, the lack of research on the undocumented condition is especially noteworthy. Franck Düvell has suggested that this scarcity of research originates in the relative newness and small scale of irregular migration in the Nordic countries, paired with a migration debate marked by an asylum and refugee discourse, engulfing and obscuring issues of undocumentedness (Düvell, 2010).

When I began this research in 2007, the number of scholarly texts concerning undocumented persons or irregular migration in the Swedish context was limited. Anthropologist Shahram Khosravi had conducted a research project among undocumented men in Stockholm and published one text on the topic (Khosravi, 2006). A few reports, mainly revolving around issues of health care were also available (Läkare utan Gränser, 2005; Ohlsson, 2006). During the course of the past four years, however, a number of doctoral theses (Baghir-Zada, 2009; Holgersson, 2011; Sager, 2011), academic reports and articles (Gavanas, 2010; Khosravi, 2010; Lund Thomsen, et al., 2010; Noll, 2010) and journalistic accounts (Lödenius and Wingborg, 2008; Mattsson, 2008; Vestin, 2008; Molin, 2010) have been published. The number of research projects concerning undocumented migration is growing exponentially and an interdisciplinary network of researchers in Sweden who are interested in issues related to irregular migration is in the making – both indicators of the increased interest and awareness. I have argued that Sweden constitutes a critical case in the study of undocumentedness and I expect interesting things to emerge from these recently initiated projects.

In an international context, it is not uncommon that the undocumented position constitutes a residual category in law and society, but in few other contexts is the exclusion of that category so definite as in Sweden. In comparison to Israel – a country with a much larger undocumented population and a comparatively aggressive internal border regime with profound effects on the undocumented experience – the inconsistencies of migration and social policy make everyday exclusion seem less pronounced than in the Swedish context (Willen, 2007a; Kalir, 2010). These kinds of discrepancies have been noted in the study of policy making and policing (Coleman, 2008) but their significance for the undocumented experience remains largely unstudied. Another important specific of the Swedish context, in relation to undocumentedness, is the dominance of refugee related immigration during the past 30–40 years and its influence on migration policy and discourse. These are details that need be investigated in further detail, in relation to the experiences of migrants in general and of undocumented persons in particular.
Feminist thought, phenomenology and Hannah Arendt

Phenomenology and Arendtian political theory are two bodies of literature that for a long time, by many, have been considered incompatible with feminist scholarship. Phenomenology in geography has generally been confined to the humanistic strand of geographic research, far from both critical and feminist concerns. Likewise, the influence of Arendt’s writing has until recently been minor within feminist and critical geographical scholarship.

Arendt’s writing has been described as “somewhat erratic as well as eccentric, filled with misjudgements and controversy” (Howell, 1993:314). Likewise are phenomenology and feminism umbrella terms for a variety of philosophical and political perspectives. Phenomenology, including Arendt’s phenomenal political theory, is highly spatially aware in its conceptualization of perception, experience and our engagement with our worlds, and the vastness and ambiguousness of these frameworks invite productive interpretation and amendment. By productive I don’t mean sloppy – I mean what Sara Ahmed suggests when she embarks on a queering of phenomenology:

The promise of interdisciplinary scholarship is that the failure to return text to their histories will do something. Of course, not all failures are creative. If we don’t take care with the texts we read, if we don’t pay attention, then the failure to read them ‘properly’ won’t do very much at all. Taking care involves work, and it is work that we must do if we are to create something other than another point on a line. We must remember that to ‘not return’ still requires the act of following, we have to go with something if we are to depart from that thing. The following takes us in a different direction, as we keep noticing other things (Ahmed, 2006:22-3).

I argue that the synthesizing of phenomenological and Arendtian thought with feminist and political geography are generally undervalued endeavours. These combinations have been productive in this thesis and I hope it proves encouraging to further such merging attempts.

Critical and feminist phenomenology

From one perspective, ‘feminist phenomenology’ is an oxymoron and a calamity. Phenomenology – attending to sensuous experience and perception, generally ignoring the structures and historical chains of events that condition and make possible the studied experiences and perceptions – has its foundation in ontological and epistemological assumptions bordering on solipsism. In contrast, feminist scholarship originates in feminist protest and political struggle, where the varying philosophical standpoints have been instigated as reactions to the traditional hegemonic Western analytical-scientific approaches.
Few sliding scales are linear or predictable, however, and at closer scrutiny it transpires that feminist scholarship and phenomenology are theoretical frameworks that from different starting points can arrive on closely related ground. As growing numbers of feminist scholars and phenomenologists have discovered, they have a number of shared core interests: the focus on everyday and embodied experience and the subjective and situated qualities of knowledge being two of the most important. Feminist engagements with, especially, MerleauPonty’s writing have been well aware of its political and ethical deficiencies, as well as how ‘the lived body’ is ill-suited to theorize alterity. Regardless, scholars have, in various ways, fruitfully developed his thoughts to better fit feminist research methodology and interests (Olkowski, 2006).

