

# Ukrainian refugees and the Nordics

Research-led best practice on how to  
cater for Ukrainian refugees arriving  
in the Nordic Region

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# Preface

On 24 February, Russia invaded its neighbour, Ukraine. This has resulted in the biggest refugee crisis in Europe since World War Two. Millions have crossed Ukraine's borders into neighbouring countries in the west, and many will continue on through Europe to get to their final destination in one of the Nordic countries.

Ukrainian refugees ought to be met by professional services with expertise and capabilities in many fields. Many of those who are responsible for planning and designing the services should have the latest knowledge about migration and integration issues, enabling them to plan and organise the refugees' arrival and integration in the best way possible.

Since 2020, NordForsk has funded seven international research projects on migration and integration with researchers from all the Nordic countries and the UK. We invited these seven projects and one additional project that we funded in a previous call to submit tailor-made articles presenting results and analysis which could help us better understand the needs of Ukrainian refugees.

The articles are based on the results from the researchers' own work on refugees and migrants in the Nordic countries and the UK. This research-based knowledge is presented in a popular way to provide valuable insight into how refugees think, feel, and should be met in order to facilitate their introduction to the Nordic societies.

Oslo, 29 March 2022

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**Project:** Structural, cultural and social integration among youth:  
A multidimensional comparative project (IntegrateYouth)

# Integrating young migrants

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Among the large numbers of refugees now forced to leave Ukraine are many children and young people. They face disruptive and stressful experiences of war, displacement, and in many cases the loss of friends and family members. Their future is uncertain, and many of these young people may have to settle long-term or even permanently in other countries. How are their lives likely to unfold? What can our countries do to support their development? In our NordForsk-funded project *IntegrateYouth*, we study the lives of young people from immigrant backgrounds in several European countries. We believe that the knowledge we're building is helpful for understanding how to facilitate the development of Ukrainian children and young people who are about to settle in the Nordic countries.

Given the extremely stressful experiences, a prime concern is the **mental health** of refugee children. This is a concern upon arrival, and quick and efficient routes to safety and stability are important for both children and parents. Our research shows, however, that in the longer term the majority of children in migrant families show remarkable resilience. In their teenage years, their mental wellbeing, self-rated health and optimism for the future are, on average, as strong – or even stronger – among young people from war-torn countries as for young people in their host country's majority population (Mood, Jonsson & Låftman 2016; 2017; Jonsson, Mood & Treuter 2022). We've not studied rarer, more extreme health problems, so we cannot rule out different patterns in these cases, although it is still important to emphasise that the long-term situation in this regard is good for the vast majority.

**Social integration**, that is, making friends, is a challenge for newly arrived immigrant children. In the first two to three years after immigration, they have on average fewer friends than other children, and are more often socially isolated (Hjalmarsson & Mood 2015; Plenty & Jonsson 2017). This pattern seems to hold regardless of national background. A reassuring finding is that, after a few years, these difficulties have ceased. However, from a child's 'here-and-now' perspective, lacking friends is an important problem, even if temporary.

In the Nordic countries, the **socioeconomic situation** of refugees is good compared to the situation in many other destinations, and for many refugees better in an absolute sense compared to their

origin country. Refugees are guaranteed benefits in kind and income support that keeps severe material deprivation at bay even when they have not yet been integrated into the labour market. As long as families are dependent on social benefits they are, however, likely to have an income that is relatively low in the host country. The most tangible consequence is probably the size and location of housing, as limited economic resources shrink the opportunities on the housing market. The quality of housing in terms of equipment and modernity is, however, likely to be high overall, as the housing stock in the Nordic countries is of high quality in an international context. There is only a weak correlation between family incomes and **children's own economic resources**, and our research suggests that children's average economic resources are not lower for children and young people in immigrant families. They report equal levels of own 'income' (from parents and work), equal access to a cash margin if in need, and no more problems than others in being able to afford to take part in activities with friends (Mood & Jonsson 2013; Mood 2018). Hence, the socioeconomic situation is unlikely to be a major concern.

**Schooling** is crucial for children's lives and development. Overall, children and young people from an immigrant background – even those born to immigrant parents in the host country – tend to have weaker school results. At the same time, they have much higher aspirations and place more importance on education (Friberg 2019; Rudolphi & Salikutluk 2021). Nordic school systems are comprehensive and offer free-of-charge tuition, with little performance-based tracking. This means that young people from immigrant backgrounds are not held back and their high aspirations are allowed to play out. The higher average aspirations and lower average performance combine to create a 'bimodal' distribution: Young people from immigrant backgrounds are equally likely as those with Swedish-born parents to get a tertiary (university or university college) degree. At the other end of the distribution, however, young people from immigrant backgrounds have a marked over-risk of ending up with very low education, that is, lacking an upper secondary school qualification – often because their grades from compulsory school are so weak that they do not qualify for upper secondary school education (Jonsson, Mood & Treuter 2022).

A crucial factor in relation to education is **age at migration**. Those who immigrate after around the age of nine are at a particularly high risk of ending up with low grades and low education (Hermansen 2017; Jonsson, Mood & Treuter 2022), and this pattern holds regardless of national origin, and for both boys and girls. Even with extensive opportunities for remedial education, for example in the Swedish Komvux system, only half of those who immigrate to Sweden in their early teenage years manage to get an upper secondary school qualification (Jonsson, Mood & Treuter 2022).

In seeking to learn from earlier migrant experiences, **diversity** among migrants must be acknowledged. Averages and typical experiences for an undifferentiated group of 'migrant youth' may not be particularly relevant for understanding the specific challenges that Ukrainian children and young people are likely to face. An important strength of the *IntegrateYouth* project is that migrant diversity is weaved into its design as a fundamental premise. In most domains we have observed greater challenges the greater the distance is between the old and the new country in terms of the population's education, language, religion, and culture. For Ukrainians, many factors speak in their favour: Being a non-visible minority, they are less likely than many other migrants to be stigmatised and discriminated against, which in turn is likely to benefit social and socioeconomic integration as well as mental health. Many Ukrainians are also highly educated, which facilitates socioeconomic integration and also helps their children's school achievement.

Although Eastern European/ex-USSR migrants to Sweden may seem to be an obvious group to learn from, the fact that they are generally not refugees, and strongly self-selected, makes drawing comparisons difficult. We believe that children and young people who migrated from ex-Yugoslavia during the 1990s (mostly Bosnians) are a better comparison group, as they share many of the features of the Ukrainian group today, primarily the experience of flight from war and large-scale violence. Both are also non-visible minorities of European origin, speaking (in most cases) a Slavic language, and having parents with, on average, high education relative to refugees from most

other regions. There are, however, also a couple of potentially significant differences. First, religion: While many refugees from ex-Yugoslavia (especially Bosnia) were Muslims, Ukrainians are predominantly of an orthodox Christian denomination. Second, in the 1990s a large Yugoslavian community already existed in Sweden (following earlier waves of labour migration), meaning that for those who came to Sweden there were networks to connect to, and also a support system in the Serbo-Croatian language (e.g., news broadcasts and mother-tongue teaching).

So how has the situation for migrants developed after almost 30 years since the wars in Yugoslavia? In Sweden, adults as well as children in this immigrant group have enjoyed good socioeconomic development, with adult employment levels after a few years reaching that of the majority population (this process being quicker for those who settled in areas with more jobs) (Ekberg 2016). Results from Norway show a similar positive development (Bratsberg, Raaum & Røed 2017). Given the similarity of the groups' characteristics, it is likely that the Ukrainian migrants, if they remain, will see a similar development. In fact, their opportunities for labour market integration are likely greater than for the ex-Yugoslavians, due to the triggering of the provisions in the *EU 2001 Temporary Protection Directive*<sup>1</sup>. This directive was created following the Balkan wars as the EU realised that the ordinary asylum procedures did not fit situations with large-scale exodus from violence. Among other things, it gives Ukrainian migrants instant access to EU labour markets without having to wait for an asylum decision.

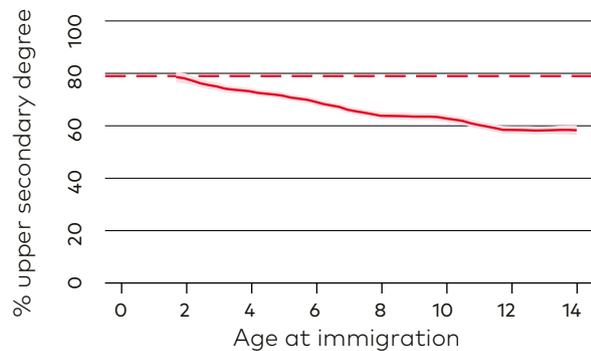
Ex-Yugoslavians who immigrated as children have succeeded well in education compared to non-European migrants, but, just as for other migrant groups, many of those who immigrated later in their childhood did not obtain an upper secondary school qualification. *Figure 1* shows the proportion of immigrant children who had an upper secondary school qualification by age 20 according to their age at immigration, distinguishing four relatively big origin regions. On average, children from all four regions suffer a disadvantage compared to children with Swedish-born parents (where just under 80% in these cohorts obtained an upper secondary

1 See: [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/policies/migration-and-asylum/common-european-asylum-system/temporary-protection\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/policies/migration-and-asylum/common-european-asylum-system/temporary-protection_en)

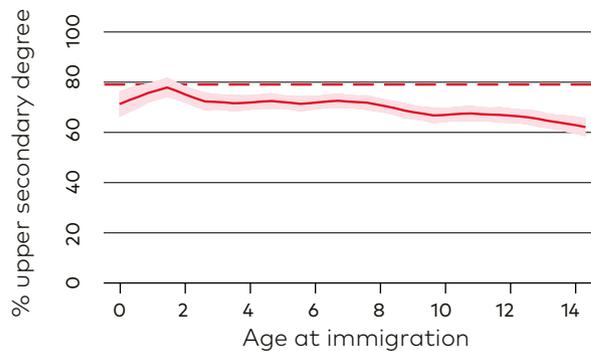
school qualification, indicated by the dashed reference line), and in all four cases we see that the disadvantage increases with their age at immigration. This suggests that the age-at-migration-effect is likely generic. However, Figure 1 also illustrates another important point: The level of disadvantage differs depending on origin. For example, among children who immigrate at age 14, 60% of those of ex-Yugoslavian or Eastern European/ex-USSR origin manage to get an upper secondary school qualification, compared to 35% of those of Iraqi or African origin.

In Figure 2, we can see that not only is there systematic variation across groups from different origin regions, there is also a systematic difference in educational success between boys and girls. Boys suffer more than girls from immigrating at an older age: For example, among ex-Yugoslavians who immigrated at age 14, just over half of the boys got an upper secondary school qualification, compared to over 60% among the girls.

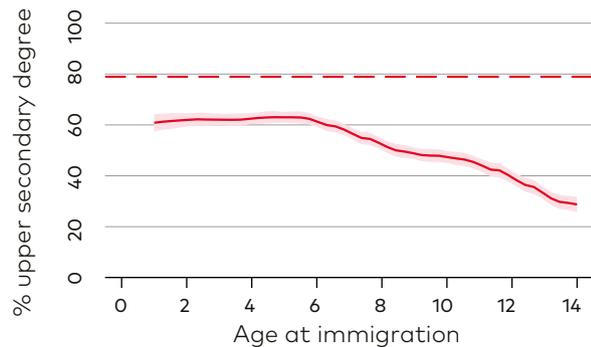
### Ex-Yugoslavia



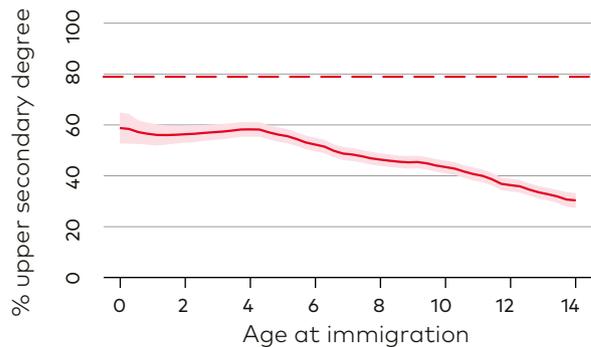
### Eastern Europe, Ex-USSR



### Iraq



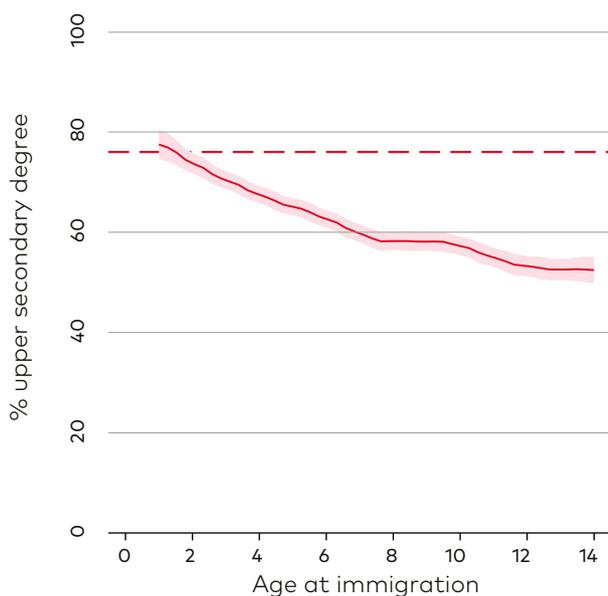
### Africa



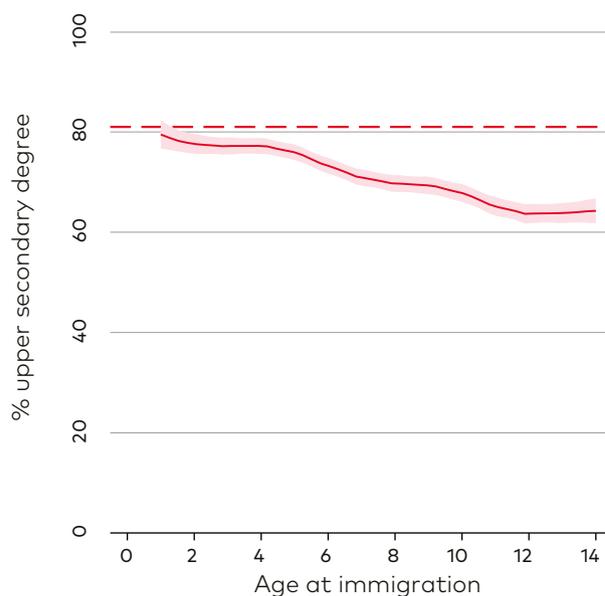
Note: Immigration 1990-1999, born 1976-1999.  
Horizontal reference line shows % with upper secondary degree among Swedish-born same-aged youth.

