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The Unwanted: negotiating the refugeehood in Sweden.
- A qualitative discourse analysis of individual narratives of denied asylum seekers.

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Abstract

By using critical discourse analysis this study aims to understand the asylum process in Sweden through the experiences of the denied asylum seekers as they are expressed in their narratives published online. The study also aims to explore how the applicants influence the asylum process and if the applicants perform any resistance. By adopting the power perspective and presenting the denied applicants’ experiences of the asylum process through the perspective of discipline power, sovereign power and biopower, the study shows that applicants experience positioning which is imposed on them by Swedish Migration Agency. This research supports findings of the previous studies yet it presents the asylum seekers in a contrasting way, namely as acting subjects who resist and negotiate their position during the asylum process. The denied applicants do not just accept the assigned positions, namely the subject who can be denied, be deported and the unwanted subject, rather negotiate them in various ways including attempt to mobilization through the social medias and digital technologies. The study also shows how the family unit is used as a resource in this negotiation both by the applicants and the Migration Agency.

Key words: Critical Discourse Analysis; asylum & refugeehood; power & resistance; subjectification.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Migration has increased during the past decades and the year 2015 brought the phenomenon called by media as “Refugee Crisis”. A rapid influx of asylum seekers into EU has led to broadly covered debates in Swedish and international media. The so called “Refugee Crisis” brought a number of problems into light, such as individual country’s responsibilities to engage in accommodating asylum seekers. It has also put more pressure on country’s asylum procedures alongside with drastic changes for the freedom of movement within the EU, namely border controls.

Isabel Schoultz (2013:220) describes some consequences for many migrants who have experienced the “European deportation machine” as they were denied residence, been criminalized and deported. In this regard the picture of EU’s migration policies as a “deportation machine” contrasts with Swedish Migration Agency’s (2015a) ambition to be the “safeguard to protecting the Human Rights” and provide protection to persons who are in need.

Sweden has been known for its generous and humane policies around asylum practices and as Swedish Migration Agency (2016a) states “People who are in need of protection and come here to find it must know that they are welcome”. But according to the Migration Agency (Statistics, 2015) only 55% of applicants have been granted asylum in Sweden in 2015. One of the largest Swedish newspapers, Expressen, writes that the Migration Agency estimates to deport around 80 000 persons this year (Asplund & Nilsson, 2016). Yet the newspaper discusses the amount of people to be deported in terms of practical problems, as they point out that institutions, like the police, are not coping and new measures should be enforced.

Refugees and asylum seekers are often discussed in Swedish media but very often they are presented as a “problem”. One of the largest Swedish newspapers, Aftonbladet, writes in the article “New rapport: this is how many refugees are coming this year” (Jeppsson & Svensson, 2016), that ID-controls, which were enforced last year, seem to decrease the number of applicants yet the Swedish Migration Agency is not coping despite the increased funds.
We experience the overall discussion in Swedish media about asylum seekers revolves around practical difficulties with implementation of the asylum practices such as assessment procedure, accommodation and repatriation of the denied applicants. Yet these practices seem to be presented as unproblematic as only a few actors highlight personal costs and risks associated with repatriation and long waiting times for the asylum decision.

The Red Cross organisation wrote an official request to the Swedish Parliament in 2011. The organization stated that EU migration policies are targeted to “prevent, control and combat irregular migration” and therefore deny asylum to many applicants, violate their rights for protection and deport people with no regard to the risks and individual consequences associated with it (Position Paper, 2011:1). Therefore Red Cross requested the Swedish Parliament to improve the asylum procedure and fulfil humanitarian obligation to people in need and ensure the access to apply for asylum and to account for risks and costs associated with denial and repatriation (Position Paper, 2011:4). It seems to have no or little effect on the Swedish migration policies as we explained above, the asylum procedure and deportation practices seem to be problematized in relation the practical implementations of them, rather than in regard to the applicants’ rights and safety.

It appears that only a few actors speak of “problematic” asylum cases, question the asylum policies and highlight the moral obligations of countries to accept refugees. One of these actors is a website, flyktingarna.se which makes quite a strong claim to “show another reality” as they publish individual stories of people who have been denied asylum in Sweden. This publisher website seems to present Swedish restrictive migration policy as problematic as it makes highly politicised claims and challenges politicians to account for the extend of deportations and denials, which according to the website, constitute a rule rather than exception.

As migration increased, difficulties with practical implementations of the asylum right have become more obvious as larger numbers of asylum cases have put more pressure on Swedish institutions and regulations. This also increased the number of people deported, created more obstacles for travelling to countries who grant protection and waiting times for asylum decision has been prolonged. We see the asylum process as a practical outcome of the interpretation of the international asylum right by Swedish state and the key institutions where the applicants seem to play a marginal role. This seems to create a tension between the
asylum seekers’ need of protection and the State’s need of coping with the problem that the increased migration seems to create. We consider it alarming that asylum seekers are silenced in the public discourse as there are only few actors who expose individual consequences of deportations and current asylum process as it takes place in Sweden.

We suggest therefore addressing this problem through the understanding of the asylum process from the applicant’s perspective and through the notion of power. As Foucault (1982:778,782) points out, power is experienced in everyday life as it gives people identities and shapes them into social subjects. As we stated above, we see the asylum process as interpretations of the legal right to asylum and therefore present it as a process of construction of the refugee or non-refugee. This is seen as a positioning of persons within the power relations of the asylum process where some become refugees and some don’t. The narratives published at flyktingarna.se constitute the empirical material for this study and by using critical discourse analysis as our method we attempt to understand how the asylum process is experienced and constructed by the denied applicants.

The aim of the study and research questions

By adopting a power perspective, this study aims to understand the asylum process through the experiences of the denied asylum seekers as they are expressed in their narratives. We use critical discourse analysis to analyse the written narratives published online to be able to capture the individual perspectives and experiences of the power techniques applied to the seekers and how do they relate to them. The method allows also identifying the role of the applicants in the asylum process and how they influence it. To achieve the aim of this study the following questions will be answered:

- How the denied asylum seekers experienced their asylum procedure in relation to the denial and deportation decisions?
- What power techniques have the denied asylum seekers experienced during the asylum process and deportation?
- How the individuals participate in the asylum procedure and if they perform any form of resistance?
Background to this study

As a background to this study we present digital media as our research field, the publisher website flyktingarna.se as a domain for our empirical material and the legal definition of the terms refugee and asylum seeker.

In this section we want to outline some specialities with conducting social research within the field of digital media as it constitutes the platform of this study. Further we present the website flyktingarna.se which publishes the individual narratives of the denied asylum seekers. This website is the domain of the empirical material for this study therefore we would like to give a reader the understanding of its character and aims underlying the website’s activity. We shall also give the reader a brief background for understanding refugeehood in Sweden as it is of importance to understand the differences between the legal definition of a refugee and an asylum seeker. As we try to understand the experiences of the asylum process in Sweden by denied asylum seekers we want to clarify who these persons are.

Social research within the field of digital media

The development of digital and internet technologies has altered communication patterns in a number of ways. Devices such as smartphones and tablets symbolize, according to Wodak and Krzyżanowski (2008:54-56), modern tendencies as transnationality, interactivity and decentralization as they represent and mediate globalized information society. The researchers point out that online media made a drastic change in communication and discursive practices as it altered directions of communication, the speed of transmission of the information as well as means of expression, such as audio and video communication or real-time chats.

Fairclough (1992:99) presents printed media as having a democratizational effect on the discourse as consumer oriented marketing led to the creation of new shapes and methods for speech. We want to point out that online media indeed contributes to the democratization of discourses as Whitlock (2015:248) writes, digital technologies allow one’s voice to be heard globally in a matter of seconds. This represents a great interest for social research as digital media is a great part of one’s everyday life and therefore has a tremendous potential to alter social consciousness and practices.
The website which shows “another reality” - Flyktingarna.se

We came across the website flyktingarna.se during a minor project at the university in which we examined the public discourse of the “Refugee Crises” in Sweden. Flyktingarna.se seems to be the largest legitimate actor who publishes the narratives of the denied asylum seekers in digital media, which is a domain of our empirical data.

Flyktingarna.se is a Swedish website founded in 2013 which has about 8000 Facebook followers. The editorial staff, which consists of 8 employees, argue that the website is politically, religiously and organizationally independent. They also claim the website is a complement to the already existing strong engagement of the oppositional movement for a radical change in Swedish migration politics of which among others Amnesty, Red Cross and Rädda Barnen are a part. Apart from publishing the narratives, the website also provides links to several actions held between 2013-2014, for example email campaigns to prevent somebody´s deportation or similar.

According to Flyktingarna.se their existence is an outcome of the current migration policy discourse and they use the term “single cases” to highlight the extend of the asylum denial praxis: “By talking about, and describing the impact of the policy as "single cases" draw responsible politicians and representatives of the executive authorities the picture that shows only a few [denial] experiences, which we actually may have access to, and which constitute an exception. Yet the exception became the rule” (flyktingarna.se, 2016, our translation).

By publishing the story behind the “single cases” flyktingarna.se claims they present a different reality which they consider to be a result of Swedish migration policy. The website publishes asylum seekers’ individual narratives who has “[g]ot into trouble because of the Swedish migration policies” (flyktingarna.se, 2016, our translation). The website publishes only negative individual experiences, such as denial of asylum, deportation or detention and persecution of applicants.

Who are the refugees

The right to asylum was defined in the context of the World War II and currently applies to all the people regardless time and geographic location (Seidlitz, 2014:16-17). In short, it is one of the human rights that gives any person the opportunity to seek asylum as well as it puts obligation on countries to grant this right (Ibid, 2014:15).
According to the Swedish Migration Agency (2015b), an asylum seeker is a person who is situated in Sweden at the time of applying for asylum, whereas a refugee is one who has been granted asylum. Sweden shall grant a residence permit to any person who is classified as a refugee according to the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, Swedish and EU regulations. In accordance with the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees a person is considered as refugee if she or he has well-founded reasons to fear persecution due to: race, nationality, religious or political beliefs, gender, sexual orientation or affiliation to a particular social group. In addition EU regulations offer a ‘Subsidiary Protection’ to one who is at risk of: being sentenced to death, subjected to corporal punishment, torture or other inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment or is a civilian at serious risk of injury due to armed conflict. And finally, Swedish legislation offers ‘Other Protection’ to people who do not fulfil the criteria mentioned above yet cannot return to their native country due to armed conflict or serious opposition in the native country, feels a well-founded fear of being subjected to serious violation or cannot return to their native country due to an environmental disaster (ibid, 2015b).

These definitions seem to define a refugee against grounds for the asylum claim where only a certain and very abstract set of conditions are considered to be inhumane or life threatening and therefore are interpretative and not unproblematic. This also implies that a person should travel across several national borders in order to apply for asylum in Sweden, yet as Seidlitz (2014:64-65) notes, most nationalities need to have a valid visa to enter Sweden. It is also important to note that asylum can be granted to a person who has “well-founded fear”, which implies that an applicant should prove her situation and its grounds. Seidlitz (2014:66) highlights that asylum right is a person's right to have her case assessed, rather the right to asylum itself.

In the next chapter we shall further discuss how we can understand the refugeehood and the asylum practices as we outline the previous research in the field of asylum.
Chapter 2: Outlining the research field

To start off our study we began to look for research involving the asylum process in Sweden and research on sociological definitions of refugees and asylum seekers as well as resistance or activism. Our study cannot account for generalized practices or trends as it takes a point of departure in the denied asylum seekers’ individual experiences. Therefore we present first research from institutional and legal perspectives and discuss relations between state representatives and the asylum seekers, as it highlights the complexity of procedural and deportation issues. We will also use academic materials concerning the production of asylum seekers as a subject in European migration policy as it gives us a wider understanding of some sociological implication of the definition “refugee” and how the subjectivity of the asylum seekers are constructed. And finally we present existing research that accounts for asylum seekers’ resistance and digital activism to get a glimpse into the strategies adopted and their effects.