Iris Marion Young and Gail Weiss are two feminist scholars who have engaged phenomenological and existential philosophy in politically and ethically concerned matters, and they have constituted important sources of inspiration for this thesis. Even more so has Sarah Ahmed’s queering of phenomenology, with focus and development of orientation as a key dimension of social interaction, normative culture and human experience in general. They have proved, among other things, that it is possible to care about both power struggles constitutive of a phenomenon, as well as their experiential and existential qualities.

The changing migration regimes and politics of bordering are important objects of study, as are the power structures and discourses through which they are founded and justified, and these have been central themes within migration studies, as well as in feminist and political geography. Increasing attention is given to the individual and embodied aspects of these developments, however, which has enriched the understanding of these processes, but attention to their phenomenological qualities is still scarce. Our contemporary, rapidly changing world does not only remodel structures of power and oppression but has consequences also for how we live our lives and engage with the world, and therein lies – ultimately – the power over experience and existence. The advance of critical phenomenology within anthropology demonstrates a capacity for a more politically aware phenomenology and the potential for theoretical development of individual experience within feminist thought. This thesis is part of furthering that endeavour.

Arendt and feminism

A common reading of Arendt, perhaps especially among feminist thinkers, is as a nostalgic and antimodernist thinker. The awkwardness of turning to Arendtian politics to enrich feminist theory is often mentioned in the attempts at it during the past two decades (Honig, 1995). Arendt herself was impatient with the feminism of her time and dismissed their concerns with the private realm and gender identity as politically inappropriate. She was
reciprocally dismissed by feminism and there are several obvious provocations toward feminism in Arendt’s writing: Her own oft-quoted ‘suspicion against women who give orders’, her critique of the social and her reluctance to invite private and reproductive matters into politics, as well as her alleged gendered separation of the private and the public (Dietz, 1995). Depending on outlook and focus, these issues are more or less problematic, and some strands of feminist scholarship are more compatible with Arendt’s work than others. A focus on gender identity and intersectional perspectives, with their emphasis on social categories, necessarily clash with Arendtian conceptualization of politics, while agonistic (Honig, 1992) or mestiza feminism (Anzaldúa, 1987) are well suited for the job. What Arendt conceptualizes in public space is not a utopic idea of lofty, disembodied politics, but a small scale, performative and discourse driven participatory democracy, quite compatible with a feminist ‘anti-categorical complexity approach’ (McCall, 2009).

I would argue that Arendt’s focus on beginnings, plurality and the inevitable unpredictability of action and human relationships in some respects invites, or at least allows for, the inclusion of the fleshy, messy, inconsistent reality of bodies and geography. The what-ness of our social categorizations is left out of the Arendtian public space but it doesn’t necessarily follow that bodies must be apolitical. Moi’s situated, lived body is material and ready for action, orientated towards the possibilities of the future (Moi, 1999) – it can and will force itself into view.

Rancière’s (2004) example of women’s demonstrations during the French revolution in claiming political rights – demonstrating despite not being recognized as political subjects – pinpoints the discrepancy between the abstract state and embodied action and, thus, the problem of confining the analysis of political action to a matter of rights and formal recognition. The undocumented position as defined in reference to the state as a juridico-political construct is absolutely excluded, containing no potential for rights or struggle. Yet, it is true that the sans-papiers of France have spoken and acted, and it is also true that Papperslösa Stockholm has been demonstrating outside the Swedish parliament building for more than four years. Although undocumented persons are deportable, that doesn’t necessarily mean that they will be deported if they appear as themselves. It is to take a risk, but “[b]odily domination is never imposed by some abstract societal Other; only bodies can do things to other bodies” (Frank, 1991:56). In what Rancière calls dis-sensus, he conceptualizes a practiced politics inside-outside the political community, where anyone can take the chance to speak up and appear in front of others. Combining a juridico-political view of the state with an understanding of the undocumented position as reproduced in practice, the role of bodies in space in the political struggle comes into focus, revealing potential routes for embodied, political action.
The importance of doubt, and of courage

What if we could express exactly what we thought and felt? I don’t mean that we ever could, but what if? Wouldn’t it just be... a roar? A shockwave of sound, so complex that it fills every wavelength. And it just keeps coming, doesn’t it? But if we succeed in distinguishing and channelling some part of it onto a page, or a canvas or a scene or into a little gesture, it may, it has a chance to sing in tune with someone-else’s roar, and we can truly, though not ever fully, understand (Sigvardsdotter, 2011b).