Figure 1. Proportion of immigrant children in Sweden who have an upper secondary school qualification by age 20 according to age at immigration, for four common origin regions. Children born between 1976 and 1999 who immigrated between 1990 and 1999. Line shows moving averages (local polynomial smooth), shaded area gives a 95% confidence interval. Data from full population school registers.

## Ex-Yugoslavia, boys



## Ex-Yugoslavia, girls



Note: Immigration 1990-1999, born 1976-1999.

Horizontal reference line shows % with upper secondary degree among Swedish-born same-aged, same-sex youth.

Figure 2. Proportion of immigrant children from ex-Yugoslavia in Sweden who have an upper secondary school qualification by age 20 according to age at immigration and sex. Children born between 1976 and 1999 who immigrated between 1990 and 1999. Line shows moving averages (local polynomial smooth), shaded area gives a 95% confidence interval. Data from full population school registers.

## How can our knowledge assist Nordic countries in helping Ukrainian children?

**First**, the systematic evidence (from our research group and others) that children from immigrant backgrounds (including refugees) have, on average, very high aspirations and a remarkable capacity to remain healthy, optimistic and achievement-oriented despite stressful experiences means that it is imperative that they be seen as active and capable co-creators of their futures. Policies and support must have a child perspective that emphasises the agency and potential of refugee children.

**Second**, children arriving in late childhood – and in particular boys – need special attention and intense school support. While many of these children will succeed in school, the risk is high that a significant minority will not. There is no time to lose here: Study and (host-country) language support for older children should be given high priority and commence as soon as practically possible. The EU Temporary

Protection Directive gives a right to education for children, so any barriers here are practical rather than legal. Resources should be earmarked so that schools with many older immigrant students receive sufficient resources. Children's transition from the Ukrainian to the host-country school system may be facilitated by employing teacher-educated Ukrainians in a supporting role.

**Third**, recent immigrant children and young people often need support with opportunities to establish friendships, in school and outside. Teachers and civil society organisations should actively, but respectfully, organise activities in ways that make it easier for newcomers to establish contacts.

**Fourth**, settlement for migrants must balance the understandable desire for co-ethnic contacts with housing availability and job opportunities. Many refugees from ex-Yugoslavia to Sweden settled close to co-ethnics in Malmö, where unemployment was high. Ekberg (2016) shows that these refugees

took longer to get established in the labour market than those of the same background who settled in communities with better labour markets. Parents' establishment in the labour market is indirectly important for children and young people as it gives the family more independence and better chances in the housing market.

**Fifth**, we do not yet know how many children and young people will stay and how many will return to Ukraine. We know from previous experience in the Nordic countries that few refugees return to their country of origin, and this holds also for refugees from ex-Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, a two-pronged strategy is probably sensible: We should support positive development in the Nordic context, but also acknowledge the importance of children's co-ethnic networks and maintenance and development of their mother tongue.

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**Project:** Relational wellbeing in the lives of young refugees in Finland, Norway and Scotland (The Drawing Together project)

# **Integration for young refugees in Finland, Norway and Scotland as seen through the lens of relational wellbeing**



## Context

I'll begin by saying something to you as a reader. I'm choosing not to write in the third person, but relationally, with you and me in mind. This paper addresses you, person-to-person, beyond your role as a policy maker. In writing about integration, I'll name some forces that we face that pose the threat of disintegration, including the war in Ukraine and the COVID-19 pandemic. And in facing them together, we're beginning to do something to create clarity, coherence and continuity, which together form the crucible of integration within our countries. Our work in this project is built on the idea that integration is neither dramatic nor sudden. It is quiet, unremarkable, and made by communities living together within borders that seek to preserve and evolve their national identities. As nations, we look back, look around, and look forward, so that policies themselves are integrated with our past, present, and future. So, the cross-comparative question at the intersection of these time and space dimensions is this: what does it mean to be Finnish, Norwegian, or Scottish? What resources, cultures, and behaviours make integration work, both for young people who are refugees, and the hosts who are prepared to receive them? Answering such questions means that we're developing understanding of the contours of hospitality and reciprocity, in ways that are familiar as well as new to policy makers in each of our countries.

## Relational wellbeing in the lives of young refugees in Finland, Norway and Scotland

Our project's subtitle is '*Drawing Together*'. This symbolises not just our focus on young refugees and hosts being close, but also on using artwork as part of our approach. In line with many other research studies, the heart of our project looks at integration in relation to young refugees' stories about what host countries do or what they provide. It seeks to amplify their stories by asking about the experiences in a number of ways, as outlined below. In our work with young people, our emphasis is on policy-based actions and the effective use of material resources. However, their stories are bigger than the '**how**' and '**what**' of integration. They also speak of '**who**' – that is the young person's own biographical fit with the people around them in their new countries. They sometimes discuss the '**why**' of being away

from their lands of birth, within the stories they tell of their lives before leaving. They talk of the '**where**' of integration, encompassing the ecology of living. They locate themselves within the constructed and natural environments of their new countries, and how these hide or show themselves as places of multiple belongings. In linking the stories of their childhood with their present circumstances and future hopes and dreams, they provide a sense of '**when**', as time does not always move in a straight line. Rather, time constantly unfolds around them. So overall, integration as 'multiple belongings' is not just about their place in the world, but also about travelling in time.

## Our project's architecture

Our project relies on the concept of 'relational wellbeing' (RWB) (see White, 2008; White and Jha, 2020). At its simplest, it shows that integration policies in each country need to be built around three interlinked *dimensions*: First, people 'having enough' in terms of their material needs, and achieving stability through, for example, the provision of education and employment, housing, health and social care services. Second, people 'being connected' to others and exercising their relational rights and responsibilities within sustaining communities of protection and care. Third, 'feeling OK' subjectively, not just in relation to others, and to resources, but also their environments and faith systems. Moreover, relational wellbeing assumes that in order to create and sustain a balance between these *dimensions* of living, there are three *drivers*. One is societal, encompassing social, cultural and economic aspects of life. Another is environmental, lodged within an understanding of ecosystems, climate, and the 'sacred and moral order' of life. The third is personal, reflected in the ways people absorb their individual, family and community histories, and sharpen their talents, skills, temperaments and outlooks on life. These drivers and dimensions together create scaffolding for integration. But they do not form a static framework. They are not solid, but fluid. They constantly ebb and flow in people's lives.

## Methodology

A core element of our methodology has been to follow 16 young women and men in each country who have refugee status – a total of 48 young refugees. We've done this over three years. In following their lives over that time we've avoided a mere snapshot. Instead, we've chosen to emphasise that life is about rhythms and patterns that can only be observed over an extended period. It's not a photo, it's a movie. Another aspect of our work is creating art for an exhibition in our countries. This is to demonstrate to a wide public audience that there is life beyond the spoken word. For young refugees who speak languages other than the one in the new country, an arts-based project is a good way to demonstrate their talents and skills. They put their artwork and talk of hope and talent alongside the stories of suffering that they have had to tell the authorities in each country. We think that multiple stories matter, as they show life in colour, not just in black and white. And for each participant, there is a chance to connect their present situation with their childhood and their aspirations for the future. They do this in various ways, telling us about their timelines of wellbeing through talking and drawing maps about important people in their family, their community, their friendship network, and their professional helpers. Each element shows a different part of the scaffolding that supports their life. Finally, we meet with them and a 'value person' chosen by them, who can talk about what the young refugee brings to the new country, and what he or she means to them as a person who is vibrant.

## COVID-19 constraints

A major constraint has been the impact of COVID-19. For a project built on '*Drawing Together*', researchers in all our countries have spent a lot of time ensuring that closeness could happen at a safe distance. Spontaneity has had to be planned. Although there are downsides to conducting research under such conditions. But as COVID-19 regulations have eased over time, we have met young people face to face. We have witnessed their struggles and movements towards making a new a life for themselves. These observations are beginning to form our results.

## Some preliminary results

Our project is still young. It will reach its middle age later this year. Nevertheless, we have begun to analyse our data within the framework provided by the RWB model. Moreover, we have begun to place integration policies relevant to each country within that framework. In Scotland, for example, two policy documents are being examined – the New Scots Integration Strategy 2018-2022 (Scottish Government, 2018), and the UK Home Office's Indicators of Integration Framework (Home Office, 2019) that is relevant to all UK countries including Scotland. These show that the main focus of refugee integration policies lies in education, housing, health and social care, employability and welfare rights, language and communication, and the development of digital skills. These fit well with the 'having enough' dimension of the RWB model and the material aspects of integration. In addition, the 'being connected' dimension is about the relational aspects of life. It considers the growth and maintenance of social links, bonds and bridges, and how these articulate with citizens' rights and responsibilities within contexts of cultural pluralism.

Perhaps what is less visible in these policy frameworks is the ways refugees can feel integrated within the ecosystems of their environments. Similarly, there is little written in relation to subjective feelings of integration via religion and faith that guides some people. So, to capture elements of heaven and earth, one has to look at other social policies. In Scotland these appear as the Scottish Government's (2020) Environment Strategy for Scotland and its (2013) Equality Outcomes: Religion and Belief Evidence Review. Each delineates a sense of Scotland looking out for opportunities for integration not just for refugees, but also for people as citizens of a country that is promising safety, belonging, and success. Scotland says that in order to work harmoniously, policies need to integrate with each other so that integration makes music, not noise. Now, let's move to what young people have to say about day-to-day integration within the framework provided by the RWB model. Here are brief examples from the interview data:

## 1. HAVING ENOUGH, and the material dimensions of integration

One of the firm intentions for our young refugees is to have identifiable goals and to build skills that realise them. So, many discussed having an initial focus on language acquisition and finding resources to support language development. Access to technology, particularly having a mobile phone as a means of navigation, remained enduringly important. They used it to map and move within their new environments. But it also allowed them to plot a way forwards to the future by accessing information that could lead to better access to resources. Importantly the phone also held images of the past – family, music, food – and evoked nostalgia and memories that were not always comfortable. But they were pilots in finding ways forwards. A sense of freedom was contained in simple choices that they made in the comfort of having a little more safety in their lives. Although our project has not asked about experiences of racism specifically, it was clear that some had experienced it and were not complacent about it. It made them wary and wise enough to step back from danger rather than step forwards. As the project progresses, we may have a fuller sense of similar experiences in the different countries, but for now we have snippets with which to see the bigger picture later on. In terms of gainful employment, the young refugees talked about their own persistence, and the kindness of strangers in helping them find employment. Here's one young person's experience:

*I went straight into the restaurant and asked them for work. 'Do you guys have any work for me?' He said, 'Come back tomorrow'. And then when I come back the day after, the boss, the owner was there. And I said to him, 'I'm looking for work'. The dishwasher was leaving. They said to me, 'We have you a dishwasher to start with, do you want it?' It was a hard job, I was doing it, I was doing it for two months... I was working very hard, they look at what I was doing, I was coming on time, everything. So, he give me the chance, I explained to him all my situation, my English is not good enough, my first time in this country, I don't have work experience. Even I say this, he give me the opportunity, he say, 'Not a problem, everyone has their situation'.*

Finding helpers was not just about their social networks. It also meant using welfare services to find housing, and education as a means of achieving success. Guides such as social workers and teachers became important people. But also foster carers, who did small things well. Finding a dentist, for example:

*And then she was trying always to make me happy. I remember my teeth was like a rabbit, like you know, was quite a bit out, and then when I laugh with her, I was hiding my teeth like this. Then she say to me, 'Why you hiding your teeth because they are so beautiful, why are you hiding your teeth?' Because I said to her, 'I'm not comfortable when I laugh because my teeth is quite out, and when I laugh, I feel like I have rabbit teeth... And then she'd say to me, 'Let's go to the dentist to do a brace'.*

## 2. BEING CONNECTED and being relational

Young people often talked of people who were their champions and 'family-like' companions. These relationships were maintained within the circle of other young refugees. They were often reciprocal. They also reached out to the communities where the young people lived. These wider relations were often about giving or receiving assistance. Overall, the small and wider circles of support and obligation were there to steady them, carry them forwards, and be *on their side and by their side*.

As a project, we have so far focused on local networks. We will explore their relationships within wider networks at a later time – such as in relation to social, political, and cultural identities, or their relationships with the State, law, politics, and welfare. We have glimpses of the bigger picture. Within the smaller notes about connectedness, stories have emerged of football teams, language teachers, local guides to explain the rules of living in the host country, and people who understand the value of mutual respect and dignity. Looking transnationally, young refugees also showed their reliance on wider kin networks, far away but close to them. Equally they talked about establishing a rhythm and pattern of life with others that was predictable and safe. Some young people had connections with faith communities. Finding a suitable mosque or a church appeared to bridge the present with the past, and also with the future.

*It means for me church, when I go church, so I can understand singing and if I want to be quiet, so I can be quiet, I can read bible, to teach people and to pray. Yeah, that's why it's important for me to go church, to understand deep.*

As we chart young people's lives over time, we will also study how their networks contract and expand, and the dynamics they contain. Examining the pulse of social networks will offer insights, not just across the nations, but also into how wellbeing is maintained or evolves in relation to being connected. For example, given the COVID-19 pandemic, young refugees have spoken about loneliness, the chaos and mess created by withdrawing from public living, as well as about opportunities for maintaining friendships.