Understanding the asylum process in Sweden through institutional and legal perspectives

As our study aims to understand the asylum process through the denied asylum seekers perspective, we suggest looking closer at the research within legal and institutional asylum practices. This is done to outline some key institutions and legal concepts as well as to widen our understanding of them because Swedish Migration Agency often occurs in the narratives that constitute the study’s empirical material.

In Sweden the assessment of asylum claims and enforcement of the asylum right is executed by the Swedish Migration Agency. To ensure a lawful and fair process one can appeal or file a complaint to the Migration Court and the Court of Appeal. Swedish Police and Swedish Security Service (SÄPO) might be involved during the asylum process to determine if a person is registered in another EU member country, is a member of a terrorist organisation or to assist in repatriation of an asylum seeker who was denied the asylum status (Seidlitz, 2014:50-53).

Isabel Schoultz (2013) has conducted a research which explores accounts used by state representatives to respond to complaints filed against their activities. Schoultz (2013:220)
highlights that the overall research in the field focuses on the general trends of asylum practices and therefore presents her research which accounts for institutional perspective, as contrasting to the studies in the field. In her study Schoultz (2013) analyses official documents such as assessments of complaints, which are situated within a broader organizational context and within a public discourse about the treatment of asylum seekers and applicants for other residence permits.

Schoultz (2013) interpretations and analysis of these complaints are based on denials, acknowledgement and bureaucratic legitimacy. The researcher argues that legitimacy should not be seen as a fixed concept rather as negotiation because the state representatives are eager to present themselves as part of a decent and self-correcting organization and to thus regain their legitimacy. Schoultz (2013:232) suggests, state representatives preserve the institutional self-image by apologizing and by referring to the incidents in question as mistakes or isolated incidents. When the accusations are understood as being more serious, denials are used as they are trying to legitimize the state’s existence and function, well protected behind the self-image of Sweden as a well-developed democratic welfare state. The researcher points out despite of this self-presentation, Sweden has practiced regulations in line with other EU states in criminalizing the asylum seekers and preventing the legal access to claim the asylum right (Schoultz, 2013:220).

Eva Nilsson (2014) conducted a critical discourse analysis of the international refugee law with focus on women who suffered from domestic violence and applied for asylum. She points out in her study that Sweden, in contrast to many other EU countries, does account for gender as a ground for persecution and therefore asylum claims (ibid, 2014:123). Yet Nilsson (2014:124) argues, there is a gap between the legal and practical applications of the definition of a “refugee” as well as asylum law. The researcher highlights that although gender based persecution is recognized by the Swedish law, it does not guarantee the asylum due to presentation of domestic violence as a “general practice”. Nilsson (2014:127) explains that domestic or gender based violence takes place in Sweden as well as worldwide and therefore opens a possibility for denial of refugee status. In this regard Nilsson (2014:127-28) concludes that the presentation of persecution as a “general practice” not only jeopardises applicant's safety and well-being but also contributes to reproduction of power structures such as patriarchy.
The researcher suggests that the asylum process, as implemented in each individual country, is an interpretation of the international refugee law that is defined and outlined in the guidelines of UNHCR. Therefore she suggests paying attention on the construction of the refugee subject (Nilsson, 2014:126-28). She concludes in her article that it is important to explore how categories, such as refugee, are constructed and assigned meaning with an account for time and geographic place (ibid, 2014:129). Although our study does not allow the account for historical development of the refugeehood, we do consider it fruitful to look closer at sociological implication of the subject - the refugee.

Agency and the Subject of the refugees

Institutional and legal concepts play an important role for understanding the field of asylum because they implement legal concepts and regulations of the asylum right. In this section we aim to follow Nilsson’s (2014:126-128) suggestion and outline previous research that deals with the agency and subject of asylum seekers and refugees. We believe it to be of importance when we aim to understand the experiences of the asylum procedure through the perspective of the denied applicants from a power perspective.

The assessment procedure of an asylum claim aims to establish if the person is at risk of suffering severe violation of the human rights if returned to the country of origin and therefore if her claims are legitimate. An applicant has the right to have her case revised, not the right to asylum itself (Seidlitz, 2014:63–66). An applicant appears in this regard as a right-bearing subject yet it implies that she might not be what Kmak (2015) calls a “genuine” asylum seeker, rather its opposite - “bogus”. The “genuine asylum seeker” is understood as a passive and helpless victim who is in need of protection whether its adversary – “bogus asylum seeker” is one who “[lied], avoided authorities and remained in the country after a negative decision was issued in their case” (Kmak, 2015:404).

Kmak (2015:396) argues in her article that the European migration policy ascribes different moral value to the migrant's behaviour, depending on their origin. Kmak (ibid) claims that EU-citizens are encouraged to use their right to freedom of movement to improve their position in a globalised society, but asylum seekers on the other hand are discouraged to mobility and those who do so are condemned as immoral and perceived as bogus asylum seekers.
The definition of a refugee and asylum seeker seems to contradict to the image of a helpless victim, as Behrman (2014:251) explains that the juridical definition ascribes a specific agency necessary to be a legitimate asylum seeker: as a seeker supposed to be a free individual who is capable to act freely and independently. First, an asylum seeker is seen as an individual victim of persecution not just as a member of a group that is under a threat. Second, she can suffer persecution due to her political or religious beliefs, yet as Behrman (2014:253) highlights it is assumed that an asylum seeker has a choice to adopt or join a certain religion or political group. In this sense this ascribed agency should not be seen as contradictory to Kmak’s “genuine” asylum seeker, as she emphasises that the asylum procedure is based on the assumption that a seeker is “[a] rational and reasonable person who understands her situation and is aware of the consequences of her behaviour” (Kmak, 2015:404). With this regard the concept of a “genuine” asylum seeker is understood as a way for a state to limit the number of migrants to “[only] small amounts of the most vulnerable and traumatized refugees” (ibid., 2015:405).

According to Kmak (2015:403) the management of migrants seeking protection in EU occurs through the process of disjunction of refugee subjectivity into bogus asylum seeker and genuine refugee. This production of refugee subjects is according to Kmak (ibid.) guided by the conflict between the need to respect human rights obligations which produces a genuine refugee on one hand, and the need of protection of security and state sovereignty that produces its necessary counterpart, the bogus asylum seeker.

The term ‘bogus asylum seeker’ or ‘queue jumper’ has become firmly embedded in European migration discourse, Kmak (2015:403-404) points out that the discourse has introduced a form of social contract between European states and asylum seekers in which “[t]he promise of protection, shelter and quick procedure depended on their proper behaviour”. Kmak suggests that this implies authorities are dealing with a rational person who understands his or her situation and is aware of consequences of his or her behaviour. Those without evidence, who lie and avoid law and authority are being perceived as bogus asylum seekers due to their moral flaws, as they broke the contract and therefore do not deserve international protection. The conceptualization of the asylum seekers’ agency and subject has a passive implication as the research doesn’t account for possibilities of resistance and negotiation. We consider this to be a consequence of that no studies were conducted from the asylum seekers individual
perspective, therefore we suggest to look deeper into research on asylum seekers’ resistance and the strategies used.

Asylum seekers’ resistance and digital activism
As we aim to examine, if the individuals perform some form of resistance during the asylum process as described in their narratives, we shall now outline the existing research field of asylum seekers resistance. Academic materials regarding activism and resistance of asylum seekers or refugees are quite limited but there are some. For example, Roi Wagner (2012) looks closely at three different case studies where subalterns (among them asylum seekers) use silence as micro political resistance. Wagner (ibid.) twists and turns the different silence strategies, their conditions and possibilities and how they can be seen as a form of resistance. Although we find this research unique and interesting it is not valuable for this study as the denied asylum seekers are speaking and acting individuals who don’t use silence as resistance strategies.

As far as we can find there is only one study which presents asylum seekers as activists that is particularly interesting in relation to our aim, as it describes specialties of the asylum seekers’ activism. We also want to include some central concepts in the research field of digital activism as our empirical material is based on stories published in digital media.

In her article Gillian Whitlock (2015) approaches asylum seekers as activists due to their widespread testimonial narratives of the so called “tow back voyage” from Australia to Indonesian coastline. The testimonials which presented a detailed visual and verbal account of the Australian government’s “Operation Sovereign Borders”, a militarized program to stop asylum seekers from gaining access to the Australian migration zone, were published and presented in Australian media.

Whitlock (2015:248-250) suggests the global access to and affordability of smartphones and Web 2.0 technologies create opportunities for microactivism and spontaneous capture of testimonial events. She also claims, Web 2.0 technologies challenge and transform the borders of public space, between public and private, citizen and non-citizen, and foreign and non-foreign as it creates new spaces of hospitality in cyberspace. The transformation of the orange boat to a platform of transformative testimonial of asylum seekers’ microactivism also
according to Whitlock (2015:259) has a mobilizing effect to a global networked public. Finally Whitlock (2015:260-261) argues that the asylum seekers’ microactivism seems to imply the embodied presence of the asylum seekers in the Australian migration discourse.

In line with Whitlock’s argumentation, Kay Schaffer and Sidonie Smith (2014:224) coined the term “e-witnessing” for these forms of activism in digital media, meaning if one sees and capture a picture of abuse on digital media this is seen as a form of secondary witnessing. Further the researchers (ibid., 2014:226-227) point out that social platforms in digital media can extend possibilities for witnessing events, registering resistance and mobilizing actions - Facebook can schedule protests, Twitter coordinate them and YouTube tell the world about them.

In his research of the so called “Facebook Revolution” or the protests of “Arab Spring”, Brian Brivati (2014:242) points out that the Facebook Revolution could only happen due to the account of cyberspace for mass eyewitness. Brivati (2014:248) suggests citizen’s activism and fast mobilizing of social protests are possible in a new manner due to the accessibility of the internet and Web 2.0 technologies. Brivati (2014:251) concludes that new communication technologies have changed the way events happen: “[t]he evidence of people on the ground, close to events, can now embed a more complex view of how change takes place.”

**Summary**

As we stated above, most of studies concerning refugeehood and asylum practices focus on general trends. The studies from the institutional and legal perspectives provided us with understanding of the procedure and the role of institutional officials in categorizing people into refugees and non-refugees. The construction of the refugee subject is particularly interesting for this study as it problematizes the underlying motives behind the construction of “bogus” applicants and even practical implications which are imbedded in the construction of the refugee subject. The research suggests that refugees are criminalized, presented as “fraud” or immoral citizens. This is seen as a strategy to legitimately deport large numbers of people and therefore regulate migration to EU as well as preserve country’s image of humane actor who provides protection (Nilsson, 2014; Kmak, 2015; Schoultz, 2013).

Yet Kmak’s (2015) and Nilsson’s (2014) research do not account for the individual perspective and presents the asylum seekers as somewhat passive, meaning they are categorized as certain subject and it is unclear what part do the applicants play in this process.
The research on digital activism provides us with some glimpse into the active agency of the asylum seekers as they seem to resist and question such asylum practices as deportation and make themselves visible in the public discourse. The role of digital media is of importance for this study as well because it builds on the narratives published online. Although this study cannot speak of general practices as it accounts only for the individual experiences, the research outlined above is used here to develop the understanding of the studied field as well as to set the findings of this study into the broader context.
Chapter 3: Theory

We chose to approach the understanding of the denied asylum seekers’ experiences through Foucault’s concepts of constitution of a subject through the relations of power and resistance. As we discussed in the previous chapter the asylum seeker subject seems to be important for understanding the asylum praxis. Power is not just a theoretical concept but also something we experience and live through every day and as Foucault (1982:777) emphasises, humans are made into different subjects which is seen as an effect of power relations. Foucault distinguishes between three types of power, namely sovereign power, disciplinary power and biopower as they constitute subjects in different ways and through different mechanisms.