The above is a record of thoughts about representation that I published on my blog. This thesis is a record of one way of representing undocumented-ness. I have claimed that the undocumented position can be understood as a residual category and that the undocumented condition is one of alienation and disorientation. I argue these points in a way that I hope will convince you. However, I do not intend to relay ‘truth’. The frustrations of representation, of ‘truth’ and of differing perspectives, are not unique to PhD students writing up theses, but are underlying currents in everyday conversations as well as in the media and in political conflicts. Given these slippages, what sort of claims can we make and what are those claims worth? Can we ever understand each other, and what kind of creatures would we be if we didn’t try? Michel de Certeau avoids the question of ‘truth’ altogether and celebrates the productive qualities of reading (de Certeau, 1984). Donna Haraway goes all the way, embracing the limitations of true knowledge and argues that our subjective truths, as the only valid forms of knowledge, should be called objective. Approaching knowledge as something embedded in the complexity of the situated subject, she argues that it is the unfinished and fluid qualities of our subjectivity that allow for new knowledge and understanding:

The knowing self is partial in all its guises, never finished, whole, simply there and original; it is always constructed and stitched together imperfectly, and therefore able to join with another, to see together without claiming to be another (Haraway, 1988:586).

The imperfect and permeable stitches of subjectivity are what allow us to sing in tune with others and let new knowledge seep into and change us. Conversely, to become solid – to know the solid truth – is to be impregnable against new understanding or new views. This is yet another connecting thread from feminist philosophy to existentialist phenomenology. To be permeable and unfinished are preconditions for being able to allow uncertainty, doubt and multiple perspectives to exist, and the same imperfect stitches that permit us to understand also prompt doubt and angst. But “[t]o live with a quiet angst over the fact that you don’t know or understand the
disposition of the world and what you are doing in it is … the price you have to pay not to become a dangerous person” (Larsmo, 2006, own translation).

Conclusions

Doubt makes communicating ‘solutions’ or what we think is ‘right’ difficult and scary. Yet, as a researcher, I have a responsibility to communicate and make my research known within and beyond the research community. This thesis is a descriptive account of the construction of undocumentedness and the undocumented situation, and the initial aim has not been to find solutions or prescribe routes of action to ‘improve’ the ‘situation’. Usefulness is not, as has been shown through the course of this thesis, a straightforward specification, and the logic of a descriptive account is not the same as that of a prescriptive plan of action (Olsson, 1980:61b). However, in this final section of the final chapter, I present some critical points on which much seems to hinge. From these, I outline a few key conclusions that can be drawn from this research.

Especially in Sweden

… Sweden, a country long stereotyped by Western intellectuals and progressives as a paradise of social enlightenment, as an international champion of social justice, as the very model of solidarity and equality, as the world’s capital of good intentions and civilized behaviour toward others (Pred, 2000:6).

The stereotyped Swedish Model with comprehensive and ‘generous’ public welfare provision, comparatively small income gaps and high ambitions on issues of human rights, is a constituent part of the Swedish asylum-centred migration discourse and is often used as an argument when advocating rights, provision or aid for vulnerable groups. It therefore came as somewhat of a surprise to many, that Sweden, together with Austria, turned out to be the most restrictive country in Europe when it came to provision of health care for undocumented persons (PICUM, 2007). Advocacy groups, as well as politicians, who argue for a less restrictive policy, often draw on Sweden’s reputation as ‘international champion of social justice’ (eg. Westerberg, et al., 2009; Hedh, 2011; Wedin, 2011). While the restrictive attitude may be unexpected when seen in the light of this self-image, it is less so from another perspective.

I have argued in this thesis that the presence of undocumented persons in a universalistic and comprehensive welfare system exposes particularly sensitive points in that system – more so than in a state with less public provision. The fact that anyone included has access not only to a minimum of
welfare services, but to a comprehensive social security net of subsidized health care, childcare, elderly care and social insurance, makes inclusion – or partial inclusion – of the excluded a highly charged issue.

Engin Isin argues that the constitutive role of the Other in constructing a conceptual ‘we’, requires the power difference between ‘us’ and ‘them’ to be neither too small nor too great (Isin, 2002). In the case of Swedish registered and unregistered populations, the power disparity is, I would argue, too big to make the undocumented population play any part in the construction of Swedishness. In relation to the role, image and fantasy of the Swedish welfare state, however, the undocumented population plays a crucial part as constitutive Other. The great difference in provision between insiders and outsiders makes distinctions important and half membership difficult to define, accept or administer. In this context, the absolute exclusion of undocumented persons in society in general – and the barring of undocumented persons from health care provision in particular – comes as less of a surprise and more as an expected product of the comprehensive welfare state. Some politicians seem to fear that access to anything beyond the minimum of emergency health care to its actual price would make Sweden an attractive place for undocumented persons to dwell, when in fact Sweden constitutes a particularly hostile and austere environment to be undocumented in.