*If you ask a bird in a cage, 'How do you feel? What would the bird tell you? You've got freedom outside but you're in the cage, you cannot go outside [because of Covid-19], ... I just look out of my window because there is a nice park out of my window, I can see the freedom outside, I can't use that freedom because of this COVID-19 which is separating myself from my outside community.*

*But we stay on the positive side and encourage each other, being part of each other life, to feel that way, and to share that loneliness together, so not being able to face-to-face talk.*

### **3. FEELING OK and the subjective aspects of integration**

A key aspect of integration for some of the young people was endurance – just the stubborn will to make it through to reach a new life. Feeling OK also meant being receptive to not feeling OK. Disintegration and integration lived together for them, the same as they do for many migrants seeking new roots. No shortcuts, just the realisation that you have to be bigger than your barriers. Similarly, feeling OK was connected to community. As one young person said about football: *It brightens every cell in my body*. Sometimes, when saturated with stress, having access to a gym was necessary, and contact sports like boxing came as a relief. In terms of outlooks and characteristics, young refugees' faith in themselves appeared important, just as it did in having access to nature and the open environment. Happiness was a matter of practice before it becomes spontaneous. Being kind to people and animals, being curious about learning, becoming skilled at a job, and learning the new language all added to a sense of achievement and progress. Overall, arriving in a new country and being accepted by strangers was for some a high point of living peacefully:

*[X country] people they are humble...In [this city] in the middle of the night I can walk by myself, no one can ask me, and [...] people everywhere they say, 'Hi mate,' make you feel like safety... In my country whenever you see someone you have to say salaam alaykum. Like here in [this country] you say hi, it's the same as salaam alaykum. People here are good.*

The two pictures you see here were offered by one young refugee in an art workshop. The first is a gift he received from a teacher, so that he could begin to decorate his room. This was a valued object from his new life, he said:

*Yeah, I like this picture, it reminds me of when I first come to this country. When I came here it was so strange this country and I received from my teacher. So, she helped me a lot and the way I am here, and I am able here to learn from people and how I learn from society. I think that it represents her, how she likes helping people to encourage them to go to community, to people, get on well with them, to get to know them, to find yourself, be independent, to be freedom. Just makes you stronger. And every time I look at this picture, it makes me very stronger and makes me very happy*



From this gift from the teacher, the artwork was made. It shows the complexity of the journey towards integration, in terms of hopefulness and joy, as well as sadness and barriers. The confusion of the past is drawn like wire wool in the bottom right of the picture. The doves are still flying. The young person has colour. In the top left, he sees himself as a tree providing shelter for others. He says:

*So, like at the beginning I didn't know what I'm going to be, so I imagined myself and saw my future by these people, so I can help people in the future, I can give them something, hope...*



This hope was expressed in a final art workshop in March 2022. We began by asking participants to gather around a table covered with a large map of the world. After identifying their own countries, they found Ukraine. From Ukraine they built corridors of safety to other countries using toy bricks as vehicles, bridges, and buildings. They worked silently in solidarity, evoked not only by their own memories, but in sympathy with the people of Ukraine. They said that they were just people helping other people. Together, they hoped for calm.



## Conclusions

Any conclusions are tentative. They will be stronger later in the project's life. For now, we can say that as a personal experience, integration for young refugees is complex and fragile. They are intent on putting something back into the country that has accepted them. As a policy framework, integration is built step by step, layer by layer, into scaffolding that young refugees can use to grow their lives organically. As part of that regrowth, reciprocity is as important as hospitality. Here, accepting their rights and responsibilities as a new citizen is balanced with accepting and providing opportunities for their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of others. The promise is that integration is a win-win. I end with a quote from one of our participants walking in a park and reflecting on the laws of natural order that generate integration across ages:

*Some of the trees are very old and broken*

*they lean on other trees and they hold on*

*for me it's absolutely amazing,*

*it's not just human being that can help each other,*

*look at nature, the trees are encouraging, holding each other's weight*

*It's as if they were saying*

*'Yes, don't worry, I'm holding you, we're not finished here'*

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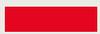
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**Project:** Teaching that Matters for Migrant Students:  
Understanding Levers of Integration in Scotland, Finland and Sweden (TEAMS)

# Migrant integration:

## Treating diversity as a norm in modern schooling systems



Recent estimates from the United Nations (UN) suggest that over 15 percent of the world's 260 million migrants are children and young people. In 2020, more than 17,500 child refugees and migrants arrived in Europe (UNICEF, 2020). Since then, the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has initiated the biggest inflow of migrants since the Second World War. At the time of writing, an estimated three million people have fled Ukraine within three weeks and there is no end to this crisis in sight. The vast majority of Ukrainian refugees are women and children, many of school age. This new wave of refugees exacerbates an already accelerated rise in the number of migrants globally as people continue to move for economic reasons or to escape natural disasters and conflict.

Consequently, the social and cultural makeup of school-age populations is changing rapidly, creating challenges for schools and teachers in national education systems that were designed to meet the needs of local populations. The current crisis highlights the urgent need to consider **how education systems can accommodate the increasing diversity of student populations as a common feature of modern educational systems and schooling rather than a situational crisis or problem of migration.**

### **Education, schools and teachers as levers of integration**

Integration has been defined as a process by which migrants become accepted in a society, that places obligations on host societies to provide access to the labour market and different kinds of services, including education (IOM, 2011). Schools are an important arena for integration as they are among the first places where newly arrived migrant children and families mix with local populations. Schools are important sites for learning local languages and cultural norms as well as forming relationships and new friendships. They also provide key contact points for other support services, and education

itself increases the chances for participation in the labour market.

The capacity of schools to support migrant children is significant for their social integration as well as educational outcomes. Teachers are key for creating opportunities for academic learning, enhancing a sense of belonging and social participation in the life of the school<sup>1</sup>. However, this can pose challenges for schools and teachers as they seek to include migrant students who are adapting to a new language, curriculum and education system. Migrant students may also be coping with loneliness and confusion as they encounter unfamiliar cultural norms and expectations. Some may also be dealing with trauma and loss as a result of the circumstances of leaving their home countries. Clearly, it is essential that educators and other school staff help migrant students navigate the receiving school systems, and work with families, colleagues and other professionals to address the risks of exclusion, underachievement or other forms of marginalisation facing some migrant students. Building relationships between educators and migrant students, their families and members of the community is thought to provide key resources for crossing lingual and cultural barriers and creating an inclusive learning environment<sup>2</sup>. **The unprecedented number of migrant students now enrolling in schools around the world, but particularly in Europe, highlights the need to focus on collaboration with key stakeholders to share expertise and resources in support of all learners.**

In so doing, it is important to acknowledge that the contexts of school systems can inadvertently create barriers to integration due to assumptions about student populations that are embedded in the institutional structures and cultures, which shape what teachers see as possible within their practice<sup>3</sup>. Teachers often express a commitment to education for all students, but they also report not feeling prepared for the challenges of cultural and linguistic diversity in their classrooms<sup>4</sup>. This can

- 1 Lund, A. & Trondman, M. (2017). Dropping out/dropping back in: Matters that make learning matter. *Queensland Review*, 24, 57-74.
- 2 Moskal, M. (2014). Polish migrant youth in Scottish schools: Conflicted identity and family capital. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 17(2), 279-291.
- 3 Vongalis-Macrow, A. (2007). I, Teacher: Re-territorialization of teachers' multi-faceted agency in globalized education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 28(4), 425-439.
- 4 Florian, L., & Pantić, N. (2017). *Teacher education for changing demographics of schooling*. Dordrecht: Springer.

lead to a view of supporting migrant students as an additional demand on teachers rather than as an integral part of teaching. Whether teachers feel capable of supporting all students including migrant students largely depends on the support systems available to them, and critically on the pedagogical choices teachers make as they use them. This is why **it is important to understand collaborative practices within the institutional contexts in which they are embedded.**

The characteristics of receiving school systems have been shown to be a strong predictor of migrant students' learning, regardless of cultural background or prior education<sup>5</sup>. However, national education systems designed to serve local populations do not account for diversity as a norm. This has the unintended consequence of putting migrant students at risk of marginalisation if they are viewed or treated differently to local students. Thus, the increasing presence of migrant students in today's schools can present challenges to teachers. Understanding how teachers and other staff use their agency to implement, but also adapt, or challenge institutional structures not designed to accommodate diversity is key for devising policy solutions that support teachers in responding to the presence of migrant students in their schools as a resource for learning rather than as a problem. **Teaching that Matters for Migrant Students (TEAMS), a project supported by NordForsk, addresses the challenge of facilitating migrant integration as an integral part of teaching in today's schools.**

## TEAMS project approach

TEAMS employs [social network analysis](#) and fieldwork across seven school sites in Scotland (3), Finland (2) and Sweden (2) to examine how teachers interact with students, their families, school colleagues, specialists (e.g. language specialists) and other support services. Understanding how teachers use the resources embedded in their professional networks helps us identify the conditions that facilitate individual and collective ways of working that support migrant integration in schools.

At **the level of the teacher**, the project focuses on teachers' *relational agency* – a capacity to work flexibly with others, such as school counsellors, social workers or mental health professionals<sup>6</sup> to respond to all students' needs in a holistic and coordinated manner<sup>7</sup>. This is essential for removing barriers to migrant students' learning and meaningful participation, creating opportunities for socialising with non-migrant peers, and developing a sense of belonging in their school communities<sup>8,9,10</sup>. TEAMS interprets teachers' practices using a theoretical lens of [inclusive pedagogy](#) – an approach that emphasises the importance of taking responsibility for all students and the role of staff collaboration in enabling this<sup>11,12</sup>. This approach replaces a focus on singular identities (e.g. migrants) and the problem of integration for particular types of individuals and groups, with ways of thinking about differences as an ordinary aspect of human diversity. We consider how teachers incorporate support for migrant

- 5 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD]. (2015). Helping immigrant students to succeed at school - and beyond. Paris: OECD.
- 6 Edwards, A. (2009). Improving inter-professional collaborations: Multi-agency working for children's wellbeing. London: Routledge.
- 7 Pantić, N., Galey, S., Florian, L., Joksimović, S., Viry, G., Gašević, D., Knutes Nyqvist, H., & Kyritsi, K. (2021). Making sense of teacher agency for change with social and epistemic network analysis. *Journal of Educational Change*. doi:10.1007/s10833-021-09413-7
- 8 Juvonen, J., Espinoza, G., & Knifsend, C. (2012). The role of peer relationships in student academic and extracurricular engagement. In S. L. Christenson, A. L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 387–401). Springer Science + Business Media. doi:10.1007/978-1-4614-2018-7\_18
- 9 Smyth, G., McBride, G., Paton, G., & Sheridan, N. (2010). Social capital and refugee children: Does it help their integration and education in Scottish schools? *Diskurs Kindheits und Jugendforschung*, 5(2), 145-158.
- 10 Sinkkonen, H.-M., & Kytälä, M. (2014). Experiences of Finnish teachers working with immigrant students. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 29(2), 167-183.
- 11 Florian, L., Black-Hawkins, K., & Rouse, M. (2017). *Achievement and inclusion in schools*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- 12 Florian, L., & Black-Hawkins, K. (2011). Exploring inclusive pedagogy. *British Educational Research Journal*, 37(5), 813-828.

students into their regular practices, rather than providing specific targeted interventions only for migrant students.

At the **school level** we examine migrants' integration with regard to the levels of social cohesion within school communities. Responses at school level are central for our analysis as they directly affect students and mediate other influences<sup>13</sup>. Research shows that networks in which learning support specialists (e.g., teaching assistants, special educators, language support specialists) are well-connected with classroom teachers produce more inclusive learning environments<sup>14</sup>. TEAMS seeks to understand how teachers' professional collaboration in social networks shape their collective responses as they make sense of different policies that affect migrant students. Social networks represent the pattern of relationships that shape day-to-day interactions. Understanding teachers' relational practices at school level is important because human relationships and collaborations are at the heart of responding to diversity in education.

Finally, TEAMS explores **how practices at school and teacher levels are shaped by national and institutional policy contexts** to create conditions for cohesive migrant integration. The aim is to advance knowledge about the enactment of practices that empower teachers to exercise agency in responding to unique needs of each and every student, and identify policies that support this.

## Emerging findings

We have currently collected 2 out of 3 waves of data. Our preliminary analysis is beginning to show how the social and pedagogical actions teachers take to include migrant students are shaped by the social structure of schools, and to highlight how policies shape school staff networks and practices for migrant integration.

Across our sites, teachers' collaboration networks for migrant support partly reflect the institutional and policy arrangements in the three countries. In Scotland newly-arrived migrant students are

immersed directly in mainstream educational provision, supported by the English as an Additional Language services (EAL), where language specialists cover multiple schools within local authorities as well as multiple languages. In Sweden and Finland there is some preparatory instruction in the early stages, as well as teaching in the migrants' own language, although this is not compulsory. Teacher collaboration networks that support migrant students vary in each site to different degrees but commonly indicate a tendency of teachers to interact with support staff they perceive to have responsibility for migrant students. The extent to which their interactions enhance or hinder inclusion in education and the social integration of migrant students is examined with fieldwork data.

Preliminary data from Scottish school networks reflects the centrality of actors such as specialists who support learners for whom English is an additional language or other specialists, such as personal guidance teachers and Support for Learning (SfL) leaders. Scottish school networks also reflect hierarchal structures with more management roles than in the other two settings, while policy documents explicitly endorse teacher agency. The Finnish school networks show a great deal of similarity between their teacher communities that reflect the high levels of autonomy Finnish teachers have in their pedagogical decisions. Class teachers work with special educators who offer support in their classrooms. In Sweden, the two school sites present different examples of teachers' collaboration networks for migrant support. In both sites, collaboration seems to be a strong feature of teachers' daily work, consistent with the policies of institutional support for various forms of collaboration around pupil support. In one school with a small number of migrant pupils, the interactions of teachers and other actors are primarily directed towards those who are seen to be key for supporting migrant students as per their official roles. In the other school, where the majority of students have migrant backgrounds, social networks reflect teacher-teacher interactions around migrant support as well as those with school leaders and administrators. These interactions focus on student support for a wide range of needs within and beyond the school community.

13 Ainscow, M., & Miles, S. (2011). Responding to diversity in schools. London: Routledge.

14 Youngs, P., Jones, N., & Low, M. (2011). How beginning special and elementary school teachers negotiate role expectations across professional resources. *Teachers College Record*, 113(7), 1506-154.

Complementary qualitative data from interviews with key stakeholders helps us to understand how teachers navigate the institutional structures in order to both implement and adapt procedures that they perceive as enablers or barriers for migrant integration. Across all sites we have found many instances of teachers and other school staff exercising agency to support migrant students' integration regardless of the policy arrangements. Across sites, the data begins to illustrate how different forms of collaboration can facilitate or become a barrier to integration for migrant students.

For example, data about teachers' interactions with support specialists illustrates inclusive forms of collaboration, where teachers and other school staff members actively take responsibility for supporting migrant students, whether this is a prescribed part of their role or not. They reach out to colleagues to establish a coordinated approach to supporting migrant students among all others in ways that include them in what is ordinarily available to all students, while recognising different needs as a common feature of student diversity.

These teachers reported seeking specialist support as a resource for themselves to help them better understand students' experiences related to their cultural heritage so that they could incorporate such knowledge in various subject teaching. In this way concern for the specific needs of migrant students becomes a resource for all students.