To answer our research questions we shall outline these types of power in relation to the mechanisms which constitute the subject. Later, we shall discuss resistance to power; more specifically the notion that power defines resistance. This constitutes our theoretic point of departure in the further analysis of our material which also complements our method, discourse analysis because as defined by Fairclough (1992:61) this method provides tools for understanding in great detail the constitution of a social subject as an effect of power relations.

Three types of power: Sovereign power, Disciplinary power and Biopower

We are now going to describe three different types of power and how they constitute the subject. It is important to point out that power exists only when put to action and therefore manifests itself in a specific context, for example institutions such as the Migration Agency (Foucault, 1982:788,793). Different types of power can exist side by side within the same institution as for example the Migration Agency focuses and directs each individual applicant yet at the same time it regulates and monitors general migration trends.

Sovereign power

Foucault explains sovereign power as exercised in feudal societies, meaning the power over a territory and not over an individual body or what it does (Foucault, 2003:36). This kind of power is oppressive, legislative and prohibitive (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2014:110) and is exercised in relation to the physical sovereign, whether the State or the Monarch who claims its legitimate right to rule (Foucault, 2003:37,44).
Sovereign power is inscribed in laws and the juridical system in the modern society where the laws are used to govern and to legitimize the power of the sovereign. In this sense juridical laws or codes are both the limit of sovereign and the tool it is using (Foucault, 2003:37; Lilja & Vinthagen, 2014:110).

Relations of sovereignty are a “subject-to-subject cycle” (Foucault, 2003:43). Sovereign relation relies upon the assumption that a person obtained qualities and capacities by nature and therefore “can and must become a subject, this time in the sense of an element that is subjectified in a power relationship (Foucault, 2003:43)”. In relation to the subject, sovereign power can be seen as a “right to live and the right to take life” (Foucault, 2003:240). In other words, disobedience to the sovereign results in an exercise of violence, causing severe pain or death and the threat of violence and therefore “[transforms] one into someone that does what the rulers say out of fear of being caught and punished. It creates subordinate subjects (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2014:112)”. Although the sovereign power is seen as totalitarian Foucault (1982:790) stresses, power only exists in relation to freedom, as it can only be exercised upon a free person, who is capable of making free choices, meaning that one is capable to decide whether she will obey or not.

On the other hand, a person has or can claim her rights only on the basis of the existence of the sovereign, because of the sovereignty of the State (Foucault, 2003:45). State’s sovereignty ensures geo-political borders where a field of diverse powers, forces and opportunities opens up. In this sense Foucault (2003:44) explains sovereign power as fundamentally unifying and therefore ensures, facilitates and regulates the existence of other powers, for example discipline and biopower. Yet the relations between these three powers are extremely entangled and mutually dependent as Foucault (2003:36) points out: disciplinary power limits and contradicts sovereign power yet they both exist parallel.

**Disciplinary power**

Disciplinary power is incompatible to the sovereign as it focuses on individual bodies and by monitoring and directing bodily actions increases the mechanisms for and efficiency of subjugation as well economic production (Foucault, 2003:35-36). Discipline can be seen as a direct opposite to sovereign power, as Foucault (2003:34, 36) describes it, disciplinary power does not aim to dominate, rather to train and guide with the maximum effect using minimum
effort. It constitutes heterogeneous mechanisms that are masked behind the sovereign right and are exercised from below in a very obscure way (Foucault, 2003:37).

Human sciences are integral part to disciplinary power as they focus on the body, soul and mind of a human, produce the knowledge of humans and constitute the norm (Foucault, 2003:46). This scientific observation of individuals combined with “pedagogical” techniques, such as the-carrot-and-the-stick method, embedded in disciplinary institutions, constitute the normative power of the discipline (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2014:114).

The power constantly produces knowledge and the deviant subject is individualized greater than the normal one. Foucault (1987:194) explains it as an effect of the observation of the individual body which aims specifically on the one who deviates and studies the subject in greater detail. For example, an immigrant, a criminal, a child are more individualized compared to their “normal” opposites - a citizen, a lawful and an adult. Observation is integral to effective disciplining as power does not force, push or make one, rather one acts “correctly” due to powers constant presence, in the form of surveillance, even delayed in time for example an upcoming interview with the Migration Agency executive or possible punishment (Foucault, 1987:207).

In this sense a constructed subject can be seen as both observed and the observer as she constitutes a self-governing subject with the norm to relate to (Lilja & Vinthagen 2014:2014). A subject who does not conform with, or deviates from the norm is seen as inferior one and therefore can and must be “fixed” (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2014:109), whether through a therapy, prison, training or any of the diverse mechanisms of discipline. This subtlety of discipline power is very productive and efficient which also relates to the subject itself, as it creates humans into effective and autonomous tools who are capable in watching themselves, adjusting their behaviour, training themselves according to goals set by others then the person herself (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2014:114). Therefore power relation should not be seen as a conflict between two opponents rather as governance, meaning the “[way] in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed: the governance of children, souls (Foucault, 1982:790)”. 
**Biopower**

Biopower or biopolitics, in contrast to sovereignty and discipline is not preoccupied with rights or individual bodies, rather with humans as species (Foucault, 2003:242). Biopower infiltrates discipline and exists side by side to the sovereign as it aims to regulate people on a different level, namely as population as a whole.

This power aims to insure the maximum human capacity, longevity and efficiency as it also aims to foresee, to predict a variety of possible threats which incapacitate people and therefore creates security measures to protect people from random accidents (Foucault, 2003:246-249). Foucault (2003:242) explains it as a power “to make life and to let die”. Biopower can also be seen as nurturing and loving as an example, a welfare state which cares of its citizens, yet as Lilja and Vinthagen (2014:119) points out, power is not exercised by the sovereign rather a multiple techniques both within a state apparatus and actors of the civil society.

Biopower adopts similar techniques to the discipline, namely production of scientific knowledge, normalization and surveillance yet they are used to study and predict general patterns and tendencies within the society, but as Foucault (1982:783) points out it also observes the individual in particular through her entire life. As Lilja and Vinthagen (2014:118) explain, biopower constitutes a subject gradually as a self-governing one as it can intervene only after some deviation from the norm or an accident has taken place.

**Resistance**

Our understanding of resistance is based on the well-known and quoted dictum of Foucault (1978:95-96) “[w]here there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power.” Power and resistance, according to this understanding are seen as entangled, rather than opposed. Resistance occurs in many forms from outright rebellion to everyday forms of deviance.

In her critics to Subaltern Studies, Chandra (2015) claims the Subaltern resistance studies were a product of its time and calls for a re-defined theory of subaltern resistance, namely a theory of resistance as negotiation. Further Chandra (2015:565) writes, to resist is to apprehend the conditions of one’s subordination, to withstand those conditions in everyday
life and act with sufficient intention and purpose to negotiate power relations in order to rework them towards a more favourable direction. In this study we don’t apply the term subaltern on asylum seekers as we believe it creates a dominating power relation between us as researchers and the asylum seekers as participants. But we do think the theory of resistance as negotiation is useful for our study as it highlights and reveals subject positioning and the negotiation over this positioning in power relations.

According to Lilja and Vinthagen (2014:108) resistance is a reaction to power and; “Different power techniques need to serve as the corresponding reference point for possible resistance techniques, where the peculiarities of power decide how resistance can be conducted”. The actual relation between power and resistance is still unclear, but as Lilja and Vinthagen (2014:112) further argue, this is probably due to different power techniques creating different power relations which in turn create an amount of resistance practices. In this study we will therefore follow this account and use a theoretical framework of resistance as a response to certain power techniques mentioned above, namely sovereign power, disciplinary power and biopower.

**Resistance to sovereign power**

Sovereign power and its techniques are about violence, prohibition and punishment and demand absolute obedience, using specific mechanisms of this power. The resistance develops in accordance with these mechanisms and, according to Lilja and Vinthagen (2014:113), has to be about undermining and challenging the very key mechanisms of sovereign power such as; commands, prohibitions, punishment, monopoly of violence, fear, status symbols, claims of legitimacy or legality of sovereignty.

**Resistance to disciplinary power**

As for the resistance to sovereign power and its techniques, the resistance to disciplinary power is all about challenging the key mechanisms of disciplinary power such as training, monitoring and examining individuals. Here the resistance to discipline, according to Lilja and Vinthagen (2014:114) is about either to refuse the participation of the construction of the new subjectivity, or rework such social construction to something else, not useful for disciplinary power’s interests. Lilja and Vinthagen (ibid.) further explain that this is done by destabilising the institutional control of behaviour. Such practices can take form as foot-
dragging, escaping, sarcasm, passivity, irony, disloyalty, misunderstandings, slander and the like.

Another central form of resistance toward discipline is through the rearticulation of the dominant discourse with a different meaning, as according to Lilja and Vinthagen (2014:115) Foucault defined as ‘reversed discourse’. Reversed discourse, according to Lilja and Vinthagen (ibid.) describes “[h]ow subalterns involve the categories and vocabularies of the dominating force or superior norm, precisely in order to contest it . . . the idea is to use the possibility of a repetition that repeats against its origin”. Lilja and Vinthagen (ibid.) further write that ‘reversed discourse’ exemplifies resistance toward discipline by negotiating the construction of the new subjectivity. Lilja and Vinthagen (2014:111-112) use the term ‘self-reflexivity’ as they argue, agency is made possible due to a particular kind of relation to oneself which allows either to resist or to discipline and subjugate oneself in the line with the dominant discourse.

A third way in which disciplinary power and its techniques can be contested, according to Lilja and Vinthagen (2014:115-116) is through the concept of mimicry strategy of the dominant behaviour, values, discourse or other normative rules. The mimicry strategy is connected through the rewriting of one’s self which gives a story about who you are which exemplifies resistance to the kind of subjectivity you are given by power relations (ibid).

**Resistance to biopower**

The resistance to biopower is about undermining and challenging the management of large populations, of life and society and the managing of huge information databases, surveillance techniques and statistics, which according to Lilja and Vinthagen (2014:119) are the main mechanisms of biopower.

Lilja and Vinthagen (2014:120) also explain how biopower produces a high stage of power which in turn creates a corresponding biopolitical production of resistance culture among populations. The authors explain that resistance undermining the techniques of biopower can be all kinds of biopolitical practices in which people question certain aspects of control over their lives and/or also use alternative and self-governed practices such as, home-schooling or alternative medicine.
As pointed out by Lilja and Vinthagen (2014:120-121), if individuals or small groups question the techniques of biopower or use self-governed practices, it is not threatening the production of biopower. But if the ‘self-modification’ resistance technologies spread and become part of a larger mobilisation, as in the case of the asylum-seekers microactivism in Australia, mentioned above, it can threaten the production of biopower.

**How the theories are applied in this study**

Theories on power and resistance can be applied on different levels, meaning they can be seen as abstract theoretic notions as we have outlined them or as they are manifested in the everyday life or in a particular setting.

In this regard we adopt these theoretic concepts as schemata for interpretation of our empirical finding as it helps us to set various power effects and incidents of resistance into a more general context. This power concept can also be seen as methodological notion, meaning, power relations are discursive as they are tightly connected to the language. This discursive aspect of power will be developed further in the method chapter.
Chapter 4: Method

Choice of method and ontological standpoint

Our ontological standpoint is based on the assumption that the social world is socially constructed but once constructed it is socially real for the interpreter of the world which, as Norman Fairclough (2003:8) argues, affects and limits the textual and discursive construction of the social world. Language in this regard is seen not as a mere tool to express oneself, rather as a mean to construct the social reality through the process of assigning meanings to various objects, phenomena etc. (Fairclough, 1992:62-64). Yet as Fairclough (1992:62) highlights, the language is not solely a collective practice but also an individual one, meaning the language is appropriated both collectively and by each person in her own unique way.