When Allan Pred wrote of racism in Swedish society, he titled his book *Even in Sweden*, referring to the stereotyped image of Sweden as the capital of “good intentions and civilized behaviour toward others” (Pred, 2000:6) and discussing the occurrence of racism *even* in that context. A monograph on the stark exclusion of undocumented persons in the same setting, but viewed in the light of the presented arguments of this thesis, could correspondingly be titled *Especially in Sweden*.

Regulating health care provision

The regulations for care for undocumented patients are as, at the time of writing, still a controversial political topic. No action has been taken by the government since its own investigation of the issue was presented more than a year ago, despite pressure from NGOs as well as political parties within the government and in opposition. At the moment, the only national regulation concerning health care applicable to the undocumented population is the established general minimum of emergency care that must not be refused to anyone. No suggestion of alternative action has emerged from the government and they are, it seems, attempting rather to keep the issue of health care for undocumented persons unregulated. By making it clear that undocumented persons should not exist in Sweden and that no accommodation should be made for such unauthorized and unacknowledged presence, they appear to endeavour to legally and discursively eliminate undocumentedness as an
issue. Any attempt to formulate regulations, of any kind, applying to undocumented persons would be to recognize their presence.

It has been made fairly clear that the greatest hurdles to undocumented persons’ access to health care, apart from their fear of authorities, are administrative. The computerized registration systems and rigid record keeping give rise to confusion and refusals, not on the basis of the patients’ lacking residence permits, but on the basis that they cannot be registered. This is a typical manifestation of exclusion by omission and an example of how borders, institutional or conceptual, need no exclusionary language to be built rigid and solid.

With no regulatory or administrative support in making decisions about whether or how to provide care for the undocumented patients they meet, an enormous responsibility is dumped in health care workers’ laps. In this context, the debate concerning undocumented persons’ access to health care has been important in raising awareness of their existence. The current debate on local and regional levels has brought the question of provision for undocumented persons from the hospital floor and individual cases, to the level of a discussion about general principals, administrative and medical practice.

The initial and most important step in order to find a constructive and sustainable way of handling undocumented persons’ access to care as well as the provision of that care has been to acknowledge their presence. This is something that is still difficult on the national level, but something that local politicians and people working with provision have already done. The proactive stance of the county councils is an indication of their better understanding of the state and public provision as practiced and embodied as well as political and legal issues.

A final remark

Hannah Arendt claimed that statelessness is symptomatic of the inter-state system – a series of bounded states with bounded membership will necessarily produce positions outside the totality of that system. Although the hegemony of the international structure of nation-states seems to have passed its height, national and supranational regulations still draft the rules around forced and voluntary migration. In this context, the situation for stateless and undocumented persons has by no means improved. Rather, the number of persons expelled into these categories is steadily increasing and the effort of keeping the ‘unwanted’ out of the EU is a multimillion-Euro-endeavour. Walls are being built and enforced, and border police given extended options for surveillance and additional border control. Yet, increasing numbers of undocumented persons reside within that walled Panopticon Europe. Migration is not something that can be stopped – history tells us that the only effective attempts at that have been made are within totalitarian regimes. The efficiency of exclusion and coherence of policy that is, at least
expressly, strived for in the Swedish case, cannot be achieved in a democracy – the reaction and action among the county councils being an excellent example of that.

The residual category that undocumented persons constitute is not a sign of the inter-state system having broken down; it is symptomatic – even constituent – of it. This research has shown the perilousness of the undocumented, paradoxical space – lingering in that limbo situation is a painful, alienating and disorientating experience – especially in Sweden. Their presence must be recognized; it must be possible as undocumented to survive and it must be possible to escape that situation. As members of the human community, it is our responsibility to make sure that we take care of those who get stuck in the cracks of our world.
Om papperslösa i Sverige: en sammanfattning

Papperslösa är en benämning på personer som befinner sig i Sverige utan uppehållstillstånd. Ibland, och av vissa, kallas de gömda, gömda flyktingar, tillståndslösa, illegala eller irreguljära. Att vara papperslös är inte brottsligt, men innebär att man är utvisningsbar – om myndigheterna upptäcker och identifierar en riskerar man att bli satt i förvar och så småningom deporterad.

Papperslösa har inget personnummer eller annat ID nummer och är på så sätt officiellt inte närvarande i Sverige, de finns inte registrerade någonstans, och de har ingen identitet som är användbar i det svenska samhället. Vadhelst som kräver identifikation – att hyra en film, att åka tåg, hämta ut ett paket på posten, hyra en lägenhet – blir närapå omöjligt för en papperslös person; man blir helt hänvisad till den svarta eller informella marknaden. Sverige är en specifik kontext i detta sammanhang, då personnummer används i väldigt många sammanhang som identifikation, oftare än i de flesta andra länder och svårigheten med att inte ha en officiell identitet blir tydligare.