In other forms of collaboration, teachers defer to specialists who are seen as responsible for supporting migrant students. In these collaborations, teachers "pass on" the challenges that they face in supporting migrant learners, based on a view that they cannot support migrant students due to language or other barriers. This is especially the case where the focus of student support is predominantly on learning achievements. There is a general sense that migrant students are seen to be needing some kind of extra support, but the nature of specialised support and how the policies that regulate it are enacted needs further analysis.

Emerging qualitative data from students participating in the TEAMS project underscores the important role that teachers play in migrant students' learning and overall school experiences. There is some evidence that migrant integration may play out differently for students of different backgrounds, as attitudes towards different groups seem to vary to some extent.

The next stage of our analysis will examine the impact of teachers' network practices on migrant students integration outcomes, including a student engagement survey that captures experiences of different groups of migrant students compared to their non-migrant peers. The data collected from school staff and students will then be analysed in relation to the policies that structure practice in order to examine the pattern of variations in pedagogical practices and student integration experiences across the three countries.

## What has been learned so far?

Our preliminary findings are consistent with other research and support some **key messages for practice, policy and future research**.

Overall, to advance migrant integration within wider efforts to develop practices that are generally more inclusive for everyone, **it is critical that we shift our gaze away from seeing migrants as a problem towards accepting diversity as a normal, common feature of modern schools. This has profound implications for teacher development, but also for creating the conditions for collaborative practices and cultures.** The inclusive pedagogical approach that framed our analysis suggests that, if learners have anything in common, it is the fact that each and every student is unique, and teachers will routinely encounter diversity among learners as an ordinary aspect of school life.

**Teachers can be supported to take diversity into account.** Emerging TEAMS data is identifying instances of more or less inclusive forms of collaboration depending on *how* rather than *whether* teachers work with each other and with other actors such as support staff, to take responsibility for migrant students' education. Instances of inclusive collaborations corroborate the findings of previous ethnographic research that showed how

some teachers have found authentic inclusive ways of helping migrant students navigate the formal structures of schooling to address intersecting barriers such as poverty, racial prejudice, and peer discrimination (1). Knowing students seems to be key for understanding their perspective and removing barriers to learning and participation.

Teachers and schools play an important role in facilitating the kinds of the human relationships that create an atmosphere in which all young people are listened to, included and valued. However, the potential to build and sustain such relationships in schools appears to be constrained by the narrow focus on academic achievement and language barriers in some contexts. **Creating conditions that enable teachers to develop inclusive forms of collaboration** with each other and with other professionals, requires structural changes in educational infrastructures and flexibility to use their professional knowledge and agency to seek creative solutions to challenges associated with teaching diverse groups of learners. **Our preliminary findings suggest that policies and practices that support teacher autonomy and collaboration more generally facilitate networks of holistic student support for migrants as for other students.**

## Avenues for policies and future research

Migration trends will continue for years to come, highlighting the importance of schools as an important arena for shaping migrants' integration. **Current debates about how best to deploy resources: through targeted approaches that address the needs of migrant students, or developing inclusive approaches that support migrant students in the mainstream provision, reflect uncertainty about 'what works'.** Some policy analysis<sup>15</sup> suggests that universal and 'loosely targeted' educational mechanisms aimed at supporting all students could be seen as more inclusive and beneficial for migrant integration than more targeted approaches. TEAMS is generating empirical evidence of the impact of both universal and targeted approaches in Finland, Sweden and Scotland that illustrates how they shape teachers' networks and practices for migrant support. The three country contexts provide a

range of targeted support such as preparatory classes in Finland, support within mainstream provision in Scotland and examples of both kinds of arrangements in the Swedish system, where some schools opt for immersion in mainstream classes, and in others migrant students spend at least part of their time in school in separate classes with other migrant students.

The TEAMS project's **design with at least two schools in each country allows us to examine the collaboration and relational practices at individual and school community levels, relative to the broader education policy and immigration contexts** (e.g. different support systems in the UK and Nordic countries). So far we have identified instances of more or less inclusive forms of collaboration at teacher and school levels.

The next stage of the analysis will examine how these forms of collaboration facilitate (or impede) teachers' and schools' capacity to enhance migrant integration outcomes, including academic success, cross-cultural socialisation and a sense of belonging to the school community. This will enable us to interrogate claims that teachers can act as agents of change in their school communities. Considering the urgent need to support the integration of migrant students in Europe (and internationally), additional research could be designed to inform policy solutions that create conditions for schools and teachers to facilitate educational inclusion and migrant integration in host countries. To examine how teachers' relational practices are shaped by national and institutional policies **future research should include a purposeful sampling of education systems that reflect a range of targeted and universal approaches as well as intersections between education and other policies of immigration within the broader social welfare regimes.**

15 Public Policy and Management Institute (PPMI). (2013, January). Study on educational support for newly arrived migrant children. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

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**Project:** Migrants and solidarities: Negotiating deservingness  
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# Refugee support and inclusion policies



**Event:** At the time of writing, [more than 3 million people have fled Ukraine, and 6.5 million have been internally displaced](#) since Russia's invasion, which began on 24 February. Many more are expected to flee in the coming weeks and months. This is a situation that is unprecedented in Europe since the end of WWII. The policy response as well as responses from ordinary citizens have, so far, been one of welcoming Ukrainians.

In this context, it is important to note that the vast majority (86%) of the world's 82.4 million forcibly displaced people, including internally displaced people, are hosted in developing countries, most often neighbouring countries. Turkey hosts 3.7 million refugees, more than any other country.<sup>1</sup>

This briefing outlines the policy context and addresses key questions about how best to support newly arrived refugees, taking an inclusion and rights-based approach. It addresses: 1) The temporal dimensions of refugee status; 2) Language acquisition and tuition; 3) Representations of refugees; 4) Welcoming and hosting refugees; and 5) Gender and family issues.

**Knowledge base:** This paper draws on insights and lessons from ongoing qualitative research, which examines questions of deservingness and solidarity with respect to migrants, refugees, and people seeking asylum in Denmark, Sweden, and the UK, in the context of the Nordforsk-funded [Migrants and solidarities: Negotiating deservingness in welfare micropublics](#) project.

**Context and policy response:** Since the war in Ukraine broke out, Ukrainians have been met with public and political support and sympathy in neighbouring countries. At the policy level, the EU has granted those fleeing the war [Temporary Protection](#) for at least one year, extendable up to three years. It is as yet unclear what will happen after the end of the temporary protection period. This is a remarkable [policy U-turn](#), including from governments that are otherwise hostile to refugees. Commentators have noted [the stark contrast](#) between the hostility

directed towards refugees from Africa and the Middle East and the welcome extended to Ukrainian refugees. As recently as in January 2022, Iraqis seeking to enter Poland, Latvia and Lithuania were met with soldiers and push-backs. Push-backs are [a violation of the European Convention on Human Rights](#); both the [the EU and UNHCR have expressed concern](#) at the practice.

In Nordic countries, Denmark has recently shifted its policy focus from integration to repatriation. The requirements for protection in Denmark are so strict that most people fleeing from Ukraine [would not meet asylum criteria](#). As a consequence, in order to accommodate Ukrainians, a special '[Ukrainian law](#)' was passed in parliament to provide Ukrainians the right to residency and access to the labour market for a two-year period. This has led to [public discussions about discrimination](#) and whether [some refugees are more deserving of protection and solidarity than others](#).

Sweden pursued a comparatively generous refugee policy towards Syrians, but later introduced restrictive legislation. In response to the Ukrainian crisis, the government has emphasised a shared responsibility among EU countries and in the West more generally. The decision that Ukrainians fleeing the war will be treated in accordance with the EU directive on Temporary Protection, allows for swift processing without individual vetting. However, a number of questions concerning the future for Ukrainians in Sweden have been raised. For instance, while children can access schooling, adults granted temporary protection will [not have access to free language courses \(Swedish for immigrants\) nor full health services](#). Furthermore, [in order to receive financial support for housing and daily living costs](#) those given temporary protection must either live in housing provided by the board of migration or in municipal areas in Sweden that are *not* deemed as socio-economically vulnerable. Yet, it can be difficult to find housing in such areas, especially for recent arrivals with limited financial resources. The implementation of the Temporary Directive therefore does not provide the same rights as those otherwise extended to asylum seekers.

1 Figures from end 2020, see <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/figures-at-a-glance.html#:~:text=How%20many%20refugees%20are%20there,under%20the%20age%20of%2018>.

In the UK, the government has launched a limited [scheme](#) for family members of Ukrainians already living in the UK, and Ukrainians who have named host families or sponsor organisations in the UK. The scheme requires Ukrainians to obtain a UK visa *before* arrival in the country; it includes residence for up to three years. The scheme [falls short](#) of granting refugee status and goes against the 1951 Convention which [enables people to seek protection without having to ask permission first](#). Critics have noted the UK government's [slow, complex and bureaucratic response](#), and the [human cost](#) of its rigid visa bureaucracy. The scheme has been introduced as a new [Nationality and Borders Bill](#) is going through its final stages in UK Parliament, which is set to have far-reaching negative consequences for people seeking asylum, and about which the UNHCR has raised [serious concerns](#).

In the coming weeks and months, as priorities shift from emergency humanitarian aid to a focus on inclusion and integration, a major challenge will be to ensure that public goodwill does not run out and that the policy-based [intentions to support and include Ukrainians and provide access to employment are translated into reality](#).

## Refugee inclusion policies: evidence and recommendations

### 1. The temporal dimension

A central issue in refugee inclusion or integration is precariousness and [the temporal horizon](#). Research shows that precarious and temporary statuses are associated with poor socio-economic outcomes linked to education, labour market participation, and health status, including for children of refugees. People are able to build new lives if they have security of status. For example, evidence from [Switzerland suggests that an additional year of waiting time reduces the subsequent employment rate of refugees by 4 to 5 percentage points](#); research on [Ukrainian labour migrants in the Czech Republic](#) has shown that those with permanent residence permits were twice as likely to have skilled jobs compared to those with temporary residence permits, and were half as likely to end up on the

bottom rungs of the labour market; and [research in the rural north of Sweden](#) on highly skilled refugees with temporary residence permits, found evidence of active de-skilling as a coping strategy with the purpose of signalling deservingness for permanent residence applications.

### 2. Language acquisition and tuition

Language plays a fundamental part in settlement and the processes of inclusion and integration. Evidence from France suggests that [an additional 100 hours of language training significantly increases the likelihood of participating in the labour market](#). An accessible and comprehensive system of language education for migrants, refugees, and those seeking asylum in the Nordic Region is therefore of prime importance. This should be underpinned by a clear commitment to sustained funding and a statutory entitlement to appropriate language tuition, regardless of immigration status, including for those who are newly arrived or those who are waiting for a decision on their asylum claim. There is also an argument to be made for evenly extending the official bilingualism of countries or regions to language education provided for migrants, refugees and those seeking asylum, and to provide access to both majority and minority language tuition to counteract the exacerbation of inequalities and exclusion that can occur when the choice of language tuition is restricted. By way of illustration, [research in Finland](#) has shown how precariousness increased when people seeking asylum, who were settled in a Swedish-speaking rural area, only had access to language learning in Finnish and not Swedish.

Access to the common language(s) of the country and communities where people are settling, setting up a new life and seeking to integrate themselves is a prerequisite for full and equal participation in society. Furthermore, the opportunity to learn those languages is a human right. A rights-based approach shifts the focus away from emphasising the obligation to learn (which can easily turn into the scapegoating of those who are deemed 'unwilling' to do so) towards creating suitable pathways to learn for all. A right-based approach includes removing financial and other barriers to accessing these opportunities and centring decision-making

around meeting the needs and aspirations of those in need of acquiring new languages and language-related skills, tackling the challenges they face, and the right of individuals to access the kind of provision that is best suited to their circumstances. This is not achieved through a 'one-size-fits-all' approach, rather it is vital that the diversity of refugee backgrounds is taken into account, including different levels of formal education. Language tuition should also be designed to take into account the different language needs of learners including, for example, negotiating everyday life, socialising, continuing education, accessing higher education, re-training or seeking re-qualification, finding work, and participating in civil society and political life.

Language education is a public good, which has the potential to contribute towards making the Nordic Region the most sustainable and integrated region in the world; the value of sharing common languages in the region is undeniable. However, the issue of language proficiency should neither be a precondition for citizenship, being able to claim the right to belong, or for social acceptance, nor should it draw attention away from other factors that cause divisions and animate exclusionary mechanisms, such as wider inequalities or discrimination.

### 3. Representations of refugees

Public and political debate about migration and refugees has become increasingly shrill and hostile across Europe in recent years. It is vitally important that the voices and experiences of refugees and people seeking asylum are heard in debates, and that their [claims to dignity and humanity](#) are included in policy-making. In UK-based research for the Migrants and Solidarities project, we have worked with people in the asylum system to foreground their voices and perspectives. They have told us of the [pernicious impact of categories and labelling](#).

Our research suggests that we need to create more room for [refugee voices](#) in the public and political debate to challenge and nuance simplistic representations of refugees. It is important to make room for *different* people with *different* flight experiences in order to acknowledge the complexities of refugee backgrounds and encounters with national asylum systems.

### 4. Hosting and welcoming refugees

Welcoming refugees relate to age-old [questions of hospitality](#). Listening to refugees as well as people living in 'host' communities can facilitate space for dialogue and empathy rather than confrontation. Categories like refugee/host or guest/host organise relations between new neighbours in asymmetric power relations. Instead, it can be fruitful to establish spaces and places where people who are part of local communities can meet each other in alternative ways as humans and fellow citizens around questions of how solidarity, friendship, responsibility, and community take form. In this relation, [theatre, arts, filmmaking, games, performance and other kinds of creative methods and interventions](#) can prompt reflection and dialogue, and open up imaginative possibilities for empathy, solidarity, and political action.

### 5. Gender and family reunification issues

Approximately 90 percent of Ukrainians who have fled the country are women and children according to [UNHCR](#). The IOM, the UN's migration agency, has pointed to [initial reports of traffickers exploiting the large-scale human displacement, including instances of sexual violence](#). As signalled by both [aid workers and academic experts](#), it is crucial to run background checks in order to avoid exploitation and sexual violence.

Given the demographic profile, providing access to schooling and affordable childcare needs to be prioritised for the wellbeing of children and to enable mothers and carers to access the labour market.

Refugees fleeing war, conflict or persecution will, in many cases, flee separately from their families, or they may become separated during the migration journey. For most refugees, reuniting with their families is a key concern and aspiration, both during their flight as well as during the asylum and settlement process. Family reunification is one potentially safe legal pathway for families to be reunited. Despite the recognition of the importance of [the right to family life in human rights legislation](#), rights to family reunification in Europe have become increasingly conditional and regulated.