Based on our ontological standpoint we look at the individual narratives as socially constructed on the basis of the denied asylum seekers’ social reality. So when we analyse the narratives we do believe we can say something about the social reality as experienced by the denied applicants but also how they construct it. As Fairclough (2003:26-28) points out this doesn’t mean the reality can be limited to one person’s knowledge of reality because it is probably insufficient. Therefore we interpret the narratives as reflections of certain social practices yet, as they are based on the authors’ experiences, these narratives also reflect the authors’ understanding and attitudes to these practices. The narratives, in this regard, can be seen as authors’ own discourse what they construct themselves yet it is interconnected with other discourses and power relation they are a part of.

Our choice of method is critical discourse analysis as it enables us to empirically examine the asylum process through the experiences of the denied applicants and to account for the power relations within the asylum process. Critical discourse analysis (further referred to as CDA) allows understanding of social practices and experiences in relation to discourses, meaning institutionalized ways to talk, think and act which thereby are seen as exerts of power (Wodak & Meyer, 2009:35). Discourse can be seen as a regulatory system which legitimizes certain knowledges but not others and also decides who gets to speak or not. We see discourses as different perspectives on the world and as Fairclough (2003:124) notes, discourses are even associated with the different relations people have to the world, which in turn depends on their positions in it. In our case the discourses within the field of the asylum right depend much on the position one occupies - a position as a migration politician, as a
Swedish Migration Agency executive or as an asylum seeker. As Fairclough (ibid) argues, discourses may complement one another, compete with one another and one can dominate others and so forth.

Fairclough (2003:8) also pinpoints the importance of connecting the research’s theoretical questions about discourse to the researcher’s choice of CDA as there are lots of versions of it. Fairclough developed the CDA which is based on Foucault’s method for studying discourses yet Fairclough (1992:45) accounts for the linguistic practices in a greater extend as he argues that persons are not just shaped by the discourses but also change them through creative appropriation of the knowledge and language. In this regard texts are seen as manifestation of discursive and social practices yet text is not a mere reflection of them, rather relates to these practices dialectically (Fairclough, 1992:72).

Our approach to CDA, based on Fairclough (2003, 1992) enables us to account for the relations between the social and discursive practices and how they are expressed and challenged in the text. As we see discourses as codified language used in a given field, such as in this case, the field of asylum, we are able to look closely at how the denied asylum seekers express the practices and definitions imposed on them during the assessment procedure. This method allows us also to account for how the denied applicants relate to the imposed definitions and practices and whether they accept or challenge them in their written narratives.

Our prior understanding of the field of asylum

In this section we want to provide the reader with our prior understanding of the field of asylum. We are doing so due to the aspects mentioned in previous section, namely that discourses can be seen as different perspectives of the world and as both Fairclough (2003:124) and Foucault notes, the interpretations we make of the social world and its phenomenon depends on the position one occupies in it. We therefore believe that our life experiences and our point of departure as sociologists can affect how we view the field of asylum and our empirical data.

Both of us have been working close with asylum seekers, refugees and actors in civil society alongside our studies. Our engagement was diverse and involved, among other things, daily
activities, language studies or just keeping dialogues. Our greatest experience of working in a multilingual environment is that the dialogue is something that occurs between the speaker and the listener where both of them are responsible that the interpretation is understood as correct. Sometimes one has to use different tools or tell the message in ten different ways so it can be interpreted and received equitably. This gave us some insight to how the people from various linguistic backgrounds assign meaning to English and Swedish languages, as it might vary slightly in contrast to native speakers.

Working and making friends with asylum seekers and refugees we do believe has affected this study positively as we started from a basis with knowledge and understanding of the complexity of the asylum process. We do believe that this prior knowledge has given us the ability to attain such deep analysis we have succeeded in this study.

**Sampling and the character of the empirical material**

Here we shall present a thorough description of sampling and collection of our empirical material. With regard to a qualitative character of our research we attempt to give a deep understanding to the reader of the character of the data and even our critical reflections which we consider important to understand in further analysis.

**Sample criteria**

At flyktingarna.se one can find three different columns where different narratives are published, the first is based on individual narratives, the second on testimony narratives and the third one is on-going and recent cases often written as testimonies. Underneath the narratives there is always added “comments from flyktingarna.se” where the website itself comments each individual case. Flyktingarna.se also adds quotes from interviews with politicians from various parties on issues related to migration policy. We treat the narratives separate from the website and therefore do not include their commentaries to our empirical material. We believe these comments reconstruct the narratives by reducing the context to a few aspects which are discussed in relation to legal document or political statements.

With the regard to the aim of our study we have chosen to limit our sample to narratives written by asylum seekers themselves. We make this sample limitations because when the narrative is constructed by its author and therefore presents a certain position and knowledge,
therefore own experience narratives are the closest we can get to understanding power relations between Migration Agency and asylum applicants. We find testimonies problematic due to the influence of a third person as well as ethical reasons, for example, some narratives were documented while an asylum seeker was in a very vulnerable situation such as hunger strike and was not able to write herself.

The number of individual narratives were 45 in total under the column “narratives”, where six of them were written by someone else than the asylum seeker behind the case. Five of the narratives were also written by children and youths which we decided to exclude as we focus on adults due to ethical reasons. The decision to focus on adults only is due to our inability to obtain their and their parents consents because a lot of authors do not want to be contacted or publish the narratives under fake names. Three of the narratives were extremely short and poor in content which we didn’t find valid to use. These sample criteria sorted away 14 narratives and constituted our final sample as 31 narratives in total. The narratives are written by both women and men who came from various countries outside of EU and had different legal status in Sweden at the time of publishing. Some narratives are written collectively regarding whether a family or several people.

Structure of the narratives
The narratives are in most of the cases structured in a way in which the author begins to narrate an event or reasons behind the decision to flee the native country. In most of the cases the author also defines what kind of asylum case he or she is categorized as, for instance “LGBTQ-case” or case of “particularly distressing circumstances”. It’s also common in the narratives to read about legal concepts and legislations as the narrator explains how decisions about deportation and custody has been taken and the appeal has been made. The narrative usually ends with an assumption about how the narrator’s life would look like if he or she doesn’t get to stay in Sweden.

Fairclough (1992:227) writes that in CDA the data is chosen on the basis of its relevance to the specific study and it should include different kinds of situations and the moments of “crisis”. In relation to the aim of our study and our research method we consider these narratives to be very valuable and valid to use. The narratives expresses a spectrum of institutional techniques, claims and references to legal and human rights and provide a rich
rhetoric which describes relations to the Swedish Migration Agency and asylum policy as experienced by individual applicants.

**How Critical Discourse Analysis is applied in this study**

In the previous section we outlined our research field and empirical material and in this section follows a discussion of how we analysed the empirical data. As we have mentioned before, there are many different versions of CDA and we will therefore outline how we used the method inspired by Fairclough (1992, 2003) as it enabled us to understand the asylum process as it is described by denied asylum seekers in their written texts.

Text is an important part in most of CDA methods yet the emphasis on the text varies greatly depending on the study design. Wodak and Meyer (2009:45) do account for textual analysis yet they highlight “[l]inguistic concepts fill only a slot in the toolbox for discourse analysis”. The researchers focus mainly on discursive constellations and account for historical roots of power struggles to understand connections between the knowledge and the institutions or “mechanics” of the power. Such Foucault inspired method is extremely valuable for the aim of this study, yet it does demand a much greater research than what is possible within the constraints of this study. In this regard we consider it more useful to adopt Fairclough’s method which does account for power relations within a discourse as it has much greater emphasis on the text and language, which are considered to manifest both social and discursive practises (Fairclough, 1992:72).

A qualitative analysis cannot be reduced to a stage in the study, rather an on-going process throughout the entire research. CDA is seen as a “top-down” method, where the discursive aspects are understood from the social practice in focus, which also relates to various social structures (Fairclough, 1992:226). In this regard the analysis is seen as an interpretation of texts by identifying descriptions, experiences of social practices and traces of discursive relations (ibid., 1992:98-100). The text itself might bear a vast meaning potential as it is opened for many interpretations, depending on the reader yet organization of different text features reduces this potential and directs the reader towards the understanding of the author’s experience.
Fairclough (1992:86) suggests, the text analysis should account for the micro and macro levels, meaning paying close attention to the text features such as cohesion, wording, grammar use but also study text on the higher level both the overall structure and its relation to other texts.

By paying attention on both micro and macro features of the text and reading the text in its context the researcher can gain an understanding of the person’s identity, her position in the specific field and even her relation to the issue in focus (ibid., 1992:83). In this regard the analysis is a constant shift between the specific elements and the text as a whole including its domain and the context of the publication. We shall describe in more detail different text features as we explain the processing of our empirical material.

**Processing and analysis of the empirical material**

To begin the analysis we outlined the overall ‘sayings’ in the 31 narratives; what are the narratives about? what are the authors saying? what issues are in focus?, which has a connection to what Fairclough (1992:76-77) calls text structure. Text structure refers to a higher-level organization such as main issues in focus, how are they expressed and integrated in the text (ibid.). This aspect of analysis is particularly useful in this study as Fairclough (1992:76) explains, analysis of text structure allows understanding of social identities, of the subjects, the systems of knowledge and beliefs about social groups as well as relations between them. The overall understanding and interpretations of the text structure we got was that the texts were dealing with the issue of negotiating the positions the asylum seekers are assigned by Swedish Migration Agency in the asylum process but also the issue of negotiating the praxis of deportation decisions.

With help of Fairclough’s (1992:88) term *ideology* we could identify common concepts and terms used in the narratives, as ideology is naturalized in the structure of texts when certain concepts are expressed as “common sense” and therefore taken for granted or seen as unproblematic. Yet Fairclough (1992:89) pinpoints that despite the naturalization of ideologies in the social practice it also positions the subject in the discourse which allows the subject to question her position and therefore to act in a creative way to renegotiate her relations to practices and the ideology she is exposed to. In our analysis we identified, among others, the term *asylum seeker* as an ideological concept as it is intertwined with juridical definitions along with political implications which prescribe a certain role to a person and
determine power relations between the ideology’s institutional domain - Migration Agency and the applicant.

As we interpreted that the subject positions assigned to asylum seekers in the asylum process as they are described in their narratives we had to outline how positions assigned to asylum seekers are produced and manifested. As we aim to do this from a power perspective we followed Lilja and Vinthagen’s (2014) description of that certain resistance techniques correspond to certain power techniques. We therefore located and sorted the material into three power categories, namely biopower, disciplinary power and sovereign power as it enabled us to understand how different power techniques constructed different subject positions during the asylum process. In the narratives we could identify different power techniques related to different power and could therefore also place resistance categories to corresponding power categories.

Out of the six constructed categories we began to distinguish what Fairclough (1992:65-73) calls discursive practices within the different categories to be able to understand how different power techniques and negotiating/resistance techniques produce and reproduce subject positions. Discursive practices, according to Fairclough (1992:65-66) is practices which are used in the discourse to produce/reproduce certain power relations, systems of knowledge and beliefs. Fairclough uses the example of family as an institution for such practices being expressed, for example certain chores are attached to certain family roles. In line with this argument, new subcategories were constructed, linked to the corresponding power - and resistance techniques namely, family, effective citizen, victimization and criminalization.

When the construction of main categories and subcategories were made the detailed work with the texts were now possible and with inspiration from Fairclough (1992:74-78) we could distinguish differences and similarities within and between the texts. We were doing so by looking closely at what Fairclough (ibid.) calls wording and grammar and cohesion and how it related to the discursive practices we distinguished earlier. This allowed us capture significant elements in the texts such as family, and how it was described and used in different narratives as a negotiating strategy. Fairclough (1992:76) describes that this stage in the analysis is of ideological or political significance since the words used and their
grammatical links show how different domains are expressed in text as well as how they relate to one another.