Att vara papperslös innebär att ingå i en kategori med etiketten 'papperslös'. Det är en kategorisering som tar sin utgångspunkt i staten. Således är definitionen av 'papperslös' också beroende av definitionen av staten. Antingen kan man se papperslöshet som ett resultat av lagstiftning och riktiljjer, eller som något som produceras och reproduceras i praktiken i implementeringen av dessa regleringar. Jag har valt att inkludera båda dessa synsätt i analysen i den här avhandlingen. Kategorin 'papperslös' formas också av andra mekanismer i samhället än de som relaterar till immigration. Att inte ha ID handlingar gör att man blir utesluten från många delar av samhället som inte specifikt har med rättigheter eller medborgarskap att göra. Den första delen av mitt forskningsprojekt fokuserar på hur kategorin papperslös definieras i lagstiftning och i policy, samt hur den definitionen formas och reproduceras i administration och i praktiken. För att kunna zooma
in på specifika mekanismer och praktiker som formar papperslösheten i Sverige använder jag sjukvården som exempelsektor.

Den andra delen av min forskning handlar om vad papperslöshet innebär för de som är papperslösa. Här har jag försökt ta ett mer djupgående grepp på papperslöshet som situation att befina sig i. Bortom de praktiska problem som uppstår och de taktiker man kan ägna sig åt för att hantera dem och klara dagen, har papperslöshet mer grundläggande politiska och existentiella konsekvenser. Jag använder mig av ett kritiskt och feministiskt fenomenologiskt perspektiv som jag förklarar kort längre fram i den här sammanfattningen.

Framställning och disposition


Strukturen i denna sammanfattning är ungefär densamma som avhandlingen som helhet. Efter en kort metodgenomgång går jag över till att diskuterar hur kategorin 'papperslös' skapas och formas i lagstiftning, administration och i praktiken, samt vilken roll den svenska kontexten spelar i dessa processer. Jag ägnar extra uppmärksamhet till frågan kring hur dessa mekanismer fungerar inom vården, hur olika regler växer fram på olika politiska och administrativa nivåer och vilka effekter den nuvarande situationen har för både sjukvårdspersonal och patienter. Därefter diskuteras jag den paradoxala situation papperslösa personer befinner sig i som fysiskt närvarande men officiellt frånvarande och hur de osynliggörs av att inte ha någon officiell identitet. Slutligen diskuteras jag hur det att vara papperslös påverkar ens upplevelse av verkligheten samt pekar kort på några huvudpunkter i min forskning.
Metod och material


lösa när jag först träffat dem, men har under projektets gång ansökt om och fått uppehållstillstånd. Eftersom papperslöshet som upplevelse och situation att befinna sig i är en ännu mer diffus kategori än definierad ur ett juridiskt perspektiv har jag inte sett detta som ett problem, utan snarare som en fördel.


**Terminologi**

När det gäller papperslösa och papperslöshet är språket mycket politiskt laddat och valet av benämningar blir extra viktigt. I Sverige är det främst tre olika uttryck som används i debatten, varav *papperslös* är ett av dem, de andra två är *gömda* och *illegala*, men även blandningar och kombinationer av dem förekommer. Helena Holgersson (Holgersson, 2011) har i sin avhandling identifierat tre diskurser kring papperslöshet som hänger samman, mer eller mindre starkt, med var sin term. Detta är en viktig bakgrund och kontext till hur frågor kring papperslösa och papperslöshet hanteras i svensk debatt och politik.

*Gömda och gömda flyktingar* är de uttryck som används mest och längst i den svenska debatten, men enbart om asylsökande som fått avslag och håller sig undan deportation. Det är ingen slump att ordet gömd är i passiv form: de gömda gömmer sig inte själva, utan är gömda av hjälpare och gommare. Detta är symptomatiskt av den offerroll som de gömda placeras i; de som använder ordet gömda talar oftast om de gömda som offer för det svenska asylsystemet, och de framställs inte sällan som hjälplösa, undangömda och inte som en del av det samhälle ’vi’ befinner oss i. Illegala immigranter är ett uttryck som främst används av den växande högerextrema eller populistiska falangen i svensk politik och samhällsdebatt.
Med denna term lägger man samman nekade asylsökanden och personer som kommit till Sverige av andra anledningar, exempelvis för att arbeta, och fokuserar på antagandet om att det är kriminellt att befinner sig i Sverige utan tillstånd.


Vad är papperslöshet?


Lagstiftning


EU-medborgare behöver inte ansöka om uppehållstillstånd eller arbetstillstånd i Sverige, utan behöver endast registrera sig hos myndigheterna efter tre månader och förutsatt att man kan försöja sig så har man rätt att bo och bosätta sig i Sverige. Utomeuropeiska (utanför EU) medborgare däremot behöver, med några undantag, ansöka om uppehållstillstånd för att vistas längre än tre månader i Sverige och i många fall också ansöka om visum för

61 Tolkningen av ’bosatt’ kan skilja något åt mellan olika juridiska kontexter, men i de flesta fall förstås bosatt som folkbokförd.