Family reunification across the EU has strict limitations on which family members can be reunited, mostly being limited to married spouses and children under the age of 18. Considering the events unfolding in Ukraine and in other conflict areas, the sponsor refugee should be able to bring other family members, including other children who are over 18 or their parents who may be dependent upon them to avoid separating families. Importantly, children who arrive unaccompanied are especially vulnerable and should have their reunification processes prioritised. [The case of the UK is specially concerning](#) since currently unaccompanied minors are denied the right to apply for family reunification, condemning them to live apart from their families for the rest of their lives, thereby [contravening international law](#).

The overarching principle should be that all refugees have the right to a family life and family reunification, avoiding long bureaucratic procedures.

## Conclusion

The current situation calls for a coordinated, holistic, and comprehensive policy approach to support the social inclusion of refugees in local communities. It is to be hoped that the policy response to Ukrainian refugees will lead to permanent positive changes in the UK's and EU's refugee reception policies and practices such that the support and empathy extended to Ukrainians is expanded to include *all* refugees fleeing war and conflict. The crisis in Ukraine presents an opportunity for the Nordic countries to re-affirm the principles of the 1951 [UN Refugee Convention](#) and the 1967 Protocol as well as the [European Convention on Human Rights](#).

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**Project:** Life at the Frontier: The Impact of Social Frontiers on the Social Mobility and Integration of Migrants

# Refugee and migrant integration



**Preliminary findings from the ESRC/NordForsk  
Life at the Frontier project**

1 **Director:** Gwilym Pryce; Co-Directors: Urban Lindgren, Liv Osland, and Aneta Piekut; Co-investigators and researchers (in no particular order): Andrew Bell, Meng Le Zhang, Aarti Iyer, Nema Dean, David Manley, Eleanor Bale, Maarten van Ham, Inge Thorsen, Arnstein Gjestland, Henrik Andersen, Alexander Myatt, Aina Tollefsen, Mari Nuga, Maria Rönnlund, Jamie Smith, Bertha Rohenkohl, Dan Olnér, Ana Petrovic, Goretti Horgan, Zanib Rasool, Zanib Rasool, Duncan Lee, Kitty Meeks.

## Key findings:

- We have evaluated the effectiveness of the Norwegian Refugee Dispersal Policy, estimating whether the employment rate in refugee settlement neighbourhoods had an impact on refugee labour market outcomes. We found only a modest positive effect.
- Using Scottish Census data from 1971 to 2011, we find strong evidence of path dependency in migration location patterns over a 40-year period. This means that a significant reduction in the levels of segregation through policy intervention is likely to prove difficult.
- We have developed a research design for estimating the effectiveness of the Norwegian Introduction Programme which provides training for new migrants. We hope to report initial findings in the next few months.
- We have exploited the difference in housing policy between Scotland and England to investigate whether increasing new refugees' access to social housing in Scotland helped reduce homelessness. We find a significant effect.
- We are in the process of exploring the use of register data from Sweden and Norway to develop Chetty and Hendron (2018) style estimates of the impact of neighbourhoods on educational attainment and labour market outcomes.

## Introduction

The overarching focus of the Life at the Frontier project, and the wider NordForsk research programme of which it is a part, is on the integration of migrants. Integration, however, remains a contested term with some scholars (e.g. Adrian Favell) dismissing the idea of integration as nothing more than the repackaging of assimilation. However, we believe the term can have a meaningful interpretation if it is defined in a sufficiently inclusive way. A particularly useful definition is that set out in a 2004 UK Home Office report:

**“Successful integration entails migrants being able to achieve outcomes within employment, housing, education, health etc. which are equivalent to those achieved within the wider host communities”**

*(UK Home Office report, 2004)*

One advantage of this approach is that it emphasises equality of opportunity and outcome. As such, it frames the discussion around migration integration in terms of social justice, social inclusion and social mobility in the host nation, rather than placing the onus on migrants. Moreover, it raises the question of whether society as a whole is 'integrated'. If a country is fragmented and stratified by income, social class, religion and race, it makes it less likely that migrants can become integrated into employment, housing and education.

This definition also exposes the weaknesses of static notions of integration as it carries within it an implicit emphasis on the dynamic nature of integration over the life course. Static measures – such as the extent to which migrants from a particular country have employment rates similar to those of natives – can be misleading as they fail to account for the migrant life course position, especially their trajectory in the labour market. A more insightful approach is one that explicitly considers life-course trajectories and that compares them with natives and other relevant groups. The implication is that measures of integration should focus on social mobility and its various drivers.

So what might be the main factors that determine the social mobility, and hence integration, of migrants? In this article I highlight our ongoing work with respect to the following drivers:

- Neighbourhood context
- Settlement policy
- Segregation dynamics
- Social housing policy
- Training for new migrants
- School quality
- Housing market discrimination

## Neighbourhood effects

One of the challenges facing countries receiving refugees is where to house them. The cheapest option, at least in the short run, is to locate them in areas with low-cost housing. But there is a problem with this approach. Such areas often have the highest rates of poverty and deprivation which may not be conducive to migrants achieving high rates of social mobility and integration. The characteristics of neighbourhoods – employment rates, levels of crime, concentration of offenders, quality of housing, levels of pollution etc. – can all have significant impacts on the life outcomes of those who live there.

There is a long tradition of estimating these “neighbourhood effects”, especially the impacts of spatial concentration of poverty on life outcomes. Galster and Sharkey’s (2017) widely cited review of the evidence suggests that neighbourhood context not only has a significant *direct effect* on cognitive development, educational attainment, teen fertility, physical and mental health, labour force participation, earnings, and crime, but that there will likely be important *indirect effects* as well. These indirect effects arise from deprivation rates in surrounding areas and/or at multiple spatial scales, and the intergenerational effects of neighbourhoods on relationship matching, household formation and the attributes and behaviours of parents.

The findings of neighbourhood effects research have, however, been controversial. This is due to the difficulties of distinguishing the causal effects of a neighbourhood’s social and physical environment from other factors. It is possible, for example, that people living in deprived neighbourhoods tend to have lower health outcomes not because such neighbourhoods cause poor health, but because households with poor health are more likely to move to such neighbourhoods. Imagine, for example, a family living in an affluent neighbourhood where the main earner loses their job due to chronic illness. It is not long before the family struggle to meet their housing costs and are forced to move to a more deprived neighbourhood where rents are cheaper. Screening out these “selection effects”, and other confounding factors such as family characteristics and unobserved natural ability, has proved difficult.

Recently, however, neighbourhood effects research has received a significant boost through the pioneering work of Princeton professor, Raj Chetty. By drawing on very large US datasets that allow Chetty and his team to follow household moves into different US counties, they have developed robust methodology for isolating the causal effect of area attributes on educational outcomes. Their research has, for example, confirmed the beneficial effects of moving to a more affluent neighbourhood on educational attainment. Crucially, younger siblings who benefitted from longer exposure to the new neighbourhood than their older siblings, experienced a larger educational boost. Chetty and Hendren (2018) find that boys’ outcomes are more place-sensitive than girls’ outcomes. Good places to grow up tend to have lower income inequality, higher school quality, less crime, larger proportions of families with two parents and lower segregation.

Chetty’s work highlights how the large geographical differences across the US in poverty and disadvantage affect social mobility. Similar disparities have recently been found in the UK. Estimates by Buscha et al. (2021) reveal large geographical differences in intergenerational social mobility rates, not only between regions but also within them. In fact, “all regions in England and Wales contain districts in the top and bottom 20th percentile of social mobility nationally.”

These findings are important for our own research because they may have implications for the impact of geographical inequality on the life outcomes of migrants. Moreover, the fine-grained spatial differences in mobility rates uncovered by Buscha et al. in the UK may suggest that it matters not only which region a migrant moves to – whether it is a comparatively affluent region such as London or a comparatively poorer region such as Wales – but also which local authority district they select within those regions. With this in mind, we are currently developing a research grant application to the ESRC to estimate the extent to which the social mobility of migrants is determined by geographical context.

We are also exploring the potential to replicate the Chetty and Hendren (2018) design using Swedish and Norwegian register data. In particular, we are interested in investigating whether similar levels of geographical inequality in social mobility are to be found in countries with much more generous welfare regimes than in the Chetty and Hendren study. We shall also explore whether residential location in childhood has a causal effect on income in adulthood. As far as possible we will use the same modelling approach, the same variables, covering the same time-period as the Chetty and Hendren study. One difference will be the size of geographical units used to track movers. Chetty and Hendren (2018) use counties and commuting zones. But these are too large to be applicable in a Nordic setting. So instead, we shall use municipalities as our geographical unit. There are at least two important reasons for this. Firstly, it is the municipalities in Norway and Sweden that are responsible for nurseries, compulsory schooling, local communities and much of the local planning in general. Municipalities are therefore the most policy-relevant administrative unit. Secondly, moves at a lower level of aggregation might not lead to children changing schools, and they may even retain the same friends and social networks. We hope to report on our findings before the end of the project (March 2023).

### **Impact of Norwegian Refugee Dispersal Policy on the labour market integration of refugees**

An alternative to the Chetty and Hendren (2018) approach is to make use of a quasi-experiment such as the one arising from a policy intervention. Norway's approach to the spatial dispersal of refugees is such a policy. It "directly places refugees aided by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) within Norwegian neighbourhoods" (Bratsberg et al. 2020). Bratsberg et al find that "within each municipality, the specific neighbourhood a refugee is placed in is as-if random conditional on the year of arrival" (Bratsberg et al. 2020). This provides researchers with large random variations in the characteristics of settlement neighbourhoods, which means that the Norwegian

refugee dispersal policy offers an ideal quasi-experiment opportunity for exploring the impact of neighbourhood characteristics on the labour market integration of refugees.

For example, we might expect refugees that are assigned to neighbourhoods with high employment to do better in the labour market because they will have better access to positive role models and peer effects. We were able to use Norwegian register to estimate whether this effect was significant. We found that there were indeed positive effects on the refugee's later employment probability of having 'good neighbours' in the first neighbourhood (i.e. being placed in an initial neighbourhood with a higher employment rate), but that these effects were small and often statistically insignificant. A one standard deviation higher employment rate in the initial neighbourhood implies a less than one percentage point increase in the refugees' later employment probability. These results suggest that the employment rate in the initial neighbourhood matters little for the refugees downstream in labour market integration.

### **Segregation dynamics**

One of the reasons why the initial settlement of refugees may have little impact is that migrants may, in time, move away. A potentially important factor in driving these relocation decisions is "homophily" – the desire to live near other households of the same ethnic group or country of origin. Over time, homophily can lead to cumulative increases in the concentration of ethnic groups in particular locations. To explore the implications of this, we develop a theoretical simulation model which suggests two key processes that drive the long-term patterns of segregation. The first is "spatial persistence", which refers to the potential of initial cohorts of migrants to create path dependency in the settlement patterns of future migrants. In theory, this will lead to spatial persistence because the share of migrants currently flowing into a particular neighbourhood may be determined by the previous patterns of migrants in that same neighbourhood from a decade or more ago. If there is a high degree of spatial persistence, this is likely to indicate a high degree

of path dependency in future patterns of migration flows, and may imply that the geography of migrant residence becomes resilient to change very early on. The second key factor is the "homophily horizon" – the degree to which migrants take into account the wider geography of the ethnic or migrant mix when making their location decision. Simulation work by Bakens and Pryce (2019) implies that an increase in the homophily horizon rapidly increases the rate at which a society becomes segregated. It is therefore a potentially important concept for understanding the long-term drivers of segregation.

Understanding the evolutionary dynamics of segregation has important implications for policy. If, for example, migrant settlement patterns tend to remain relatively fluid even after successive rounds of migration, then policy makers have flexibility with respect to the timing of an intervention that seeks, for example, to change the degree of segregation. On the other hand, if migration settlement patterns become inert relatively quickly, effective intervention may only be possible during a relatively narrow window of opportunity that rapidly closes after the early stages of migration.

We have developed an empirical model to demonstrate how these effects could be estimated using panel data regression methods. Using Scottish Census data from 1971 to 2011, we find strong evidence of path dependency in migration location patterns over a 40-year period. We find that some migrant groups have significantly wider homophily horizons, especially those from poorer nations. These findings may have important implications for the decision of migrants to relocate to other neighbourhoods rather than remaining in their initial settlement housing, which in turn may significantly affect the impact of resettlement programmes. In relation to this, the particular form that segregation takes, particularly whether it generates abrupt rather than gradual social boundaries between neighbouring communities, may also be important for determining the life outcomes and lived experiences of migrants (see our accompanying report for the Nordic Council of Ministers entitled, "Segregation & Social Frontiers").

## The effectiveness of training programmes for new migrants

So far I have mainly discussed our work on the geographical determinants of migrant integration. However, many of the interventions open to policy-makers are not specifically geographical. For example, refugee induction programmes that offer high-quality training might help boost the life-chances of migrants. For example, the Norwegian Introduction Programme provides language, employment and cultural training for new migrants. Attendance on the programme is mandatory for most refugees and family reunification migrants (with non-Nordic spouses). Migrants are given a special financial reward for participating in the programme based on the number of hours of attendance. Crucially, the amount paid changes based on age: under 25s earn benefits at 2/3 the rate of those over 25.

This age cut-off is useful for assessing the effectiveness of the programme because it can be used to measure the effects of cash incentives on programme attendance and its knock-on effect on integration outcomes such as education and employment. We have developed a robust research design for evaluating the programme based on this feature which we are in the process of implementing in order to estimate the following impacts:

1. **The effect of the age-cut off (via benefit rate) on programme participation**
2. **The effect of the age-cut off (via benefit rate) on employment status, wages, and further education/ training.**
3. **The direct effect of programme participation on integration outcomes, estimated using the results of 1 and 2.**
4. **The variance in programme attendance effects across municipalities: i.e. how the effects identified in 1 and 2 vary across different intervention sites.**
5. **Whether the programme effects differ for different migrant groups by gender and other characteristics.**

We anticipate that our initial results will be available in the next few months.

## Homelessness impacts of Scottish refugee housing policy

One of the criteria for the successful integration of migrants listed in the 2004 UK Home Office definition was housing. This can refer to the quality and location of housing, but in many countries, migrants – especially refugees – often struggle to find stable housing tenure of even the most basic kind. One of the interventions available to host governments is to allow refugees to apply for social housing. This is not the case in England. However, a policy difference emerged in 2001 between England and Scotland when the Scottish government allowed refugees to apply for social housing.