**Ethics**

As we are not working in direct, personal contact with asylum seekers, but their narratives published in the online media, we have chosen to use ethical guidelines associated with online research as it raises questions about how the computer stands ‘between’ normal categories such as: alive/not alive, public/private and speech/writing. Anyhow, we will discuss some ethical issues in doing social research of refugees and other forced migrants as we find some issues important to keep in mind when working with vulnerable groups.

**Ethical dilemmas raised in the study**

As we have previously mentioned, online media represents a great field of interests for social research as it creates a new space and other conditions for people being heard and seen. The online research field has raised a lot of ethical questions among researchers as specific issues arise from conducting research via the internet (Madge, 2012:252). Some of these issues will be further discussed in relation to this study.

Informed consent is one of the issues discussed by Madge (2012:254-255) when she argues the participants in online research should be fully aware of the nature of the social research before participating. However in the case of our study, the website flyktingarna.se who publishes the narratives used in the research, writes that the narrators were fully aware of the purpose of publishing the narratives on the website including possible consequences. Madge (ibid.) discuss the issue about informed consent and secondary sources and claims, if the researcher cannot verify the identities behind the texts and anonymity is assured, the informed consent is a question the researcher has to consider in relation to her specific research. As we cannot verify the identities of the narrators and find their anonymity secured, we find informed consent impossible.

As we don’t have informed consent, we discussed questions about confidentiality, anonymity and the guarantee of ‘do no-harm’. The ‘do no-harm’ term is pointed out by Hugman et al. (2011:1272-1273) as the starting-point of ethical questions when working with refugees and other forced migrants so they are not put at further risks. The researcher’s role, according to
Hugman et al. (2011:1273) is therefore to make sure the lives and needs of these groups are not endangered due to the research. And as the Swedish Research Council points out, it would be almost unethical to refrain from conducting research that may be improving people's health and living conditions, elimination of prejudices or raise people's awareness of how in a richer way to exploit their own resources (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002:4). Therefore we consider it important to conduct this research to raise the voice of asylum seekers and at the same time outweigh research questions carefully so that the narrators are not exposed to any harm.

Madge (2012:257) pinpoints if the researcher views the participants as authors of texts who share their stories or ideas at public websites there are fewer obligations to confidentiality. However, we do believe the narrators confidentiality are secured by flyktingarna.se and in the analysis of the narratives we only use quotations and no names so we do consider the narrators are not being exposed to any harm neither are their needs endangered due to the research, and their confidentiality are secured.

**Critical reflection and the study’s limitations**

We would like to discuss some shortcoming and limitation of this study and assess validity and reliability of methodological choices. We will also include a discussion about the validity and reliability of the narratives as they are used as our empirical data.

With the regard to time and volume limits of this study there is no possibility to use CDA to its full extent, namely to account for historic and legal context of the studied phenomena. The character of our empirical material provides us with only limited means to relate it to the larger context, for example the notion of asylum in general. This means that this research cannot speak of the relations between Swedish Migration Agency and the asylum seeker as a general practice, rather as experienced by the denied applicants and expressed in their written narratives.

Another limitation is the website flyktingarna.se. As we noticed before it influences the narrative in several ways and uses them in the context of its political claims. We have excluded the website’s agency from our analysis due to its political engagement as it aimed to influence the result of parliamentary elections in Sweden 2014. Yet as Fairclough (1992:75)
points out, a text can be interpreted and appropriated in various ways, depending on the audience. Therefore we have treated the narrative published by the website as a description of individual experiences of interaction with Swedish Migration Agency and not as a form of political activism as implied by the publisher. It is important to point out that none of the narratives include any account or reference to elections in Sweden or any opposition/favouring to a specific political party.

Another important aspect within the CDA is time span. Fairclough (1992:227) notes that discourses and social practices are in constant change and therefore suggests collecting data with “[a] reasonable time span”. What is considered as “reasonable time span” is individual to each study with regard to its aim and design. The narrative with constitute our empirical material were published between 14/09/2013 - 14/09/2014, which is before the so called “Refugee Crises”. Therefore we made a brief research of Swedish Parliament’s and Migration Agency's websites to see if any changes in asylum legislation or procedure in Sweden have been made. We also have a continuous contact with several persons who are current asylum seekers. We did not find anything which could imply a larger shift in how Migration Agency assesses the cases and interacts with the applicants therefore the narratives are considered to be representative for current practices. Yet at the final stages of this research two law changes took place, regarding harder restraints for the refugee’s family reunion and withdrawal of all the subsidies including housing straight after the denial of the applicant. Even though these laws are not enforced yet, they most likely will alter the asylum process in a way we cannot account for in this study.

The website itself and the narratives are published in Swedish language. We had to translate certain passages to use them as quotes in the analysis. Fairclough (1992:229) suggests bearing in mind that data is interpreted constantly during the preparation stages and therefore researcher should account for this. During our translation we aimed to transmit the meaning as close to the original as possible.

The study does not aim to generalize how the relations to Migration Agency manifests themselves by denied asylum seekers but rather to get a glimpse into a currently empty research area, by accounting for individual experience of the denied applicants. And as we mentioned before the ‘denied asylum seeker’ is overall already subjected to a variety of vulnerable situations and we therefore find this study a valid asset for the already existing
research of the field of asylum. Overall assessment of our methodological choices is assessed as valid and reliable, because they are thoroughly explained and related to study’s aim and empirical material.

**The validity and reliability of the narratives**

The most important to say about the narratives’ validity is that we can never prove authenticity of the narratives published, more specifically whether they are written by asylum seekers or a third part and if the narratives describe events as they took place. We were aware of this difficulty from the preparation phase of the study and did consider using an interpersonal data collection, namely narrative interviews.

Conducting interviews was assessed as a weaker method with regard to a row of limitations. First, we can interview only persons who whether were granted asylum or are waiting for the decision, which, as we consider, does not provide equally rich description of various institutional technologies, including the punitive once, as they are described in the narratives at flyktingarna.se. Secondly, asylum process is a sensitive subject and flyktingarna.se along with our experience of working with asylum seeker show that many refuse to discuss this matter in person as it is associated with potential danger to the applicant’s case and discomfort of revealing intimate or traumatic details of the person’s flight. For the same reason we consider that interviews do not guarantee full and detailed descriptions of events which took place, neither the authenticity of these descriptions.

We therefore chose to use the narratives from flyktingarna.se and tried to explore the stories and the website as a whole aiming to identify any sings of “fraud” stories. As flyktingarna.se writes, at every published narrative they are faced with the fear of disclosing identities and expose individuals to danger. To be sure of not doing so before publishing they sometimes remove certain parts of the narrative which we find problematic as they reconstructs the original narratives. We reviewed every narrative and paid attention on what is described or not, how the language is used and the tone of the narrator. This review did not reveal anything that could make us doubt the narratives authenticity, as very diverse situations and circumstances for individual asylum claims are described in the stories and they include detailed and even personal descriptions of events during the flight and asylum procedure.
Chapter 5: Subjectification during the assessment of asylum claims

Power relations are very complex and entangled as different types of power exist parallel and simultaneously (Foucault, 2003:36,242). Therefore we approach the analysis by distinguishing between the three types of power mentioned in chapter three to understand the experiences of the asylum process and possible resistance. First we approach this through the disciplinary power perspective and attempt to expose the techniques experienced during the institutional procedure, what are they aiming for and how the applicants’ experienced the assessment of their claims.

The assessment of asylum - a disciplinary procedure

In the narratives the experiences of the asylum process is often described as an assessment procedure, where many of the narrators describe such techniques as interrogation and fingerprints taking. The following quote highlights how the narrator reflects about the asylum assessment procedure:

   Our lawyer says, we do have grounds to claim asylum, but I know how difficult it is to get asylum. If one applies for asylum, one has to be able to tell much and in a great detail. Even if my mother will get an interpreter it is impossible to know all those details that Migration Agency demands. Which day did it happen? What weather was it that day?

In the quote the process of interrogation is described as a way where the applicant has to tell everything in great detail ready to be investigated by executives at Migration Agency. If we interpret the process described in the quote through Foucault’s (1987:194) and Lilja & Vinthagen’s (2014:109) description of disciplinary power it seems that the process of asylum assessment happen through such disciplinary power techniques as interrogation. Yet other narratives provide a description of other techniques such as evidence, reward/punishment of individual’s behaviour during the asylum claim.

The quote also describes the underlying tone of Swedish Migration Agency as the applicant states that she knows that she has to prove herself by explaining in great detail what and how things happened. If we adopt Kmak’s (2015:403) distinction between the “bogus” and “genuine asylum” seeker, this disciplinary procedure can be understood as aiming to identify if the applicant is a true victim. By victimhood we are referring to the institutional and legal
definitions of refugees and asylum seekers mentioned in chapter two (Seidlitz, 2014; Swedish Migration Agency, 2015b). The implication seems to be that a true victim does have proof and is able to repeatedly narrate the same story in a great detail.

Some authors experienced their victimhood to be questioned in several different ways. The following quote exposes three experiences of denial of the same asylum applicant:

I applied for asylum three times and got three denials. First time, they said my story was not convincing, how could my mother have carried me such a long way? Second time, they said it seemed unlikely that I have not applied for asylum before in other countries, if that was so dangerous for me in Afghanistan. The third time, they said that I didn’t even have enough evidence to support that I am who I claimed to be. My mother has disappeared and is missing since 2008. In Afghanistan I have nothing to come back to except for violence and threats.

In the quote the applicant describes three different situations in which he or she try to apply for asylum using different arguments and proofs to strengthen her/his victimhood while the Swedish Migration Agency seemed to respond to this by arguing the opposite. The quote illustrates the relational process, where on one hand the Swedish Migration Agency questions the asylum seekers victimhood and on the other, the applicant is trying to prove her victimhood.

Looking at this utterance from the perspective of the disciplinary power (Foucault, 2003:34-36; Lilja & Vinthagen, 2014:114) the interrogation and fingerprint taking techniques seem to aim for assessing the asylum seeker’s mobility history, identity and national belonging and even the credibility of the story as a whole. This implies that these aspects are seen as important for the positioning the applicant as a subject who can be granted or denied the asylum.

Thus disciplinary techniques can be understood, in line with Foucault (2003:34-36) that discipline power aims to manage individual bodies in the most efficient way as it categorises people and sets the norm to refer to. The fact that the persons victimhood was denied three times for three different reasons seems to support Kmak’s (2015) research when she argues that the production of a refugee subject as a ‘bogus’ is an embedded norm in European Migration discourse. Therefore we interpret the interplay between questioning-proving as a form of underlying understanding of an applicant as potentially non-credible in her grounds for seeking asylum.
To summarize, it seems that the asylum process as it is experienced by asylum seekers can be seen as disciplinary assessment procedure which aims to question the applicant’s victimhood through the disciplinary power techniques, such as interrogation, surveillance and fingerprinting. The asylum seeker describes this as a process where she knows she has to be prepared to have evidence ready so she can be acknowledged as a victim. It also implies that the “genuine” asylum seeker is a rational being who is capable of understanding the consequences of her actions as well as lying and twisting the facts in her favour. It also appears that a person who cannot provide sufficient evidence of her fear is not “genuine” and therefore can be assessed as a subject that can be denied.

**Negotiation over the subject position who can be denied**

It seems that the asylum process as it is experienced by denied applicants aims to question the person’s victimhood and therefore constitutes the subject who can be denied. In the categorization of our data, we could distinguish three different ways of this subject positioning which seems to be ascribed to applicants based on the disciplinary procedure described in previous section and therefore appears to correspond to the techniques applied. Judging from the text structure and the cohesion of text arguments in the narratives the victimhood appears to be questioned by Swedish Migration Agency along three main lines: 1) denial of victimhood, therefore no need for protection at all; 2) a victim but presence of other possibilities and therefore no need for protection in Sweden, rather elsewhere; 3) the abject position, no identification documents - no possibilities to deport or give residence permit.