Efter att alla dessa kategorier av bosatta och besökare har definierats, så återstår en grupp på mellan 10 000 och 35 000 personer på svenskt territorium som är de som är papperslösa. De är alltså inte explicit definierade juridiskt, utan kan sägas vara en residualkategori: när alla andra är definierade så är de papperslösa de som blir över. Det har gjorts några försök att inkludera papperslösa i viss lagstiftning, men dessa försök har oftast misslyckats på grund av bristande kunskap om gruppens sammansättning, och den följaktiga svårigheten att formulera en inklusiv definition. Detta kommer jag att gå in närmare på gällande hälso- och sjukvård.

Administration och praktik


Papperslösa närvaro är på många vis mer problematisk för den svenska välfärdsstaten än för länder som erbjuder färre rättigheter till sina medborgare, då kontrasten mellan de som är inkluderade och de som är exkluderade är större. Sverige med sitt internationella rykte av att vara den ultimata väl-
färdssaten, är alltså paradoxalt nog ett av de länder i världen där situationen för papperslösa är extra svår. De faktorer som jag här nämnt som specifika för Sverige gör papperslösamexkludering och utsatthet i vardagen extra accentuerad med många andra länder, även om den interna utlänningstanken kan vara mer aggressiv på andra håll. Den effektivitet med vilken välfärdsstaten fungerar för de som är inkluderade, motsvaras av effektiviteten med vilken papperslösa utesluts.


Hälsa och sjukvård för papperslösa

God hälsa är viktigt för allt levande och en viktig grundbult i en modern välfärdsstat. När debatten kring papperslösas rätt till vård blev aktuell tidigt under det här forskningsprojektets gång, blev sjukvården ett både relevant och aktuellt val av sektor för att studera närmare hur exkluderingen av papperslösa går till. Frågan aktualiserades efter att FN kritiserat Sverige för att inte erbjuda vård till papperslösa (Hunt, 2007). En annan samtida rapport konstaterade att Sverige och Österrike var de länder i Europa som var mest restriktiva med att erbjuda vård till papperslösa. I de flesta andra europeiska länder har papperslösa personer tillgång till åtminstone subventionerad akutsjukvård och mödravård, och i flera fall också primärvård (PICUM, 2007).

Reglering


Hälso- och sjukvårdslagen reglerar landstingens ansvar att erbjuda hälsosjukvård till landstingets bosatta – och detta innebär i princip de som är

62 Dessa innefattar bland andra FN:s konvention om ekonomiska, sociala och kulturella rättigheter, FN:s barnkonvention och den Europeiska sociala stadgan.

Tillgång till vård kan diskuteras i både teoretiska och praktiska termer. I Sverige har man valt att subventionera i princip all vård för medborgarna för att göra den tillgänglig. Papperslösa kan inte nekas omedelbar vård, men den kan knappast sägas vara tillgänglig för dem i ekonomiska termer. Beroende på utgångspunkt kan detta därför uttryckas på olika sätt, antingen att papperslösa saknar ekonomiska vårdförmåner eller att de saknar tillgång till vård.

Utöver hälsö- och sjukvårdslagen finns ytterligare lagstiftning med bäring på den aktuella frågan. Kommunallagen kapitel två, 3 § anger att ”Kommuner och landsting får inte fatta beslut med tillbakaverkande kraft som är till nackdel för medlemmarna, om det inte finns synnerliga skäl för det”. I det här sammanhanget innebär detta att ett landsting inte får fatta besluta att generellt subventionera vård för icke-medlemmar (här papperslösa), då detta lämnar mindre pengar kvar för medlemmarna (de folkbokförda). Om ’synnerliga skäl’ finns i ett enskilt fall kan en vårdskuldskrivas av, såväl för en folkbokförd som för en papperslös, utan att det strider mot kommunallagen. Vidare så gäller Sekretesslagen och således vårdssekretessen i samma utsträckning för en papperslös patient som för någon annan.


Den första, och minsta gruppen, bestående av endast ett fåtal landsting, fokuserade på kommunallagens lydelse och ansåg sig endast kunna ’förtydliga lagen’. Den andra gruppen inkorporerade papperslösa i gruppen asylsö-
kande och antog på detta sätt generella subventioner. Detta har praktiska och pedagogiska fördelar genom att två relaterade grupper slås ihop, men det kan argumenteras att det strider mot kommunallagen. I vissa fall inkluderas endast personer som tidigare ansökt om asyl, och i dessa fall kan riktlinjerna sägas hemfalla åt en slags 'tycka synd om-mentalitet', där rätten till vård baseras på att personen antas vara ett oskyldigt offer och inte på att hon eller han är människa. Den tredje gruppen landsting utökade papperslösårs rätt till vård från ”omedelbar vård” till ”omedelbart nödvändig vård”, utan hänsyn till betalningsförmåga i ögonblicket.63 Dessa riktlinjer innehåller ingen reglering av betalningsansvar och lösningarna angående betalning skiljer sig mellan och inom landsting. På vissa håll skriver man ut fakturor till papperslösa patienter, medan andra låter bli att fakturera om patienten inte kan betala vid vårdtillfället.