This created a quasi-experiment for researching whether increasing new refugees' access to social housing in Scotland helped reduce homelessness relative to England. We investigated this by testing whether the Scottish policy reduced refugee homelessness eight months after permission to remain, using nonresponse rates of the 2005-2009 Survey of New Refugees as a lower-bound proxy for homelessness. We found that refugees assigned to Glasgow, Scotland had a significantly lower homelessness rate than comparable refugees assigned to live elsewhere in the UK. We attribute this effect to allowing refugees priority access to social housing, discounting potential confounders and other mediators.

## Policy implications

The integration of migrants should be thought of in dynamic terms. This means avoiding simple static comparisons of migrants and non-migrants. Instead, policymakers should focus on measures of social mobility among migrants, investigate whether these rates are lower than among the native-born population, and explore what drives these discrepancies. A particularly important set of drivers are those associated with "neighbourhood effects" – those arising from differences in the geographical concentration of poverty and disadvantage. We know from US and UK research, for example, that social mobility rates can vary hugely between areas, even within the same region or metropolitan area. As yet, we are not aware of any robust estimates in the UK, Norway or Sweden that explore how social mobility rates differ between migrants and natives, or between migrant groups. In principle, the integration of migrants could depend significantly on the local rates of social mobility. Nordic countries may be less affected by such variations as they have lower levels of geographical inequality more generally. Indeed, in our study of the Norwegian Refugee Dispersal Policy, we found that the employment rate in refugee settlement neighbourhoods had an only a very modest impact on refugee labour market outcomes. However, this may have been due to migrants relocating to neighbourhoods with high concentrations of their own group. Designing effective policy responses to refugee integration will therefore require careful analysis of how internal migration moderates the effectiveness of initial settlement initiatives, which will in turn require an understanding of the drivers and impacts of segregation. Crucially, policy-makers need to take a life-course approach to integration, one that follows and assists migrants and refugees over the various stages of their education, employment and housing trajectories, not just when they first arrive in the country. There is also an imperative to understand and address the drivers of geographic variations in social mobility within all three countries and the extent to which particular migrant groups cluster in low-social-mobility areas.

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**Project:** Life at the Frontier: The Impact of Social Frontiers on the Social Mobility and Integration of Migrants

# Segregation and social frontiers

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**Preliminary findings from the ESRC/NordForsk  
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1 **Director:** Gwilym Pryce; Co-Directors: Urban Lindgren, Liv Osland, and Aneta Piekut; Co-investigators and researchers (in no particular order): Andrew Bell, Meng Le Zhang, Aarti Iyer, Nema Dean, David Manley, Eleanor Bale, Maarten van Ham, Inge Thorsen, Arnstein Gjestland, Henrik Andersen, Alexander Myatt, Aina Tollefsen, Mari Nuga, Maria Rönnlund, Jamie Smith, Bertha Rohenkohl, Dan Olnér, Ana Petrovic, Goretti Horgan, Zanib Rasool, Zanib Rasool, Duncan Lee, Kitty Meeks.

## Key findings:

- Social frontiers arise when neighbouring communities have abrupt, rather than gradual, social boundaries, created by a lack of residential mixing at the border.
- Our research has confirmed that social frontiers are not just a UK/US phenomenon: we find strong evidence of social frontiers between migrants and non-migrants in Norwegian and Swedish cities.
- We find evidence in the UK context of a strong association between social frontiers, higher crime rates, and higher concentrations of offenders.
- Our research on Dutch data reveals a strong association between social frontiers and residents' moving decisions. We find that the effect is asymmetric: native Dutch households near the frontier are more likely to move, whereas non-Western migrant households are less likely to move, compared to equivalent households without exposure to social frontiers.
- Our research on Oslo finds that house prices are lower near social frontiers.
- Our qualitative research suggests that the meaning and impact of social frontiers is likely to be highly contextual, dependent on local ethno-social, political, and economic contexts.
- Our theoretical and methodological work suggests that more work is needed to develop methods and data linkage that will help us understand the causal impact of social frontiers and how they differ from other neighbourhood effects.

## Introduction

There is a long history of research exploring the prevalence and impacts of residential segregation and neighbourhood effects. Cutler and Glaeser (1997 p.827), for example, found that ethnic minorities in more segregated areas in the US had significantly worse outcomes than their compatriots in less segregated areas. Based on their findings, a decrease in segregation by one standard deviation would eliminate one-third of the ethnic differences in education, unemployment and income. More recently, Raj Chetty's research on the US has found that areas with high levels of ethnic segregation tend to have lower rates of social mobility (see the previous article on *Refugee and Migrant Integration*).

Alongside the social and economic geography literatures and geography, there is a sizable amount of epidemiological literature exploring the effect of ethnic density. These studies have shown that for ethnic minorities, living in areas with a high concentration of their own group can confer significant reductions in the risk of poor mental health. Becares et al.'s (2018) systematic review of 41 ethnic density studies, for example, finds a large reduction in the relative odds of psychotic experiences and suicidal ideation for each ten percentage-point increase in own ethnic density.

How can we reconcile these findings from different literatures and what do they mean for the integration of migrants? To understand how these different effects interact, it is important to address a potentially important omission from both these literatures: namely the failure to consider what happens where neighbourhoods border. For example, if there are gradual transitions in ethnic mix between neighbouring communities, but with high levels of ethnic mixing at the border, it may mean that ethnic minorities can benefit from the emotional and social support from their own group, without being cut off from the majority group, enabling them access wider social networks that lead to job opportunities and provide access to positive role models. However, if these same neighbourhoods had abrupt transitions in the ethnic mix creating a clearly defined "social frontier" then the outcome may be quite different.

An important part of our NordForsk research has been to explore what abrupt social boundaries between migrant groups might imply for the lives of residents. Drawing on insights from human geography, sociology and social psychology our task has been to think through the various causal pathways through which social frontiers may impact neighbourhood conflict and individual life outcomes, with a view to providing a rigorous framework for future empirical research in this area.

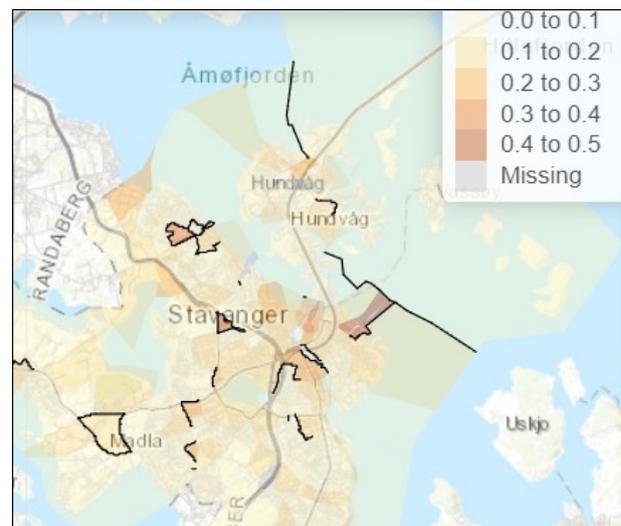
Our research suggests that an important feature of social frontiers is that they are likely to inhibit opportunities for positive direct contact between groups. This is significant because we know from the social psychology literature that positive direct contact with members of an outgroup decreases prejudice and hostility towards that group (Allport, 1954) via three explanatory pathways: increased knowledge, increased empathy, and decreased anxiety (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). However, opportunities to build shared experience and understanding between groups via positive direct contact are less possible in neighbourhoods divided by social frontiers which, over time, may increase social tension and conflict.

The abrupt and clearly defined nature of separation implied by social frontiers may also be important. We know from the human geography and political geography literatures that rival social groups often exhibit territorial behaviours when there are clearly demarcated spatial territories to defend. Therefore, because social frontiers represent such a distinct spatial location for the boundaries between groups, they have the potential to heighten territoriality and sour any contact that does take place. This is significant because "negative contact predicts increased prejudice more than positive contact predicts reduced prejudice" (Barlow et al. 2012, p.1629).

## Do social frontiers exist in Nordic countries?

Research by Dean et al. (2019) and Smith et al. (2022) has confirmed the existence of social frontiers between migrants and native-born households in the UK (specifically, Sheffield and Rotherham). Our ongoing NordForsk research exploring the nature of social frontiers in UK towns and cities has found that they are a common phenomenon, although we do not yet know whether they are becoming more or less prevalent. Previous research has also found evidence of social frontiers in US cities (Legewie and Schaeffer 2016; Legewie 2018), although the focus of these studies has been on racial divides rather than migrant/native frontiers.

The question, then, is whether such frontiers exist in Nordic countries? Our analysis of the geographical distribution of migrants and non-migrants in Norway and Sweden has confirmed that social frontiers do indeed exist in Nordic towns and cities. See, for example, the map of Stavanger in Norway where the black lines indicate the existence of frontiers between migrants and non-migrants. Moreover, results using data as far back as 1990 show that the existence of these social frontiers has been very stable over time throughout the country.



**Fig.1** Evidence of social frontiers in Stavanger, Norway: shading reflects the proportion of foreign-born in each basic statistical unit (Grunnkrets)

## Social frontiers: Impact on offender location and crime

One of the most important questions with respect to social frontiers is whether they have an impact on crime. We noted above that sharp boundaries between contrasting groups may help ferment social tensions by reducing opportunities for contact and by encouraging territorial attitudes. Our previous empirical research on this phenomenon (Dean et al. 2019) found evidence of a strong association between the location of social frontiers between migrants and non-migrants and higher crime rates in the city of Sheffield in the UK. However, this study relied on crime data that did not have precise geographical coordinates of where offences occurred. Also, the paper did not explore the location of those committing offences so we could not establish, for example, whether social frontiers were making locals more likely to commit offences, or whether they had become places that attracted criminal activities that would otherwise have taken place elsewhere.

In our NordForsk project, we have worked closely with South Yorkshire Police to explore whether the association between social frontiers and crime still holds when we use crime data with more reliable information on the geographical location of the crimes. Our analysis finds that this is indeed the case. We found that the results of Dean et al. (2018) were confirmed when more spatially precise crime data was used: frontier zones tend to have elevated crime rates. We also extended the research to the neighbouring local authority of Rotherham and found similar effects. Moreover, we found that it was not only social frontiers between migrants and non-migrants that are associated with higher crime rates. A similar relationship holds for social frontiers between Muslims and non-Muslims, and between White British and non-White British populations (Smith et al. 2022).

Our collaborative work with South Yorkshire Police also enabled us to identify the residential addresses of known offenders and thus explore the relationship between social frontiers and the location of offenders. We found that there was a higher concentration of offenders living near social frontiers. However, at this stage we are unable to identify the precise causal mechanism. For example, we do not know whether social frontiers

are attracting existing offenders to locate nearby, or whether social frontiers increase the likelihood of locals becoming offenders or foster the creation of local crime networks. Legewie and Schaeffer (2016) argue that because social frontiers will tend to lie at the periphery of communities and therefore away from the mechanisms of social control which tend to be strongest near the geographical centre of a community. Lower social control and collective efficacy near social frontiers will tend to attract criminals and also leave the emergence of criminal behaviour unchecked.

## Impact of social frontiers on household mobility

One of the potential interpretations of social frontiers is that they represent a defensive boundary between established native households and incoming migrants: a moving defensive "wall" in the dynamic process of "native flight". Community boundaries could therefore be interpreted as attempts by the majority group to contain the residential spread, and perceived threat, of ethnic minorities (Alba 2005: 27). As such, one side may see the frontier as something they want to preserve as a way of maintaining social distance with respect to the outgroup, whereas the other side may view it as an unwelcome barrier to their progress and integration into wider society. The implication is that social frontiers will have asymmetrical impacts for the groups on each side: native-born residents near a social frontier may be more likely to move out than natives not living close to a frontier. They view the social frontier as a defence against the threat of incoming migrants. In contrast, migrants may view the frontier as a place of opportunity and settlement, an expression of their desire to integrate with the native population. As a result, migrants near social frontiers may be less likely to move than migrants living further away.

So what does the data say? Working with colleagues from Delft Technical University, we developed a statistical model of moving behaviour to estimate the impact of social frontiers between natives and non-Western migrants in Rotterdam on moving decisions. On the migrant side of the frontier, we found that households of all ethnicities in the 28-37 age group tend to have reduced odds of moving, compared to non-frontier parts of the city.

However, we found that the opposite was true on the Dutch native side of the frontier where households tend to have an increased propensity to move away. One implication of these findings is that the existence of social frontiers may indicate resistance to migrant integration, not from migrants, but from the host population.

### Impact of social frontiers on house prices

One possible reason why social frontiers form is that they reflect a relative shortage of households willing to live near the outgroup. Consider the following thought experiment: suppose all households, both native and migrant, are averse to living in areas where they will be in the minority among their immediate neighbours. Other things being equal, we would expect this to cause them to locate to areas where they will be surrounded by a concentration of their own group (Schelling 1971). A by-product of this will be the prevalence of social frontiers where there is minimal residential mixing along neighbourhood boundaries because there is no group of households with a preference towards living near the outgroup (Piekut and Pryce 2022).

This has implications for house prices and rents. Because no one wants to live at the frontier, we would expect house prices to be lower near to social frontiers. More generally, if the supply of houses at the frontier is large relative to demand, house prices will be lower there. Put another way, households will only locate to the frontier if the discomfort of locating there is sufficiently offset by lower housing costs.

Now consider another thought experiment. Suppose that, rather than both groups having homogenous preferences, there are in fact a variety of preferences among households with respect to living near outgroups, with some households very happy to live near the outgroup. In this scenario, we would only expect social frontiers to emerge as a result of arbitrary or external factors (e.g. historical planning decisions or refugee allocation policies). Moreover, because there is no shortage of people willing to live near the frontier, we would not expect house prices to be any different near social frontiers than anywhere else, assuming other factors are constant, such as the size and quality of housing.

Note, however, under this scenario, and in the absence of external constraints (such as apartheid laws), social frontiers would not survive for very long. The relative abundance of households willing to live near outgroups would likely lead to residential mixing at the boundary, and all social frontiers disappearing over time. There would be no aversion to residential mixing, and so the locations of migrants and natives would become intermingled and residential integration would be achieved.

The implication of all this is that, in the absence of external barriers to residential mixing, social frontiers which persist over time will likely reflect an underlying shortage of households willing to live at the boundary between groups, relative to the number of dwellings there. As a result, we would expect house prices to be lower near social frontiers. If there is no aversion to living near other ethnic/migrant groups, then we would not expect house prices to be lower, but then we would also not expect social frontiers to emerge and persist.

To explore these ideas, we have developed a detailed model of the factors that determine geographical variation in house prices and used this model to estimate whether or not house prices near social frontiers are noticeably lower (Myatt et al. 2022). The model controls for a wide range of factors that influence house value, including dwelling characteristics (house type, size, age), demographics, and the socio-economic characteristics of the neighbourhood. The results suggest that holding these other factors constant, social frontiers do seem to have an effect; house prices do indeed tend to be lower near social frontiers. Moreover, the longer and the more pronounced the frontier, the greater the house price discount.

Further research is needed, however, to establish the precise causal mechanism at work. For example, it may be that social frontiers generate higher rates of crime and it is this that drives down house prices. Alternatively, it may be that migrants also have lower socio-economic status and it is because wealthy households are averse to living near poorer ones that house prices are lower, rather than the fact that these poorer households have a different ethnicity or country of birth.

## Qualitative research

As well as developing statistical analysis of the impacts of social frontiers, we are in the process of conducting in-depth interviews with residents, community workers and local experts in the cities of Rotherham (UK) and Malmö (Sweden). Our goal in conducting these interviews is to understand in more depth how locals recognise the existence of social frontiers, how they perceive them, what their experiences are of living near them, and what they think the impacts are. Although we are still analysing the data, our initial findings suggest that single-dimensional frontiers such as the divides between foreign-born and native-born residents, may be too simplistic. There are often multiple overlapping factors that give rise to geographical divisions, such as social class, education, housing and subtle cultural differences between multiple ethnic groups that are not captured by a simple native/migrant divide.

## Future work

The story of social frontiers and their impact remains a new and relatively unexplored field. There is still much that we do not know about the nature, prevalence, morphology and impacts of social frontiers. It would take many decades of research to fully understand how all these factors change over time and vary across different cultural, social, economic and institutional contexts. Nevertheless, in the remaining 12 months of our NordForsk project and associated PhD research and research grant applications over the next four years, we plan to extend this pioneering field of enquiry in a number of ways:

- We will develop aggregate measures of social frontiers that allow us to compare the prevalence of social frontiers across different towns, cities and regions, and how they change over time.
- We will explore the associations between these aggregate measures and various outcome measures such as crime, wellbeing, educational attainment, individual income and social mobility.
- We will develop new methods of estimating social frontiers that lead to more precise estimates of their geographical location and that allow for the detection of frontiers in multiple dimensions (ethnicity, country of birth, race, religion, housing wealth, income and social class), not just the migrant/native divide.
- We will conduct validation exercises to check whether our estimates of frontier locations resonate with locals' perceptions of where community boundaries lie.
- Explore the relationship between residential segregation and labour market integration – particularly the importance of social frontiers for work income.
- Draw on qualitative research to explore the lifestyle expectations, aspirations and desires of immigrants and natives in social frontier areas.

## Policy implications

Our initial findings appear to confirm the relationship between social frontiers and higher crime rates, greater concentration of offenders, lower house prices and impacts on geographical mobility. Although these statistical associations are strong, it is difficult at this stage in our work to be sure of the causal effect. Nevertheless, we believe our emerging body of research provides sufficient *de facto* evidence of the potential importance of social frontiers

to warrant policy interest. Our key recommendation at this stage is for policy makers to develop randomised control trials that explore the effectiveness of interventions in reducing the prevalence of social frontiers and, by extension, the effect on crime, house prices, moving decisions and social mobility. The Ukrainian refugee crisis potentially offers an important opportunity to implement such trials with a view to helping policy-makers improve the life outcomes of migrants and refugees.

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# **How do we ensure the best possible health and welfare for Ukrainian refugee children and young people seeking a safe place in the Nordic countries?**



**Six recommendations based on  
Nordic research findings**

In the light of the current refugee influx from Ukraine following Russia's attack in February 2022, much can be learnt from previous research on refugee experiences and trajectories in the Nordic countries that may inform Nordic decision makers, civil servants and practitioners in the reception of these newcomers in the Nordic countries. Refugees are not a homogeneous group of people. Yet, they have many shared needs and challenges that need to be addressed once they arrive in their destination country.

Refugee children and young people are an especially vulnerable group (1-3) due to their pre-migration experiences, such as witnessing violence and war, traumatic experiences during migration such as perilous journeys and separation from family members, as well as post-migration experiences due to lengthy asylum procedures, temporary residence permits in the destination country, and poor parental mental health (4, 5). Despite the adversities that characterise the group, refugee children also possess a high degree of resilience (4, 6), defined as their ability to cope with stressful life events while maintaining a positive outlook (7). This diversity of refugee children and young people in terms of their age on arrival, gender, country of origin, migration experiences and parental resources, etc. underscores the importance of bearing in mind that these children and young people also have very different psychosocial and educational needs and strengths when arriving in the Nordic countries.

In this article, we will draw on research findings from Nordic research, including recent results from a multidisciplinary research project titled "Coming of Age in Exile" (CAGE) funded by NordForsk between 2015 and 2020. CAGE investigated issues related to the integration of young refugees within the welfare areas of education, labour market participation and health within and across the Nordic countries, and the importance of tackling these challenges in the context of resettlement in order to facilitate the integration of young refugee newcomers (8). Inspired by the insights from research results on these issues, we will present six recommendations to guide the reception, resettlement and integration of Ukrainian refugee children and young people in the Nordic countries and beyond.

## **1) Ensure a good reception and early support**

How young refugees are received right after arriving in a Nordic country has strong implications for their life chances in terms of education, labour market attachment and health in their resettlement country. Reducing resettlement stress by minimising the length of asylum procedures, insecurity about residence permits and transitions within the country is key (9, 10). Research has shown that conditions in the resettlement country such as perceived discrimination, social support and Nordic language proficiency may be even more important than pre-migration experiences for successful integration in the Nordic countries (3). Consequently, policies that address a good and welcoming reception, and minimise insecurity about residence permits and further integration structures are crucial.

The interventions during the first phase after arrival are especially important. In spite of the relief related to finally being in a safe place (the so-called "honeymoon effect"), the later-life trajectory regarding education, labour market attachment and well-being seems to be strongly influenced by the early and well-planned initiation of interventions (8). These include Nordic language training, quality education, majority peer interactions and mental health support. Research on children, young people and adults has emphasised that learning the resettlement language is especially important for a successful resettlement, including long-term educational achievements, labour market attachment, well-being and integration. A Nordic language appears to be acquired most successfully through intense teaching combined with everyday practice in the form of regular encounters with majority peers (8).

Finally, an introduction to the healthcare system and services may facilitate good health and reduce health issues in the long term. Arriving in a Nordic country as a refugee family with a newborn or very small children poses a special challenge. Results from Denmark indicate that early and repeated encounters with child health nurses can play an important role for ensuring compassionate, flexible, collaborative, and empowering care that appears to reduce a family's day-to-day stress and also facilitate access to the general healthcare services (8, 11). Structural adaptation in terms of translators,

extra time set aside for the encounter and training in diversity skills among child health nurses seem to be important facilitators (11) that should be considered in policies.

## **2) Safeguard mental health reception procedures**

Since refugee children and young people may have been exposed to traumatising events both before and during migration, their mental health may be impaired. Consequently, policy initiatives need to ensure efficient health reception procedures including a clear focus on mental health. Until now, the focus of policies on health reception upon arrival in the Nordic countries has primarily been on infectious disease control and acute healthcare needs, while mental and social well-being have received less attention (8). One exception is Denmark, which has routinely offered mental health screening to asylum seeking children since 2009, however the systematic transfer of information on children's mental health status from the asylum system to the receiving resettlement municipality and health service is not in place (8). Ensuring the communication of health information including mental health needs across the different reception levels is essential.

Research has documented that refugee children and young people who have been separated from family members are particularly at risk of mental health issues (2, 5). As most Ukrainian children have been separated from their fathers and other male family members, it is important that civil servants and practitioners pay special attention to this issue. Those arriving as **unaccompanied minors** have been found to be particularly vulnerable compared with accompanied refugee minors, often with special mental health needs and obstacles to accessing care (3, 5, 8) that require early attention. This is likely due to poor social support, separation stress and experiences of daily hassles with potential long-standing negative effects on their ongoing health and welfare. Their special needs should be addressed in policy and practice.

## **3) Promote early interaction with majority population peers**

Policy initiatives need to promote early interaction with majority population peers. This is especially important for teenage refugees and unaccompanied minors. While reception classes may create a

feeling of safety and togetherness and promote newcomers' resettlement language acquisition (12, 13), initiatives for early interaction with majority peers through peer-mentorships, for example, as well as creative and physical activities where no verbal language is needed are recommended. Peer interactions are also sought by refugee young people themselves and may also foster an enhanced understanding of the social codes and life in their resettlement country, while also building a social network that may help in promoting wellbeing and support further social achievements (14).

## **4) Enhance the competences of professionals**

Research has shown that schools and teachers have varying and sometimes insufficient knowledge and competences to support young refugee students (8). Teachers also often go beyond their teaching role to face and handle needs of their students(13). This is due to the complex educational and psychosocial needs of this very diverse group (8) and the fact that support structures are not always in place (13). Results also suggest that other professionals, such as school health nurses and social workers, often play an important additional psychosocial role for refugee students (8). Schools should be allocated the necessary resources to strengthen teachers' and other staff members' refugee competences and support their availability for newcomer students beyond their normal roles. 'Refugee-competent' schools can make a decisive difference to young refugees in their way into the Nordic societies (8, 15). Similarly, it is important to improve diversity competences among other professionals in the Nordic welfare institutions (e.g. healthcare system and municipalities). Although experience and co-worker support may help, systematic training of professionals is required.

## **5) Be flexible in the provision of education, and aim for the completion of upper secondary school**

Flexibility in education in order to provide opportunities to continue with an education beyond the compulsory school age is warranted. This is especially true for refugee children and young people arriving at an older age as they are in a particularly challenging situation, since they need to learn the resettlement language and often catch up academically with their majority peers in a critical period which can result in a high risk of dropping out of

upper secondary school. Completing upper secondary school increases young refugees' opportunities for embarking on higher education and/or more stable labour market attachment, which enhance stronger social and economic ties to the Nordic society (8). Therefore, flexible educational provision and policies, which facilitate secondary education attainment, should be given a high priority in the Nordic countries.

## **6) Ensure continuous psychosocial and mental health support**

Continuous psychosocial support seems to be important for the successful resettlement of young refugees. Many young refugees, including unaccompanied minors, prefer this kind of support through meaningful social activities that allows for building close ties (16, 17). The fact that schools have a psychosocial supportive environment also seems to play an important role for refugee children (8, 12, 14). Some studies propose the establishment of mental health services with specialist knowledge of refugee health in the educational system in order to support refugee children and young people in tackling their mental health problems. Additionally, minimising the underlying access barriers to the healthcare system and doing so in the stages soon after arrival, where families experience the most barriers that influence their future motivations for seeking (psychiatric) healthcare, is important for supporting young refugees' mental health (8).

## **Conclusion**

From our Nordic research, we have learnt that post-migration experiences seem to be even more important for the life chances of refugee children and young people than their experiences from before and during their migration. We have also learnt that education, employment and health outcomes are closely related and interdependent. Consequently, elevating and supporting the reception of refugee children and young people can be the conduit of better long-term health and socioeconomic outcomes among these children and young people. In contrast, poor reception and experiences as a newcomer may follow refugee children and young people for their whole lives. If they already stumble upon their arrival, this may reduce their abilities to

fulfil their potential for successful life trajectories and for contributing positively to their new society or their country of origin if they later return.

Our recommendations highlight the importance of taking an inclusive, integrated approach in the reception of Ukrainian refugee children and young people and other newcomers in order to give them better life chances to achieve a good socioeconomic position, health and wellbeing. This implies that the Nordic countries need to have strategies and guidelines in place upon the arrival of refugee children and young people that include a focus on mental health issues as well as an introduction to health services in the respective countries. Furthermore, the Nordic countries are recommended to offer ongoing psychosocial and mental health support, which is especially important for unaccompanied refugee minors who seem to be at highest risk due to lack of social support as well as separation and resettlement stress. Inclusion in schools is also crucial. This includes early Nordic resettlement language training and interaction with majority peers, which further promote the acquisition of the Nordic language and peer support. Teachers' caring role for refugee children and young people needs to be supported by school management. The flexible and tailored provision of education that also takes into account refugee children and young people's otherwise vulnerable situation and their psychosocial needs is essential for supporting their educational paths. As secondary level education completion has been found to be key to labour market attachment and integration, this is especially important for refugees arriving as teenagers, who seem to face a double burden through the need to acquire the resettlement language and not lag behind academically in school in order to be ready to continue their schooling with their native-born counterparts.

Our recommendations can be considered a guideline for reception, resettlement and integration policies for Ukrainian refugee children and young people as well as those from any other part of the world coming to the Nordic countries today and in the future with regard to our fundamental common values on welfare and equality for all residents.

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**Project:** Making it Home: An Aesthetic Methodological Contribution to the Study of Migrant Home-Making and Politics of Integration (MaHoMe)

# Utilitarian and exclusive humanism

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**Conditioned welcoming through  
state-sanctioned migrant home-making**

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In the current situation of Ukrainian people fleeing war, we can observe how the European nation states are queuing up to welcome Ukrainian refugees and provide them with protection and shelter. Only two weeks after Russia's military invasion of Ukraine, on 4 March 2022 the Council of Europe activated Article 5 of Directive 2001/55/EC, acknowledging the existence of a mass influx of displaced persons from Ukraine and facilitating their temporary protection. In stark contrast to the problems associated with the Dublin 111 Convention of July 2013, protection can, in the current circumstances, be offered by any member state. However, we also see many of the same nation states struggling with their own legal frameworks which have been developed in recent years to restrict the intake of refugees.

In this short paper, we engage with this contradictory situation by using home and homing practices as a prism through which to pose critical questions about migration management and migrant/refugee<sup>1</sup> integration. We will draw on the preliminary findings from the research project, *Making it home: An aesthetic methodological contribution to the study of migrant home-making and politics of integration*<sup>2</sup>, we address how notions of home and homing are configured in immigration and integration policies in Sweden and Denmark between 2010 and 2019.

Our objective is to contribute a few selected reconstructed policy narratives that can shed light on the conditioned welcoming of refugees and how that plays out as forms of utilitarian and exclusive humanism in the two welfare nation states of Denmark and Sweden.

We hope that this analytical approach will encourage critical dialogue among Nordic decision-makers and civil servants as to what view of humanity and democratic welfare society should be defining the reception of refugees and migrants in a globalised world.

## Why home?

Observing home and home-making in a migratory perspective destabilises the nationally romanticised narrative of home as "associated with stasis, boundaries, identity and fixity (...) as a purified space of belonging" (Ahmed, 1999, p. 339). Similarly, Boccagni argues that "home is the deep-rooted and institutional marker of the boundaries of legitimate membership and belonging. In this sense, migrants and foreigners are by definition antithetical to home" (2017, p. 88) – possibly because of popular notions of homeland/nation-as-home. Using home as an analytical prism through which to reveal socio-political configurations vis-à-vis migrants alerts us to the ways of establishing divisions among "those with whom we feel at home from the rest" (Duyvendak, 2011, p. 106).

The analytical deployment of the notions of security, familiarity and control as key elements of the political regulation of migrant home-making allows us to investigate how their opposites in terms of insecurity, estrangement and abandonment function as political regulatory means of creating unhomey places of discomfort (Darling, 2011, p. 269), such as those seen in migrant accommodation conditioned by way of race, income or citizenship tests.

## Reconstruction of policy narratives

In order to unpack how migrant homing is discursively, emotionally and practically activated in national policymaking in response to the presence of migrants – and in particular refugees – in Denmark and Sweden, we have undertaken a narrative analysis of policy documents such as government manifestos, bills, parliamentary commission reports, expert reports, acts, and guidance notes.

- 1 We are, of course, acutely aware of the fact that significant differences exist between the categories 'immigrants' and 'refugees' in legal as well as socio-political terms. However, in the MaHoMe project we have chosen to blur this distinction for analytical purposes and to include as many facets as possible of policies that address home and home-making vis-à-vis any kind of person crossing the state border.
- 2 The research project has been generously funded by NordForsk under the joint Nordic-UK research programme on Migration and Integration in 2019. The project runs from January 2020 to June 2024.

This entails an identification of narrative elements, that is to say characters (subjects), problem definitions, solutions, visions (Bansel, 2015) – together understood as the normalising justification of the worldview that governs the “manifestation of a particular theory of action” (Freeman, 2017, s. 36; Czarniawska, 2010). Policy narratives do not necessarily present themselves explicitly in the empirical material but must be reconstructed.

Reconstructing policy narratives enables us to question the universality and neutrality of the legislation that conditions migrant home-making (Polletta et al., 2011).

### **Regulating migrant homing prior to the 2015 crisis**

Before we present two reconstructed policy narratives that pivot on the reception of refugees through state-sanctioned home-making in Sweden and Denmark post-2015, we find it important to provide some background knowledge of the more optimistic political narratives of refugee reception from before the 2015 crisis.

In Sweden, economic recovery and active labour market policies were high on the political agenda between 2009 and 2013. In this context, global migration was envisaged as a positive force that “opens the door to both economic and political freedom for more people in the world”<sup>3</sup>. Migrants and their descendants were rendered undisputable contributors to economic growth, even though “[c]ontinued improvements are needed to take advantage of the potential and drive that people with a foreign background possess”<sup>4</sup>. Such improvements were envisioned to provide migrants with the opportunity to maintain connections with their homelands; feeling safe to stay in their lands of origin for longer periods of time without risking their permanent residency/citizenship in Sweden. Allegedly, multiple homes would facilitate integration in Sweden and create more resources for the welfare state in terms of new business connections, capital, cultural contacts and the inflow of skills and knowledge.

3 “Regeringsförklaringen” 18 September 2012, p.11. Translated by the authors.

All quotes from Danish and Swedish policy documents have been translated into English by the authors.

4 “Regeringsförklaringen” 5 October 2010, p. 18.

5 “Et Danmark, der står sammen”, Danish Government, 2011.

This was seen as a *triple-win*, since multiple homing benefits migrants, their receiving countries, and their homelands.

In Denmark, between 2011 and 2013, much in line with Sweden’s active labour market policies, the new Social-Democratic led government reversed the Aliens and Integration Act prohibiting asylum seekers from residing and working outside the reception centres while waiting for their decision on their asylum application. This revision was based on the logic that letting asylum seekers reside outside reception centres would improve their chances of integrating in Denmark if granted asylum, or better prepare them for starting a new life should they return home.<sup>5</sup> The regulation of asylum seekers’ accommodation emerged as a means of maximising human potential, while sustaining the national self-image as a humanistic and benevolent nation state. The maximisation of human potential feeds into the double logic of integration and repatriation and builds on conditioned rights to dwell outside reception centres including a clear demand for the asylum seekers to both integrate and repatriate.

Despite the similar interests in human capital maximisation, in Denmark, the Immigration Service and accommodation operators were assigned maximum agency and control of the asylum seekers’ home-making. In Sweden, however, the state drew back from controlling migrants’ homing and migrants were deemed capable of figuring out how to accommodate themselves in the societies encompassed by circular migration.

### **Swedish and Danish policy narratives from the ‘last’ refugee crisis (post-2015)**

Taking the ‘refugee crisis’ of 2015 as a watershed, it seems relevant to revisit the policy narratives responding to that ‘past’ situation to shed light on the policy responses to the current crisis of Ukrainian refugees arriving in Sweden and Denmark.

### Sweden: From a triple-win to a triple-loss?

The governments led by the Swedish Social Democrat Party (2014-present) essentially continue the policies of their predecessors aiming to speed up the labour market integration of new arrivals who are expected to stay in Sweden for a longer period or permanently. The focus of discussions is on ensuring long-term sustainable policies and remedying "the lack of a holistic perspective in the reception system"<sup>6</sup>. However, in contrast to their predecessors, the Social Democrats have been keen to introduce more restrictive regulations which both discourage refugees to arrange accommodation independently and oblige all municipalities to accept them.

The basic post-2015 political narrative unfolds like this:

*The country is in an "exceptional situation"<sup>7</sup>. Too many newcomers remain in temporary venues provided by the Swedish Migration Board for long periods of time, which delays their 'establishment' (employment and integration into society). Municipalities are expected to show solidarity both with the refugees and with the state. Therefore, no municipality should be exempted from sharing responsibility for migrant reception. Restriction of municipal autonomy is in order. Although the local reception of refugees can be conditioned and negotiated, a no-option cannot be motivated. As recipients of Swedish welfare provisions, refugees are expected to limit their in-state mobility, avoid settling in 'problem-ridden' areas, and make themselves accessible to the authorities<sup>8</sup>. The quicker they come to the assigned municipality and the longer they stay there, the better their chances for a successful 'establishment'.*

Although it is admitted that housing of their own choice is beneficial for their well-being, refugees' own accommodation seems to be problematised as a risk to national order and security.

Adequate refugee homing is envisioned as assigned and "fixed" (Boccagni, 2017, p. 102). Consequently, the refugees' personal choice of home is good if it is in line with demands formulated by the state agencies.

### Denmark: From utilitarian accommodation to a minimum level of safety

The new right-wing government had only just been put in place when the European refugee crisis of 2015 reached Danish soil with refugees walking along the Danish motorways. The government did not hesitate to respond in line with their previous restrictive hard-liner policies vis-à-vis refugees and non-Western immigrants (Padovan-Özdemir & Moldenhawer, 2017; Suárez-Krabbe & Lindberg, 2019). The mass influx of refugees and migrants in the late summer of 2015 was considered a state of emergency, putting even more pressure on the Danish economy, culture, and social cohesion. There was an expressed concern that "illegal immigrants will run straight to gang members, Salafists and citizens, who wish to act as human smugglers for a day or a week (...) Islamists and terrorists can use and abuse the asylum system with the aim of settling in Denmark."<sup>9</sup> Consequently, the approach was to create as hostile a reception environment as possible, and even prevent refugees from arriving in Denmark by, for example, placing Danish government announcements in Lebanese newspapers explaining the restrictive Danish refugee reception policies.

On Danish soil, the policy narrative took shape like this:

*Extraordinarily, the Police and Immigration Services have established temporary accommodation in tent camps, but it is foreseen that the number of arriving refugees and migrants will put much more pressure on the accommodation facilities available.*

6 "Ett ordnat mottagande – gemensamt ansvar för snabb etablering eller återvändande", SOU 2018:22, p. 35.

7 "Ett gemensamt ansvar för mottagande av nyanlända. Arbetsmarknadsutskottets betänkande". 2015/16:AU4.

8 "Ett ordnat mottagande – gemensamt ansvar för snabb etablering eller återvändande". SOU 2018:22, p. 22.

9 "Betænkning over Forslag til lov om ændring af udlændingeloven (Håndtering af flygtninge og migrantsituationen)". Udlændinge-, Integrations- og Boligudvalget. 2015.

*The solution is therefore to permit exemptions from the Planning and Development Act in cases of properties, "which will be used for accommodation (...) or facilities for the purpose of detention"<sup>10</sup> of refugees and illegal migrants. Accordingly, these exemptions allow the Minister of Aliens, Integration and Housing to order local authorities to find, establish and run facilities to accommodate refugees and migrants. Non-housing facilities can be expediently transformed into and re-categorised as housing facilities and need only to meet minimum requirements for safety and sanitation. These measures should "make it less attractive to apply for asylum in Denmark." Accordingly, we can help more refugees in the regions neighbouring war zones "than by spending the aid on accommodating asylum applicants in Denmark."<sup>11</sup>*

Permitting exemptions from the Planning and Development Act serves as a double-edged sword, presenting Danish society as hospitable and humanitarian while at the same time making the material conditions of that accommodation as unaccommodating as possible, only meeting minimum requirements for safety and sanitation. This is done with the clear intention of keeping refugees away from Danish soil based on the logic that the 'accommodation' costs would be better spent helping refugees in neighbouring regions of the refugees' war-ridden home countries.

### **Concluding remarks – and an outlook to the current European refugee crisis**

Investigating Danish and Swedish policy narratives concerning refugee and migrant home-making sheds light on how "[a]ccommodation becomes articulated as both a hospitable and humanitarian provision to those 'in need' and a device for managing, monitoring and 'warehousing' (Fekete, 2005), those under review by domopolitics" (Darling, 2011, p. 267). Accordingly, we see how domopolitics is realised by means of 'housing' the refugee/migrant through regulated dispersal and controlled living spaces.

More specifically, light is shed on how having control over one's home becomes an exclusive privilege that can only be granted if the state considers it beneficial to the economy, which was the case in both Sweden and Denmark prior to 2015. However, post-2015 and in response to the 'last' European refugee crisis, refugees' right to choose and control their own accommodation seems to become a matter of state protection against 'too many' of 'non-Western descent' in the 'wrong places'.

In this way, our analysis points to a welcoming of refugees conditioned on numbers, descent, and a vision of the state home (receiving societies) as a pure space of entitled belonging for those with valuable content envied by others (Walters, 2004, p. 241) – in other words a form of exclusive humanism.

We see this exclusive form of humanism emerging most strikingly in the current Danish state's welcoming of Ukrainian refugees. Only a few weeks after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Danish parliament passed a special law that allows Danish authorities to diverge from the restrictive general Aliens and Integration Act.<sup>12</sup> This exceptional welcoming of Ukrainian refugees is clearly conditioned on their Western descent from neighbouring regions of Denmark. So, the administrative casework is encouraged and expedited to grant Ukrainian refugees as normal a life as possible, as soon as possible. This notion of normalcy includes a two-year residence permit and a contract with an accommodation operator providing Danish lessons, labour market integration, and housing. Unlike earlier dispersal and dilution policies, the establishment of so-called 'Ukrainian villages' is imagined as the gentlest way of accommodating their integration.

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10 "Lov om ændring af udlændingeloven (Håndtering af flygtninge og migrantsituationen)". 2015.

11 "Sammen for fremtiden". Danish Government. 2015, p. 23.

12 "Lov om midlertidig opholdstilladelse til personer, der er fordrevet fra Ukraine". 2022.

Accordingly, the Danish special law for the reception of Ukrainian refugees seems to be in accordance with the recent EU directive on facilitating the subsistence of large numbers of Ukrainians fleeing the war. However, as this EU directive is based on the condition of the Ukrainian refugees' subsequent return, the Swedish government seems to have abandoned the tradition of granting refugees permanent residence. Consequently, the current Swedish state response to the accommodation of Ukrainian refugees rests on the idea that Sweden is not meant to be their home, but a temporary shelter. The dismantling of Swedish political identity as a "miraculous welfare machine" (Schall, 2016) should be accounted for in European and domestic contexts where security concerns on par with economic rationality and the rhetoric of sustainability play increasingly important roles in curtailing humanitarian policy regimes.

As such, this analysis echoes Brun and Fábos' finding that most national policies addressing refugees are rooted in the notion of "country of origin" and guided by imperatives of return and repatriation (2020, p. 165). This tends to translate into "encampment, minimum standards and 'don't die survival'" (2020, p. 166), restricting refugees' agency of home-making in the receiving countries.

### Time for a re-think?

Approaching home as a site of politics – radicalised by international flight in a world system of nation states – raises the question of the unequal distribution of the right and means to claim and/or attach a sense of security, familiarity, and control over a certain space. In this way, home can be used just as much for exclusion as for inclusion (Boccagni, 2017, p. 91).

Our analysis of recent Swedish and Danish policy-making shows that refugees' home-making is far from being a private matter in the liberal sense. Rather, refugees' home-making appears to be an object of state regulation, confinement, and dispersion.

However, reconstructing Swedish and Danish policy narratives of refugee reception provides the possibility to re-think how things could be done otherwise (Polletta et al., 2011).

Consequently, we encourage Nordic decision-makers and civil servants to take the opportunity to re-consider the kind of humanism deployed in refugee reception:

- Can we expect all refugees to be considered as belonging to the same kind of humanity, or do we allow differentiation on the grounds of numbers, descent, and a vision of the receiving society as a pure space of entitled belonging?
- Can we expect the provision of protection for refugees regardless of how – or even if – it benefits the receiving country, or is Nordic humanism inherently rooted in a utilitarian locus?
- Can we expect that the state will always be able to rely on the contributions of civil society, of ordinary citizens and their voluntary organisations, who were much praised for their initiatives of housing refugees and providing them with initial material support in both 2015 and 2022?
- Can we expect that the reception system of refugees in the Nordic countries will be reformed so that large numbers of refugees can be quickly and effectively accommodated while not jeopardising civil society's current humanitarian principles?

This analysis indicates that this might be the time to learn from the present local European refugee crisis and to re-write and subvert the management of the recent past global refugee crisis.

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