In following quote we want to show how the subject that can be denied is constructed through the strict denial of victimhood of asylum seekers due to the lack of evidence and wrong kind of behaviour during the process:

> The Migration Agency doesn’t believe what I’m saying, they want proof to everything I’m saying. But it’s impossible to prove how the war influenced me. They say also that Gaza is a safe place and say that I don’t need protection in Sweden. [...] My brothers came to Sweden 2003 and 2002 and got the residence permit in a month, I came 2006 and was denied. It feels unfair, why am I treated like this when all my family is here [Sweden].

In the narrative the author writes that she came with her family to Sweden when she was underage, therefore her father applied for asylum to the whole family but when she turned
eighteen she had to file her own application, which she didn’t know about. Swedish Migration Agency therefore considered the person handled things incorrectly and is therefore assessed, as Kmak (2015:403) calls it ‘bogus asylum seeker’ or as we interpret it - not a victim.

In the quote the negotiation over the “not victim/victim” subject position is illustrated very well as the applicant tries to negotiate over her victimhood in different ways. The author describes this through the evidence of war influence, the conditions in the native country and family conditions. Which implies that the Migration Agency positioned her as not a victim due to the lack of concrete evidence to support her claims. If we understand this negotiating in relation to Foucault (1987:194), as he argues that the disciplinary subjectification corresponds to the definition of its opposite, as for, in this case, the not a victim correspond to victim. In this sense it implies that a “true” victim does possess exhaustive evidence which can be studied objectively and not a mere experience or a “feeling” of war. This seems to make it possible to categorize a person as not in need of protection, which we named, not a victim.

The subject that can be denied seems to be constructed in different ways namely through assessments of other possibilities of the applicant such as family members’ national belonging or the Dublin Agreement which provides an alternative to protection in Sweden.

My husband has a residence permit in Italy and we were notified that we would be sent there, not to Albania, despite the fact I don’t have any residence permit in Italy. Furthermore it is not safer for us in Italy with the regard to blood feud.

The quote illustrates a common experience of asylum seekers when they have been denied asylum. Almost every narrative describes how Swedish Migration Agency, by interrogation and investigation searches for details that can determine if the person can be sent off to another country, like the quote above shows. The author claims she doesn’t have any connection to Italy, she even writes, it can be a dangerous place for her to live in, but due to her husband’s residence permit in Italy the family is being sent there.

In other narratives other disciplinary power techniques, such as observation and surveillance of individual’s mobility are being described: “I had to give my fingerprints to police. In this way they could see that I have been to Italy, because I had to leave my fingerprints there as
well”. In this sense the theory of resistance as negotiating (Chandra, 2015:565) can lead us to an understanding of the negotiation procedure between the denied asylum seeker and Swedish Migration Agency. According to Chandra (ibid.) resistance can be viewed as a negotiation over the conditions of one’s subordination with a purpose to rework the conditions in a more favourable direction. As the denied asylum seeker has been assessed as a victim, but due to further interrogation and other disciplinary techniques such as fingerprints the person can be denied due to her mobility history.

It appears interesting in this regard the person’s family belonging created the possibility to position her as not a victim enough to stay, meaning her husband’s rights are seen as a way to deny asylum to the narrator. As disciplinary power manages individual bodies (Foucault, 1987:194) and as we previously mentioned implies the individual responsibility of the applicant, this denial of asylum due to the family belonging seems interesting as it places the applicant within the family institution. It implies also that such a family related phenomena as a blood feud is limited to the applicant’s country of origin and does not take place in Europe, or at least in Italy.

The third and final way to construct the subject who can be denied appears to take place through what we call the abject positioning. This relates to asylum seekers who describe in their narratives that they don’t have id-documents which seems to prevent the Migration Agency from deporting the individual nor issuing the residence permit. The police took me when I was on my way from the airport. They drove me to the custody. I didn’t understand what was happening, but time passed and my lawyer never responded to my call. I did not get a residence permit but they could not deport me either because I had no ID documents. Now I live here, but I am not allowed to be here, according to the police and the Migration Agency.

The abject position is based on narratives, like the one above, where asylum seekers describe how Swedish Migration Agency doesn’t know what to do with the individual sitting in front of them. The individuals of such subject positioning often are willing to submit to all kinds of power mechanisms due to their described position in a vacuum. This inability to position the subject can be understood as she lacks the documents, which doesn’t allow the Migration Agency to identify her and therefore question or acknowledge her victimhood. In this sense, the importance of ID or other documents appears as integral to the bureaucratic assessment procedure, where neither the residence permit nor deportation can be executed. This can be
seen as a limit of disciplinary power as it can be seen as a norm that a person has id and is a citizen yet on the other side disciplinary techniques that assess the person’s claims are based on the assumption that she does fit into the norm in Foucault’s sense (1987:207).

Based on the enforced subject positions on asylum seekers during the disciplinary procedure described above we can distinguish different forms of resistance strategies described by the denied asylum seekers in their narratives. These strategies manifest themselves differently and are targeted not against the authority but rather the power mechanisms applied to the person (Foucault, 1982:777; Lilja & Vinthagen, 2014:114). Some forms of resistance are expressed as obvious sarcasm and irony over the Migration Agency’s statements and decisions. A quote from a lesbian person who was persecuted in the native country illustrates such ironic statement: “I thought to myself, how can I possibly obtain a paper from the same institution which attacked me and which is still looking for me?” Or the quote from a person who came as an unaccompanied refugee child (now an adult) where the sarcasm and irony is even more clear:

When I came here the Migration Agency demanded to show them proof of me being threatened. But how can I provide it? Do they really think that I can ask my father’s friend to write them a letter where he says he was threatening to kill me?

As mentioned before, other forms of resistance can be viewed from the theory of resistance as negotiation (Chandra, 2015:565) as denied asylum seekers try to negotiate their subject positions as victim/not a victim during the asylum process. As we understand it with help of Chandra (ibid.) the negotiation occurs when the asylum seeker tries to negotiate the power relations towards a more favourable direction in the assessment procedure.

To conclude, the disciplinary procedure described above seems to construct the subject who can be denied through three different ways. This is seen in relation to disciplinary power and as a way to “sort” the applicants in an efficient way, in Foucault’s (2003:34-36) words, to manage individuals. The subject positions during the disciplinary assessment procedure seem to be constructed based on the questioning of the asylum seekers victimhood which implies that a “true” victim has all the needed proof, id-documents, has no other opportunities for protection then Sweden and has fulfilled all the obligation put on her during the procedure.

The resistance performed by the asylum seekers seems to be expressed through ironic and sarcastic utterances about Swedish Migration Agency’s actions and decisions. But as we do
understand resistance as negotiation it appears that the denied asylum seekers also use different negotiating strategies to negotiate their positions ascribed to them.

The family - a negotiation strategy for power and resistance

Based on our analysis the asylum seekers can be seen as acting subjects, who do not silently accept the subject positions ascribed, they rather negotiate it along with the lines listed above. The family is our most influenced and interesting finding in this regard as it seems to work both as a negotiating strategy used by Swedish Migration Agency to enforce subject positions at asylum seekers as a way to “get rid of them”. But it also is seen as a form of corresponding resistance strategy as the asylum seekers try to negotiate their subject positioning as victims/not victim as the following quote describes:

But now, the Swedish Migration Agency says that we have no reason to stay in Sweden, because we no longer have a relative who is a Swedish citizen. They say that we have not lived in Sweden for so long, that three years is not long enough period of time. It does not matter that we have jobs, go to school and speaks good Swedish, without relatives we cannot stay. Migration Agency do not care about the testimonial from [person’s] teacher, showing that he has evolved a lot over the past three years, thanks to the care he can get in Sweden.

This quote is very interesting as it both captures how family belonging is used by Migration Agency as a way to deny a whole family asylum. But also how the applicant uses the family’s establishment in Swedish society as a way to declare their victimhood. There are different ways how the Migration Agency uses the family and how the applicants use it, like in the following quote where the family is used in a different manner in claiming his victimhood, this time from an abject position:

I have a daughter in Belarus who I miss every day. She writes emails where she talks about her life. I wish I would be able to reunite with her but due to my situation, I cannot go to her. It hurts, and for every day that passes it feels increasingly hopeless.

To conclude, the family seems to be a valuable negotiating resource for both parts in the asylum claim procedure. It is also very interesting in relation to the juridical and legal definitions of a refugee and asylum seeker as they aim to assess the asylum claim based on these definitions (Seidlitz, 2014:63-64). As Behrman (2014:251) points out, the assessment based on these definitions requires the asylum seeker to be a right-bearing subject, a free individual who is able to act freely and independently and who shall also be assessed as an
individual. Yet it seems contradictory that the Migration Agency doesn’t follow these restrictions and uses family members and family belonging as a way to deny the asylum seeker her victimhood or her right to protection.

In the same manner the denied asylum seekers seem to want to be judged as a right-bearing individual who shall be assessed in an individual manner. Yet it seems that they use the family in different ways as a negotiating strategy of their positions to rework them in a more favourable direction during the process.
Chapter 6: Subjectification during the deportation process

In this chapter we aim to analyze the experiences of the asylum process through the sovereign power perspective, which makes it possible to describe asylum seekers’ experiences in relation to the Swedish Migration Agency’s authority and even the Swedish state. As we mentioned in the previous chapter, the asylum seekers experienced that their victimhood was questioned and therefore constructed the subject who can be denied the asylum status and consequently, be deported. Here we attempt to understand asylum seekers’ experiences of the denial of their asylum status and investigate it in relation to deportation and look at how the subjects are positioned in this relation. We will also explore if the applicants perform any kind of resistance during this process and how it can be understood.

Preparing the subject for deportation - totality of the sovereign power

Most of the narratives describe the asylum process in relation to waiting for the decision on their case but also in relation to deportation. The waiting for the decision is often experienced as vacuum, rightlessness and uncertainty. The following quote illustrates it well:

Waiting. All those days have just disappeared. Aspiration. Loneliness. Waiting. Emptiness. Vacuum. It’s when I came here I also ended up in the endless misery. Three years of my life I have spent in the thin air.

The author describes his experience of waiting for the Migration Agency’s decision after he has gone through all the interviews and has provided the evidence. Foucault (2003:240) writes that the subject only exists in relation to the sovereign and therefore is neither dead nor alive before being subjected to the power. In this sense the applicant is not positioned yet, rather experiences the vacuum where he is neither included nor excluded from the societal structures. Many other authors of the narratives highlight that they have no opportunities and rights during the decision pending period and are expected to passively wait. But also judging from the wording used in the utterance the applicant seems to be positioned as passive, immobile and incapable during this period.

It is interesting to mention that persons who were set into the abject position, as we described in previous chapter, are experiencing vacuum even after the deportation decision. Foucault (2003:45) emphasizes that the sovereign power is limited by factors such as geopolitical
borders, which in our study is seen as inability to deport a person to a country that doesn’t accept her. In this sense the abject experiences the vacuum and can neither be deported nor included.

Denial is an important part of the process and as we interpret it, an effect of the positioning of the applicants as a subject that can be denied. Most of narratives highlight the denial as an authoritarian and unfair decision, although judging from the text structure and cohesion many persons narrate around deportation and not that much about legitimacy of their claims or details of their case. Many denied applicants describe their individual experiences and current situation as desperate and powerless. The following quote represents a most common description of negative decision as a person describes her family’s situation in Sweden in the moment of denial:

But the Migration Agency refused to approve the request motivating that he [narrator’s husband] has no right to internship because of the deportation decision has been issued and he has no passport. Instead he is exorted to pursue with deportation. This made us extremely sad, it seems like all the doors are closed, we have no right to even apply for jobs to support ourselves. We have no right for anything whatsoever. This is distressing. What are we going to do now?