Tre år senare har frågan varit uppe för diskussion på nationell nivå ett antal gånger, samt behandlats i en nationell utredning, men inget förslag på nationell reglering har ännu lagts fram. Ytterligare ett landsting har formulerat egna riktlinjer och ett, Sörmland, har tagit beslut om att erbjuda vård på samma villkor som den folkbokförda befolkningen till ”asylsökande och papperslösa som stadigvarande befinner sig i landstinget”.64

I praktiken

Det viktigaste hindret för papperslösa att få tillgång till vård, näst deras rädsla för myndigheter, är bristande rutiner och kunskap hos vårdpersonalen. I många fall har de politiska besluten i landstingen inte kommunicerats till verksamheterna och det har tagit tid för regelböcker och lathundar att bli uppdaterade. För att inga patienter ska nekas vård som de har rätt till är det därför viktigt att rutiner och riktlinjer inte bara finns, utan också sprids och praktiseras.

När det inte finns regler, eller som i fallet med papperslösa patienter, endast mycket generella och indirekta regler, öppnar man för stor godtycklighet, och det blir den enskilda vårdgivaren som ska ta beslut och ansvar för huruvida en viss patient ska få vård (Sigvardsdotter, 2010). Det har dessutom hänt att vårdpersonal i sökandet efter information och instruktioner ringt till Migrationsverket för att få råd, vilket har lett till att patienten hämtats och tagits i förvar. Rykten om dessa incidenter ökar på den generella rädsla de flesta papperslösa känner inför att besöka vården.

63 Denna nya term är otydlig, men kan antas vara jämförbar med ”vård som inte kan anstå”, vilken asylsökande har rätt till. Vård som inte kan anstå innefattar utöver mödrälsälvård, vård vid abort och preventivmedelrådgivning, behandling av sjukdomar och skador där en måttlig fördröjning av behandlingen kan medföra allvarliga följder för patienten.
64 Jag har valt att inte närmare diskutera vilka landsting som har vilka riktlinjer, eller deras specifika innehåll i den här sammanfattningen. Uppdaterad information angående detta finns på https://erikasigvardsdotter.wordpress.com/


Generellt är hälsoproblemen hos papperslösa patienter desamma som hos befolkningen i stort, men med en överrepresentation av stressrelaterade symptom som högt blodtryck och ångest, psykiska problem, samt vissa sorters förslitningsskador beroende på dåliga arbetsförhållanden. En undersökning visar att ungefär hälften av de papperslösa som sökte hjälp vid Röda Korsets vårdförmedling i Stockholm hade behövt träffa en läkare vid ett tidigare stadium av deras hälsotillstånd. De sporadiska och ofta starkt försenade kontakterna med vården har allvarliga hälsoeffekter för papperslösa personer. Inom den medicinska litteraturen beskrivs problemet med profess-
ionens klara och osentimentala sätt som att: ”Diskriminering av papperslösa i vården leder till lidande och död” (Ascher, et al., 2008).

Frånvarande och samtidigt närvarande


Öömd eller förklädd?

Flyktigheten i förhållandet mellan frånvarande och närvarande gör att relationen däremellan kan konfigureras på olika sätt. Öömda-diskursen i den svenska debatten har bidragit till en uppfattning bland svenskar att papperslösa alltid gömmer sig; att ’de’ aldrig befinner sig bland ’oss’ och aldrig är
synliga för ’oss’. Denna bild är en kliché, och att vara ’gömd’ på det sättet är ganska ovanligt, men det betyder inte att det inte finns personer som under perioder lever på det sättet. Flera intervjuer betaljer att perioder under deras tid som papperslösa då de sällan gått ut, hållit sig undan fönstren och varit noga med att vara tysta för att inte väcka grannars uppmärksamhet. Detta å ena sidan en överlevnadstaktik för att undvika att behöva återvända till en plats man flytt från, men också ett sätt att avlägsna sig från det svenska samhället, utan att lämna svensk mark.


Att bli närvarande


Det finns dock flera exempel på papperslösa som lyckats träda fram som sig själva i offentligheten, men det är endast möjligt under korta stunder, och endast med hjälp av personer med personnummer. Enskilda papperslösa individer har trätt fram i media med namn och bild, och Papperslösa Stockholm har under flera år demonstrerat utanför riksdagshuset. Hannah Arendt argumenterar att statslösa saknar möjligheter att kräva sina rättigheter, men ändå att de har en potentiell politisk sprängkraft. Det är i det paradoxala hos
detta untalade som den kraften ligger: Papperslösa förkroppsligar ett glapp mellan staters territorium, befolkning och jurisdiktion, och deras paradoxala position ger deras röster kraft – när de hörs. Trots omöjligheten (i teorin) att kräva sina rättigheter, kan papperslösa med hjälp av sin fysiska närvaro kämpa (i praktiken) och lyckats träda fram som sig själva i det offentliga rummet. Med hjälp av personer med personnummer, utan dem är det omöjligt, kan de för en kort stund bli synliga, närvarande och kräva sina rättigheter.

Papperslöshet

Att som papperslös samtidigt vara närvarande och frånvarande på en viss plats har konsekvenser bortom de praktiska svårigheter som uppstår. Att exkluderas så totalt från samhället, både som en direkt konsekvens av att man inte har ett personnummer, och indirekt genom den ständigt närvarande oron för upptäckt och deportation, är också en existentiell fråga. I mina intervjuer och diskussioner med papperslösa har några teman återkommit, upplevelser som ofta handlar om att på något sätt känna sig fjärrad från världen, onödig eller vilse. För att förstå dessa känslor och upplevelser av utanförskap och alienering har jag använt mig av ett fenomenologiskt perspektiv på hur vi människor relaterar till vår omvärld och hur vi kan förstå våra och andras upplevelser. Innan jag går vidare vill jag ge en kort introduktion till fenomenologin.

En fenomenologisk utgångspunkt

Fenomenologin är en filosofisk inriktning som tar sin utgångspunkt i människans subjektiva upplevelser av fenomen i sin omgivning. Traditionellt har fenomenologin ägnat sig åt att söka förstå grundläggande upplevesstrukturer, och på sätt och vis kan man karaktärisera även denna beskrivning som ett sökande efter papperslöshetens essens. Dock vill jag understryka att även om jag hävdar att det finns grundläggande 'papperslösa upplevelser', så är det inte naturligtvis inte så att alla upplever papperslöshet på samma sätt. Snarare handlar det om upplevelser och levnadsvillkor som relaterar till papperslöhet och som papperslösa antigen upplever, hanterar eller på något sätt kämpar emot.

Fenomenologiskt grundad forskning fokuserar oftast på vardagslivets upplevelser och människors livsvärld. Maurice Merleau-Ponty menar att varje individ eller subjekt lär känna sin omvärld genom sin levda kropp som innefattar både medvetandet och kroppen. Subjektet är utgångspunkten, så att säga nollpunkten, i sin egen livsvärld och uppfattar objekt och fenomen i livsvärlden från sin subjektiva situation. Ur ett rumsligt perspektiv skiljer sig subjekt och objekt fundamentalt åt i det att objekten innehar positioner i
livsvärlden, medan det kroppliga subjektet är den konstituerande utgångspunkten för livsvärlden, samtidigt som den också är en del av den (Merleau-Ponty, 1999).


Alienation och desorientering


Jag menar att alienation och desorientering är två viktiga dimensioner av hur papperslöshet upplevs. Osäkerheten och ambivalens är bidragande till detta, men också de ansträngningar för att inte synas och inte bli uppmärksammat som papperslösa ägnar sig åt. Att flytta ofta, inte veta vad som ska hända, varken på kort eller lång sikt, isolerad från sin framtid och inte sällan också från sitt förflutna, gör det svårt att orientera sig, både i tid och rum.
Osäkerheten och flyktigheten, med begränsade möjligheter att bygga ett ’hem’ och att vara i osäkerhetens ’riktningsslösa tid’ gör att man blir desorienterad.


Som flera andra konstaterat före mig är rädsla en viktig del av att vara papperslös, och rädslen spelar också en roll i känslorna av isolation och aliering. Såhär har papperslösheten beskrivits för mig i en intervju:


Orienteringstaktiker

Det finns dock sätt att orientera sig – sätt att hitta fasta punkter i en osäker tillvaro – taktiker som också de på sitt vis skvallrar om vilka problem papperslösa brottras med, utöver de vardagliga, praktiska och ekonomiska svårigheter man har att hantera. Man skulle kunna kalla dem för orienteringsverktyg.


Slutsatser

Så länge vi lever i en värld som är uppdelad i stater med tillhörande territorier och medborgare kommer det att finnas människor som faller mellan kategorierna. I Hannah Arendts texter från mitten av förra seklet skriver hon om statslösa, ett fenomen som uppstod i samma ögonblick som det politiska system vi har idag etablerades. Statslösa i Palestina och de Baltiska staterna har fortfarande svårt att hävda sina rättigheter, men en betydligt större, och växande grupp är världens papperslösa och andra migranter med osäker status.

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