It appears that denial and consequently, the deportation decision closes an access to a lot of possibilities such as work, internship and as other narratives point out, school and language courses. In this regard the quote also illustrates the powerlessness and hopelessness of a person who was faced with this decision. It also implies that the family is persuaded to agree to the deportation decision “voluntarily” and therefore fulfil it.

If we interpret these experiences through the notion of power it can be seen as an effect of the sovereign power exercise. Foucault (2003:37,44) describes sovereign power as oppressive and prohibitive but which is exercised in relation to the sovereign, whether the State or the Monarch. Although the sovereign power is often understood as juridical laws it is present in a row of disciplinary institutions as in our case the Migration Agency and the police. In this sense the denial and deportation decision might be seen as exclusion from the Swedish state and the opportunities within it.

The quote also illustrates that the absence of the passport is partially presented as a way to exclude the person from seeking job and internship and it was explained previously in the
narrative that the Migration Agency demanded the person to handle in his ID-documents after the family got the denial. This process of exclusion seems to be used to incapacitate the subject and therefore force the family to leave the country. In this sense the construction of the subject who can be denied is interpreted here as necessary to gain the legitimacy for such drastic actions but also for the denial decision itself. This can be also seen in relation to Schoultz (2013:220) as she highlights presenting asylum seekers as “fraud” allows denials and deportation along with the preserving country’s “humane” self-image.

The sovereign power, as explained by Lilja and Vinthagen (2014:112), demands a monopoly of rule and aims to produce a totally obedient subject. This is described in many narratives as a situation where persons were given a choice: “cooperate or violence will be used”. The following quote describe techniques which a person experienced during forced deportation.

He narrates the following after he has been placed in detention for over 130 days:

The Migration Agency tried to deport me three times. First, it was a normal passenger plane. I prayed to God, and the pilot refused to fly with me on board. Next time, they used a charter aircraft. They putted handcuffs on me and hit me. They were forced to land in Egypt, and never got the landing permission in Congo. After 12 hours in the aircraft in Cairo's airport they took me back to Flen. The third time, 23 of February 2012, it was also a charter plane for me and one more person to be deported. We had hand- and foot cuffs and the waist chain. Both me and another person were terrified. The police were hitting us and gave us drugs.

This passage provides a description of his experience of a various techniques applied during the forced deportation. It also include references to other institutions such as the police who execute the decision as well as it presents several limitation to these decisions, as denied permission to land which resulted into failed deportation. Seen from the sovereign power perspective a lot can be said about this utterance, as it provides a glimpse into a complex network where power is exercised. Yet we attempt to interpret this utterance in relation to the subject who can be denied as it seems to make possible the presentation of the individual as a criminal and thereby application of techniques such as freedom restraint, sedation and forced replacement of a person.

In this particular case, the assignation of a criminal role to the subject seems to be induced by the denial, as he writes: “I was denied on my second application and therefore put in detention”. In this regard the sovereign power effect - decision to forcible deportation can be understood as a reaction to person’s disobedience, namely refusal to leave voluntarily. And as
Schoultz (2013:220) points out, there is no a humane way to forcibly deport a person and therefore criminalization or presentation of the asylum seekers as “fraud” makes it possible for countries, like Sweden, to exercise violence and preserve their self-image as a humane welfare state.

The assignation of the criminal position to the subject can also be seen as an effect of his disobedience to the sovereign power and important for the legitimacy of the sovereign decision - forcible deportation, as the techniques applied are extreme and brutal which cannot be applied to “rightful” subjects namely a “genuine” victim who is in need of protection.

There are other ways in which authors of the narratives experienced criminalization. The following quote describes the background to the situation experienced by the author when he was stopped by the police during a trip to another city and was taken to detention:

It turned out that the police was in my home, when I was away (I’ve been to the gym, there are surveillance tapes which can prove that) and that’s why they considered that I should be taken to custody so I wouldn’t be able to take off. I tried to explain that I absolutely didn’t attempt to take off - I have filed an appeal and waiting for the decision. [...] They asked me instead: “do you want to go home tonight or tomorrow?”, and I said “I will never go back. I cannot live there.” And because I’m still in the appeal process they cannot deport me before it’s done.

This utterance can be understood as an interplay of both disciplinary techniques which observe and evaluate individual behaviour (Foucault, 1987:194; Lilja & Vinthagen, 2014:114) and the sovereign demand for obedience (Foucault, 2003:240, Lilja & Vinthagen, 2014:112), which forms a frame of reference for this assessment. The person seems to have been under surveillance by the police during his appeal process. He claims his rights as he points out that he cannot be deported and denies the accusation in attempting to take off. The wording and grammar in the narrative implies that the author shows open disobedience to both accusations and implied deportation. His trip to another city can be understood both as expression of a freedom of movement within the country and, as it has been done in the story, as an attempt to take off and hide from the authorities.

According to Foucault (1982:781) resistance relates not to the power itself, rather to its mechanisms or effects. Through the accusation of the person forced him into the criminal subject position which can be understood as an effect of his resistance to the sovereign denial, namely behaviour that deviates from obedience (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2014:113) such as in this case, accepting the denial and pursuing with the deportation. The fact that the described
situation took place when the person was travelling within the country or has been away from home when the police paid him a visit implies that this mobile behaviour is deviant. It appears that sovereign power is constructing an obedient subject who is also passive and immobile during the waiting process.

To conclude, the subject who can be denied appears to be constructed not only in relation to her victimhood but also in relation to deportation as such position might justify the application of sovereign techniques such as forced deportation or excluding the person from most of social structures within the sovereign state and therefore enforce “voluntary” deportation. Asylum seekers seem to have only a few possibilities to make a resistance against this positioning as they are expected to wait passively for the decision and furthermore pursue with it and as we previously stated, open disobedience seems to enforce punishment, such as criminalization and detention. Yet many of the authors oppose to this kind of positioning through their narratives as they seem to present themselves in a different way than assigned to them and therefore attempt to undermine the legitimacy of the deportation decision.

**Negotiating over the subject who can be deported**

It appears that the asylum seekers oppose to this subjectification ascribed to them in all the narratives. We will also try to explore here if the opposition to subjectification can be seen as resistance to the sovereign power. We also adopt the view on resistance as negotiation as explained by Chandra (2015:565) rather than a direct confrontation.

Many narrators who are now faced or threatened with deportation seem to present themselves as a victim of the process. Although all the stories include passages where the person explains the legitimacy of her asylum claims, many narratives highlight specifically the unfairness or illegitimacy of the denial decision. Some narrators expose, criticize and accuse the Migration Agency for misconduct of the procedure and pinpoint that such misconduct has put them in the position where they are, namely waiting for deportation. Some expose inconsistencies within migration policies and aim to undermine the legitimacy of the denial and deportation decision.
Schoultz (2013:220) highlights that the legitimacy of the migration authorities and their decision should be seen as negotiation rather than a fixed concept, as she argues it is necessary to preserve the country's “self-image of decency and humanity”. In this regard the narratives challenge this image by questioning the legitimacy of the Migration Agency’s decisions and expose the failures during the procedure. Some authors provide detailed experiences of the violations during the assessment procedure and write things such as: “[incompetent] interpreter wastes the asylum seeker’s case and life. In addition there are no ways to prove anything and we have no right to report the interpreter”. This utterance is interpreted as resistance directed at the sovereign decision as it exposes the misconduct during assessment of her case and therefore highlights her lack of rights to influence it. This could be understood in relation to Lilja and Vinthagen (2014:113) as the resistance to sovereign power techniques is aims challenging the legitimacy of the sovereign decision.

The role of the family appears particularly interesting in this negotiation as well. The following passage is from the narrative of one family which is about to be deported due to the national belonging of the husband.

The Migration Agency claims to act for the child’s best interest. But it’s not true. If the Migration Agency has accounted for the child, or even has cared about her, they would never have taken the decision to send a child to the totally foreign country risking that the family would be separated. How can the Migration Agency decide to send the child to Lebanon, the child who lived 5 years, her only 5 years in Sweden? [...] Of course, the Child Convention is not the law in Sweden, yet still the Migration Agency doesn’t follow its own rules. [...] One can read on the homepage of the Foreign Ministry that they dissuade trips to Lebanon. The village the Migration Agency wants to send us to is pointed out specifically as a place not to travel to. And they want to send a family there.

The passage lifts up a number of critiques toward the Migration Agency’s deportation decision and its legitimacy. The author is a Lebanese citizen yet two other family members are not and according to Migration Agency’s decision the entire family should be deported to Lebanon due to the father’s national belonging. The author makes references to the human rights and Foreign Ministry to support his critique as he points out the contradictions between migration policies and the decision of deportation. He also talks of a child, his daughter, who was born in Sweden and is de facto, paperless and he appeals to the secrecy of the family unit.
Looking at the utterance from the perspective of the sovereign power and resistance to it, the twofold role of the family appears. On one side, family belonging seems to give the legitimacy for the deportation decision and on the other side, exposure of the consequences and risks for the family are used to challenge the decision’s legitimacy.

Lilja and Vinthagen (2014:113) describe one of the resistance strategies to the sovereign power as a search for another sovereign which undermines the king’s command mechanisms, among others legitimacy. In this regard the reference to the Child Convention can be seen as an appeal to the human rights discourse which is used in the narrative to counter the decision of deportation, namely to highlight that human rights are not followed in Sweden. The child’s right can be seen as bearing a strong symbolic meaning, as children are seen as innocent and the most vulnerable members of society, this is acknowledged in the Swedish legislation as children and adults have different rules in the asylum procedures (Seidlitz, 2014:61). Exposure of the Migration Agency’s lack of account for a child can undermine the legitimacy of the deportation decision, and even Swedish self-image of the “safeguard of the human rights”, especially with the regard that the narrative was published online for the open audience.

The narrative has also a reference to the Foreign Ministry travel advice, as the author points out that, Swedish citizens are discouraged to travel to Lebanon due to the dangerous situation there. This can be interpreted as he highlights the disparities between the right of the citizens and the refugees, by pointing out the inconsistency with assessment of the situation in Lebanon. In this sense the author presents himself and his family, as in Seidlitz (2014:63-66) ‘right-bearing subjects’, whose rights were violated during the asylum process. His opposition to the deportation decision seems to undermine the Migration Agency’s and Swedish self-image of the “safeguard of human rights”. There is a number of narratives which refer to the human rights discourse and emphasise the applicant’s humanity saying: “I would like to know who is responsible for the treatment of refugees. I am a human but the Migration Agency seems to have forgotten about it”.

There are people who undermine the legitimacy of the deportation decision by presenting themselves not only as right-bearing but also effective and compliant subjects. One quote highlights the person's desire to become included into the society and comply with the demands:
I have never lived here illegally and I have never attempted to take off, I have always cooperated with the Migration Agency. Still nothing happens. Sometimes it feels like it’s me who has to chase the Migration Agency and the police instead for vice versa. [...] I’m an engineer. I can and want to work, to be useful.

The author highlights his compliance with all the demand he experienced and attempts to position himself as an obedient subject who is willing to be productive, namely work and be useful for the country. He implies that he cooperated and therefore has proven himself to be a rightful subject and therefore undermines the legitimacy of his positioning as a subject who can be denied.

Sometimes the resistance to the subject positioning as a passive, waiting and obedient one, takes a more drastic turn as people attempt to emphasize their humanity and the right by mobilizing others in a form of email and Facebook campaigns and involvement of other Swedish organisations. The following quote describes how one family reacted on the deportation decision:

> We have collected the names and held the email campaigns for the rights of our family. We got the attention of the local media but the Migration Agency did not change their decision.

They attempted to mobilize others via social media and even via the narrative itself to gain more support in the “fight” for their rights. Despite the media attention, this resistance had no effect on their case. There are also several narratives who attempt to highlight their own and even other applicants’ rights which is illustrated in the following quote:

> During one month time, between the 15th of July and the 15 of August I started the hunger strike in an attempt to make somebody listen and open the eyes for my case, but also for other stateless persons’ situation. It’s dreadful how we are treated around the world. The hunger strike hasn’t changed my situation yet many became aware of my story through the media.

The author appeals to the human right discourse and calls the situation of stateless persons as “dreadful”. She deprives herself of food and water in order to illustrate her own conditions for public as well as she attempts to account for other people who are in the same situation. Resistance does not have to be successful to be seen as resistance as the author clearly aims to alter her situation which in accordance to Chandra’s (2015:565) definition can be understood as resistance. As this utterance shows, the person positions herself as a subject whose rights were violated by the Migration Agency during the asylum process.
Seen in the context of digital media as the narratives domain, the narratives has a potential to undermine the legitimacy of Swedish migration authorities as well as its image. According to Whitlock (2015:259-61) the access to digital technologies opens up the possibilities for a global mobilization and positions the refugees in the discourse. Looking at this from the perspective of resistance to the sovereign power (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2014:113), we interpret this as undermining the values of the sovereign power, namely the humanitarian character of the asylum practices as it emphasises the inconsistency between the human rights and asylum practices such as deportation and use of violence.

To summarize, it appears that denied applicants position themselves in a way that might undermine the legitimacy of the Migration Agency's decision and contrasts to the subject positions they were ascribed, namely passive, rightless and criminal. The authors present themselves as right-bearing subjects who want to be obedient and effective yet whose rights were violated or not acknowledged by the authorities. This resistance can be seen as threatening the legitimacy of the Migration Agency’s decision as well as Swedish self-image because these narratives are published online for the broad audience. There are also people who take more drastic measures to support and emphasise their rights, namely email campaigns and hunger strikes. In the narratives it seems that such a resistance has no or very little effect on a particular case and in some cases seem to inflict violence upon the applicant.
Chapter 7: The construction of asylum seekers as “unwanted subjects”

In this chapter we will try to understand the experiences of the asylum process out of the biopower perspective where we attempt to interpret our findings from the two previous chapters on the higher societal level as we discuss denied asylum seekers experiences in relation to national security. We will discuss how different types of power can be seen in relation to the construction of the ‘unwanted subject’ as it was experienced by the denied applicants. With the regard to the aim of this study we cannot account for general practices on the higher societal level where biopower is exercised. Yet we attempt to interpret the findings that relate to all the denied asylum seekers as a large group of people and how can they be understood through the notion of biopower, more specifically in relation to the production of the subjects who can be denied and be deported mentioned in previous chapters.

There are narratives that focus primarily on the flight experience and not that much on the asylum process as a whole. The authors of these narratives present the dangers and difficulties of the flight as well as disparities between them and Swedish citizens in terms of mobility and therefore expose the national security practices in Europe.

There are no alternative to illegal travelling. [...] So that is why I decided to come to Sweden illegally, which was successful. Yet I have to highlight that I’m an exception [...] Many I know had to suffer much more than me. One of the worst stories I heard was when a person was smuggled under a car seat for 36 hours with nothing else than a bottle to pee in. It’s also common that smugglers only take you to Greece or Italy where the condition for refugees are beyond words dreadful. If you flee together with your family you are at risk to be separated and maybe never meet again.

The author highlights the barriers for refugees in general, such as restricted migration to EU and positions himself as an exception because he has successfully taken himself to Sweden. If seen from the perspective of biopower, this utterance exposes national security practices such as regulated immigration which can be interpreted as a production of biopower as it, according to Foucault (2003:246-249) creates security measures to protect populations from external threats.
The passage also provides a glimpse into the condition for the asylum seekers in other EU countries like Greece and Italy, as the author explains why people move through Europe illegally and do not apply for asylum in the country of entrance. As Schoultz (2013:220) points out the asylum practices in EU became a matter of national security rather than an issue of the human rights. Kmak (2014:397) explains that restriction of immigration together with fragmentation of a refugee subject, namely “bogus” and ”genuine”, which allows countries to accept only a few refugees and exclude others.

As Foucault (2003:242) explains, biopower is preoccupied with the protection of the body of the nation, and is tightly intertwined with other types of power such as disciplinary power and sovereign power. In this sense the Swedish Migration Agency can be seen as a biopower institution that aims to regulate and control migration to Sweden and therefore can be seen as a “safeguard” of its national borders.

As our analysis in chapter five showed the applicants experienced the questioning of their victimhood during the assessment procedure. They also experienced, as we have seen in chapter six, the threat of deportation and were positioned as passive and rightless subjects. Many of the authors state that the Migration Agency wanted to get rid of them. One person writes the following: “It seems that it doesn’t matter that I exist, who I am, how I feel or what I’ve been through. They just want me to disappear”. A lot of narratives also highlight the lack of human value they experienced during the asylum process. One person writes: “For them we are just a mere name on a paper which they can erase”.

These utterances can be seen as an exposure of the subject position as the unwanted one. As we have mentioned before, the construction of the unwanted subject can be understood through the construction of the subject that can be denied and deported which we have described in previous chapters, namely through the disciplinary procedures and the laws that regulate the asylum process. Lilja and Vinthagen (2014:111) state that the subject of biopower is constructed gradually and materially through everyday practices. In this sense biopower can be seen as a “filter” that directs other institutional mechanisms and regulations toward identifying a small number of “genuine” applicant among the mass of “bogus” once.

As biopower is operating on the population level and is using statistics, these utterances can also be interpreted as pinpointing human value behind the numbers. Kmak (2014:395)
highlights that presenting the refugees as a mass of people, creates the image of refugees as harmful for the host societies as biopower is based on the triangle of freedom-fear-security. Although our empiric material does not allow an account for general practices of, and attitudes to asylum implementation in Sweden, asylum seekers are often presented in media as a problem, as we stated in the introduction to the study.

**Resistance to biopower**

As biopower is exercised on the level of population, the resistance to it should be seen as similar, meaning as social movements and resistance among populations (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2014:119). Our empirical material might be seen as a form of resistance to biopower if put in the context of digital media, as domain of the narratives. Due to that authors expose and criticise the perception of the refugees as a mass or names on the paper, they highlight the human and its value of each and individual case. Although each narrative individually is not seen as resistance to biopower, yet a collection published online for the open public might be a form of resistance. Whitlock (2015:248-250,259) states that the access to digital technologies opens up new space for activism as it creates an opportunity for sharing information global as well as for global mobilization.

One can also see the refugees as a global movement, as great number of people migrating to EU despite the danger, border controls and laws that prohibit their movements. Although they are not necessarily organized or aim to undermine the biopower, namely state security, they do threaten it if seen from the perspective of the host country.

To summarize, the construction of the subject who can be denied and be deported can be seen as a product of biopower as it gradually constructs “the unwanted”. On the other side it can also be seen as an effect of the phenomena taking place on the higher societal level where the amount of asylum seekers if presented as a threat to European nations and therefore they can be subjected to a procedure that questions their victimhood and regulations that incapacitate the applicant to enforce the voluntary deportation. As we have already mentioned, this study cannot take a full account for understanding the asylum process through the notion of biopower as we focus on the individual experiences, yet our finding suggest that it might be possible to interpret the narratives as a resistance to biopower with the regard to their open access on the internet.
Chapter 8: Conclusions and final discussion

In this chapter we will have a final discussion about our main findings in the study in relation to the previous research and our choice of method. We shall also raise some questions which occurred during the analysis and present them as possible suggestions for future research.

By using power perspective, through the notion of disciplinary power, sovereign power and biopower we have tried to analyse the experiences of the asylum procedure through the denied applicants’ perspective as it is described in their written narratives. By following Lilja and Vinthagen’s (2014:108) proposition we have outlined the power techniques experienced by the denied applicant during the asylum assessment procedure. Therefore we were able to identify the corresponding resistance strategies used by the denied asylum seekers during the asylum process.

Our findings show, the experiences of the asylum process seem to be about being assessed and assigned specific subject positions, namely the subject who can be denied and be deported. These subject positions seem to be used to identify a “fraud” asylum seeker as the authors experienced their victimhood been questioned by the Migration Agency through the techniques of interrogation, evidence base assessment process and surveillance of the applicants and their mobility history. These techniques can be seen as a way to legitimize and organize other techniques used during forced deportation such as criminalization of the applicants and the use of violence, namely forced sedation and detention. These findings are supported by previous research such as Kmak (2015:403) who explain deportation practices in relation to constructed subjects - the “bogus” and “genuine” refugee. Yet in contrast to the previous research, our findings show that the applicants are not just ascribed certain subject positions rather seems to negotiate them and even make attempts to mobilize others to support their resistance.

The family role appeared to be our most interesting and surprising finding as it hasn’t been discussed in previous studies. The method adopted in this study (CDA) and the power/resistance theories enabled us to identify the pattern of how the family is used as a resource in the negotiation of the subject positioning, both in terms of denial and deportation. If we look at the family unit through the power perspective it appears, as Foucault (2003:34,36) calls it, an ancient institution, which is important for power. For example within the disciplinary power the family is seen as a disciplinary institution which forms children
into effective subjects. This implies the importance of the family union, yet as our study shows, it does not fully apply to the asylum seekers, as family separation seems to take place in the asylum assessment procedure.

Kmak (2015:396) approaches the refugee subject in relation to the freedom of movement and highlights disparities between the rights of EU citizens and the refugees. We consider it possible that the role of the family might be seen in similar way depending on the person’s origin. Therefore it might be fruitful to further explore the integrity of the family union in relation to the asylum practices.

As our analysis shows resistance seems to take place during different stages of the asylum process and the applicants express resistance against power mechanisms applied upon them. For example, some applicants resist the disciplinary power mechanisms, such as evidence based assessment with irony and sarcasm. Some authors use the suffering of their family members as a way to prove their victimhood. As to the resistance to the sovereign power the authors expressed resistance in form of appealing to the human right discourse as a way to undermine the Migration Agency’s decisions and even perform hunger strikes. Due to that the resistance appears to take place on different levels it sometimes takes a form of mobilization and attempts to microactivism. Our research shows that the asylum seekers resistance seems to have no desired effect on the asylum process and in some cases inflicts violence upon the disobedient applicant.

As we have excluded the role of the host website in our study, we cannot draw any certain conclusion whether the resistance undermines the legitimacy of the subject positioning and deportation practices. Yet our findings imply that publishing the narratives for open access does have a potential to challenge such practices. The research on e-witnessing (Schaffer & Smith, 2014:224) and digital activism (Brivati, 2014:248,251) suggests that digital technologies allow both mobilization and sharing information globally and even expose how the social change takes place. Therefore we suggest looking deeper into the field of digital activism to be able to uncover how asylum seekers and their resistance could have an effect on the general asylum practices and even the migration discourse itself.

When we interpreted our findings through the notion of biopower, the applicants seemed to experience the unwanted subject position, which seems to be constructed gradually through
the production of the subjects who can be denied and deported. As Kmak (2015:403-405) and Schoultz (2013:232) point out the asylum practices are seen as a contradiction between the national security and the human rights discourses, which results into border control, criminalization of the asylum seekers and consequently produces the “fraud” refugee. This study cannot draw any concrete conclusions in this regard as it adopts only individual perspective of the denied applicants. Yet it implies that illegal travelling and the exposure of the dangers and inhumane conditions during the flight might have a potential to undermine the values associated with biopower, namely its preoccupation with national security, longevity and health. Therefore we suggest to further investigate how the resistance to the unwanted subject can be understood in relation to illegal migration and the exposure of the personal consequences of the flight published online.
List of reference

Books:


Academic articles:


Electronic sources:


