

# **Free Access to Public Transportation for Ukrainian Refugees**

Enhancing Social Participation and Inclusion Through Mobility

Master Thesis

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# Abstract

This research aims to examine how Ukrainian refugees, who came to Sweden in 2022, experienced the use of free public transportation and further, how this has influenced their social inclusion into Swedish society. Following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, more than 8 million Ukrainians have been displaced, with more than 50.000 Ukrainian refugees arriving in Sweden. Following the beginning of the war, a wave of solidarity spread throughout Europe, offering the displaced Ukrainians a number of solidarity measures, here among free access to national and transnational public transportation. A measure that was somewhat unheard of until that point. Through a phenomenological ethnographic framework, this paper combines mobility studies and refugee studies to understand how national and regional public transportation is experienced and how it impacts everyday mobility for Ukrainian refugees. The collected data has been obtained through semi-structured interviews with 21 Ukrainian refugees, with assistance from a translator, and entails personal perceptions and experiences with the free access to public transportation. Following the inductive approach, the observations and experiences of the phenomenon of free access to public transportation have formed the use of the theories and concepts of *Everyday Mobility*, *Time-Geography*, *(Im)mobility Justice*, and *Recognition Theory*. The main findings illustrate how structures such as placement, economy, authority figures, physical capabilities, and culture influence everyday mobility and the use of public transportation. Further, it demonstrates the significant interconnectedness between transportation accessibility and social inclusion for Ukrainian refugees. Moreover, through social and legal recognition, the Ukrainian refugees are enabled to act within the formation of a social identity in their current context of time and space. The research concludes that the free ticket allowed Ukrainian refugees' social participation in Swedish society while benefiting the individual's mental and physical well-being, and enhanced various aspects that were favourable for inclusion into society. Nonetheless, the abolition of the free access to public transportation resulted in a restricted everyday mobility and increased social exclusion.

**Keywords:** Mobility Justice; Social Participation; Integration; Mobility Behaviour; Transport Equity; Displaced Persons

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# 1. Introduction

War in Europe. The world woke up to this headline on the morning of the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 2022 after Russia started a full-scale attack on internationally acknowledged sovereign Ukrainian territory (UNGA A/ES-11/L.7). Ever since 2014, Ukrainian and Russian militaries have faced each other on the Eastern border of Ukraine, coming to an escalation in February 2022. Countless missiles and attacks from Russian forces on Ukrainian civilians have forced Ukrainians to become internally displaced persons or flee across international borders, with 90% of those being women and children (UNHCR Sverige, 2023). Millions of Ukrainians have fled the country. Alone in Europe, more than 8 million Ukrainians have been registered as refugees (UNHCR, 2023b). A wave of solidarity across European countries has welcomed and supported Ukrainian refugees. Beside state support and NGOs, countless civilians have offered Ukrainians housing accommodations, food support, clothes, and helped with bureaucracy. A special EU Temporary Protection Directive allows Ukrainians among other to remain in European states for more than a year without applying for asylum and to work. Many European state-led train services, e.g., Poland, Denmark, and Sweden offered free usage for Ukrainians. Furthermore, many regional public transport services allowed Ukrainians to use services for free. An act of support and solidarity towards refugees that was rather new. This research will elaborate on how this act of support has influenced the life of Ukrainian refugees in Sweden.

In Sweden, more than 50.000 Ukrainian refugees arrived within less than a year after the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 2022 (UNHCR, 2023b). In addition to several financial initiatives that support Ukraine, Sweden offered multiple local initiatives (Government Offices of Sweden, 2023). One of those is free access to public transportation that was introduced in several Swedish regions. In the wider Gothenburg and Malmö regions, which are Sweden's second and third biggest cities, free access to public transportation for Ukrainians has ended. However, it is still free for Ukrainians in Stockholm. This tool of public transportation to mobility and its correlation with everyday mobility and social inclusion is at the centre of this research.

Everyday mobility describes the movement of the individual that enables participation in society. Mobility in everyday life is enabled and limited by physical, mental, and social conditions (Stjernborg, 2014; Urry, 2007). Barriers, such as financial or physical obstacles can hinder mobility in everyday life, which can negatively influence active participation in society.

Social relations are harder to maintain or expand. Further, this can negatively influence the subjective well-being (Awaworyi Churchill and Smyth, 2019). Public transportation is, as research suggests, a resource efficient and sustainable option for people to be mobile (K2, 2022). Everyday mobility and taking part in society are especially relevant for refugees. Refugees often depend on public transportation in order to be mobile, as they often do not have a driver's licence or lack the financial means to own a car. Other modes of transport, such as biking, are not as common in non-European countries, often due to a lack of infrastructure or different transportation cultures, which can result in the limited use of bikes in a host country (Ipsos, 2022).

A great deal of the literature that is studied in the field covers how immobility impacts refugees. Though unprecedented, a feeling of European solidarity resulted in a wave of free public transportation for Ukrainian refugees following the Russian invasion in February 2022 (European Commission, 2022). Besides being a noble humanitarian act by European countries, this is an angle in the topic of refugees and mobility that has not been extensively studied yet. This thesis wants to investigate the effects of the phenomenon of free access to public transportation on the everyday life of Ukrainian refugees and how such may have influenced inclusion. Further, after more than six months with access to free public transportation, (less time in some countries) the 'free ticket' as it is hereafter called, was cancelled across the majority of Europe, leaving Ukrainian refugees to pay the regular fee when using public transportation (VisitUkraine, 2022b). What is interesting about first granting free access and then later revoking it, is that it gives us as researchers an opportunity to understand the effect of the 'free ticket' on everyday life, now that it is no longer available in the majority of Sweden.

## 1.1 Research Question

Studies taking place in Turkey, USA, England, etc. talk about how not having access to public transportation and being placed in spatial exclusive areas increase segregation and diminish the well-being of refugees (Ozkazanc, 2021; Ray and Reed, 2005; Smith et al., 2022). While these countries and the researched refugees all come from different cultural backgrounds, it is possible to add Ukrainian refugees and their free access to the debate in order to enhance the knowledge between refugees and public transportation. So, the question is: will having access to free public transportation actually benefit these aforementioned areas or is there a separate component to the issue of mobility and refugees that has not been yet considered?

With all these aspects in mind, this thesis will be based on the following research question:

*How and to what extent do Ukrainian refugees in Sweden from 2022 experience the phenomenon of free public transportation and what influence has it on everyday mobility and social inclusion for Ukrainian refugees in Swedish society?*

The research question is supported by the following questions: How important for inclusion and social life was the possibility of free public transportation? Is there even any notable difference with or without the ‘free ticket’? With the scientific framework of phenomenology, we strive to understand how mobility or immobility waves into the many aspects of inclusion from the experiences of Ukrainian refugees. More specifically, we investigate Ukrainian refugees' ability to conduct everyday life in Swedish society.

## 1.2 Delimitations

A more specific refugee definition will be elaborated in a later section, though it is important to understand where Ukrainian refugees are legally placed to understand the framework of our research. Placing Ukrainian refugees in a normative refugee perspective would not be correct. According to the 1951 Refugee Convention, a refugee is defined as a person, who is forced across international borders with a well-founded fear of persecution and who cannot be protected by the home country (Refugee Convention, Art. 1A, 1951). Refugees of war are normally placed in the conventional refugee definition. However, although Ukrainian refugees are fleeing from war, they are placed under the EU Directive which provides them with other conditions and rights than conventional refugees (EU Temporary Protection Directive, 2001).

The topic of refugee mobility can be fairly extensive without geographical and cultural delimitation. For this thesis, it was decided that the data collection and interlocutor pool consisted of Ukrainian refugees within Sweden as a field. Sweden was one of the European countries that extended the initiative for free public transportation for Ukrainian refugees back in June 2022, when other European countries such as Denmark and Poland cancelled the free ticket (VisitUkraine, 2022a,b). It was extended until November 1, 2022 (Oja, 2022). This provided an interesting research field as the notion of solidarity arguably was strengthened in the prolongation. Combined with Ukrainian refugees having access to free transportation for a



longer period, this allows a more thorough comparison of everyday refugee life *with* and *without* the free ticket. A further reason for choosing Sweden as the field is our collaboration with the Swedish Knowledge Centre on Public Transport – K2, located in Lund.

In this research, the use of wording was debated, both for it to fit into the research scope but also to show consideration towards the interlocutors. To better fit into the reach of this study it was decided to use the word *inclusion* instead of *integration* when talking about Ukrainian refugees' life in Swedish society. Integration is a complex concept with additional aspects that are not included in the research. Rather it is a multi-dimensional and on-going process that requires a readiness from the refugees to adapt to the host society's lifestyle without giving up their own (UNHCR, 2023a). The UNHCR uses the concept of integration as one of the three solutions, namely: voluntary repatriation, resettlement, and integration (UNHCR, 2023a). Further, if the interlocutors in this study wished to return to Ukraine, it can be debated whether they will try to fully integrate in the same way as refugees who intend to remain in Sweden. In this, the notion of them living in a state of limbo is emphasised. Therefore, the use of inclusion as a concept fits the research better, as it only touches upon the aspect of taking a socio-economic and possibly temporary part of society. In addition, the concept of inclusion is greatly applied in transportation literature, when among others looking at the mobility of older people or disabled (Stjernborg, 2014), drawing a connection between the topic of Ukrainian refugees and access to free public transportation.

Further, this thesis will use the word *war* when describing the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the following armed conflict. While the conflict in Ukraine legally has not been declared a war and legally stands as an international armed conflict, it is still bound by International Humanitarian Law (IHL) in the same way as declared wars (ICRC, 2023). In security policy, the conflict in Ukraine can be categorised as a war and not just as an international armed conflict as it fulfils specific criteria such as the number of deaths, use of force across international borders, and destruction of everyday life (Crawford & Pert, 2020; International Conferences, 1907). Despite the terminology being disputed, it was decided to use the term *war* as it is still subjected to the IHL laws and underlines the seriousness of the situation and follows the general consensus among international state leaders.

### 1.3 Disposition

This thesis will attempt to answer the question of how access to free public transportation relates to the everyday mobility and social inclusion of Ukrainian refugees in Sweden. After this 1) introduction the thesis will introduce the 2) methodological framework of phenomenology and the research methods that were used to obtain the data. It will explain the use of semi-structured interviews, the recruitment, and observations, as well as ethical considerations. 3) The literature review will introduce the empirical area and scholarly contributions that shape our research, which made it possible to place this research in the research gap. 4) The theories and concepts of Everyday Mobility, Time-Geography, and Recognition will be outlined. 5) This is followed by a contextualisation of the historical and legal background necessary to apprehend the following 6) analysis, 7) discussion, and 8) reflection. This thesis will conclude with 9) a validity and credibility assessment of the research, followed by 10) an encapsulated answer to our research question.

## 2. Methodology and Methods

In the following chapter, the scientific framework of phenomenology and an inductive ethnographic approach are elaborated. Further, it is illuminated how the data collection, semi-structured interviews, and personal position were approached. The chapter ends with a section on ethical considerations.

### 2.1 Scientific Approach

When using a scientific approach in research like this, one can see it as a framework for how the data and study is understood. According to Egholm (2014), theory and scientific approach are lenses through which one can observe the investigated phenomena. This thesis will be accomplished on the basis of phenomenology and the analytical principles of said approach to examine how Ukrainian refugees who came to Sweden in 2022 experienced free access to public transportation and how it affected their everyday mobility (Egholm, 2014).

Phenomenology is the study of how a phenomenon is experienced in intentionality, (i.e., the intentional action of the experience) and what significance it has to the experience from a first-person narrative (Ahmed, 2007; Egholm, 2014). Phenomenology seeks to describe

a phenomenon or experience as it is lived based on the person who experiences it and is often analysed in a greatly descriptive and context-based way. Egholm (2014) describes phenomenology as “*to understand human experience and action [...] phenomenology is interested in describing and understanding phenomena and practices*” (p. 102). The perspective argues how a phenomenon cannot be studied independently from how they appear in an individual's conscious experience and that it must be understood in contextualisation (sensory qualities; socio-cultural and historical conditions; linguistics; conscience; etc..) to the individual.

In phenomenology, a phenomenon can be objects, events, tools, the flow of time, self, and other things that arise as an experience in an individual's *Life World*. The *Life world* is the world one exists in without scientific interpretation and it incorporates how a phenomenon appears in the conscious experience and everyday life (Egholm, 2014; Kusenbach, 2003). It is in the *Life World* of Ukrainian refugees that we aim to uncover how the phenomenon of free public transportation is experienced in respect to their everyday life. As it is the framework of the study, phenomenology recurs in several parts of this thesis, e.g., the research question, the interview guide, the reflection of self-position, the coding, and the analysis of the data. The research question for this study has been written with the scientific approach in mind and illustrated the aim to investigate experiences and everyday life of Ukrainian refugees.

As the phenomenological perspective focuses on how phenomena, (in our case the effect of free public transportation in everyday life) manifest itself for the individual (Ukrainian refugees), it is important for the research and analysis to be conducted without the researchers preconceived notions surrounding the phenomena. These notions would interfere with the results and understanding of the experience. With this in mind, we have included a section titled ‘*Personal Position and Identity*’ to uncover any preconceived notions we might have had before the beginning of the research and thereby limited the chance of them affecting our results.

### 2.1.1 Research Design

This research design is based on a qualitative ethnographic study, as it intends to observe and examine Ukrainian refugees in Sweden and their everyday mobility, experience with public transportation, and the effect that free access to public transportation had for the inclusion from

their own perspective. Ethnographic research provides the opportunity to get an in-depth insight into a specific culture or group of people in the specific context of time and space that they exist in (Schultz & Lavenda, 2014). Through the framework of phenomenology, it is possible to gather information explaining the interlocutors' experiences (Egholm, 2014).

Furthermore, an inductive approach has been the primary method of research for the study (Bernard, 2017). This research started out with the acknowledgement of the phenomenon of free access to public transportation for Ukrainian refugees in Sweden. According to academic literature, which will be expanded on in the literature review, this is a very rare phenomenon (Geis, 2019), and thereby a new and unknown field. Cross-borders mobility of refugees has been investigated (Lucht, 2011; Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013), though the free access to transportation for refugees' internal mobility has not been as researched. Therefore, it is an undisclosed territory that this research examines and later on, analyses through theories and concepts to understand the specific case. Before conducting the interviews, a minor online search was done to get an initial understanding of the framework surrounding the free access to public transportation, followed by the main data collection, namely semi-structured interviews. To be able to understand this phenomenon and how it was experienced, this research has been working with Ukrainian refugees and ended up with seven individual interviews, one focus group, and a larger group interview, giving a total of 21 interlocutors. The fieldwork and data collection were done over the months of February and March 2023, and dealt with the experiences of Ukrainian refugees in Sweden occurring from March 2022 to March 2023. What is special with this research and in line with an inductive approach is that the collected data is what provided us with concepts and theories. In the following sections, the methodological approach used for this research will be elaborated.

## 2.2 Research Methods

To conduct research, various qualitative or quantitative methods can be used. In the following section, it is elaborated on how the research field was approached, accessed, and how the data in this research was collected. Furthermore, it allows insight into challenges and possibilities that were approached throughout the research and ethical considerations that have been acknowledged.

## 2.2.1 Accessing the Field and Data Collection

The research field of Ukrainian refugees was limited to Sweden. The following step included determining that for reasons of protection of minors, all interlocutors should be above the age of 18 years and therefore, considered legal adults according to Swedish law. Afterward, we chose to access the field through non-probability sampling methods, which is the unbiased sampling to receive a few in-depth cases that can be analysed (Bernard, 2017). These methods allowed us to choose the interlocutor according to their individual experiences – in our case following phenomenology, people with a first-person point of view, who have fled the war from Ukraine to Sweden in 2022 and have experienced or are still experiencing free access to public transportation in Sweden. Our primary aim was to get in contact with people that could act as interlocutors through snowball sampling, as this method allows researchers to reach groups in society that are not easily accessed (Bernard, 2017). Our recruitment resulted in an interlocutor pool of 21 Ukrainian refugees. The ages range from 26 to 68 years old with the majority being 40 years or older. The pool consists of 16 women and 5 men, giving a reasonable indication of Ukrainian society in Sweden, as arguably more women than men came to Sweden as a result of the war. Additionally, our interlocutor pool represents both Ukrainians living in bigger cities like Malmö and Stockholm (where the free ticket still exists) and smaller villages such as Furulund and Lomma, which adds a nuance to our findings (see Appendix 5 for a map of Skåne and Stockholm). For the purpose of confidentiality, all names will be pseudonyms. Further details can be found in Appendix 3 for an overview of interlocutors.

### 2.2.1.1 Recruitment

As a first step, we asked colleagues, family, and friends if they knew any Ukrainian refugees in their social surroundings. This informal convenience approach (Bernard, 2017) resulted in 3 contacts that were forwarded to us. One of the contacts that was forwarded resulted in an immediate interview. However, the other two contacts acted as gatekeepers that were in a position to direct us to further interlocutors and forwarded our contact details as a part of snowball sampling (Bernard, 2017). They referred us to other people who would fit our research limitations and were willing to answer our questions in a meeting. As a result, from the three Ukrainian contacts, we were able to schedule and conduct five individual interviews, and one focus group interview.

As a second step, it was decided to broaden the search method to find interlocutors. Once again convenience sampling was used in the hope of grabbing the attention of someone who could refer us to a possible interlocutor. Thus, we sent an email to the NGO “Amnesty International” located in Sweden. Unfortunately, the email resulted in no further connection. Nonetheless, with the same approach, an email was sent to a former contact person that worked at the Swedish Red Cross. It was a contact person through previous voluntary work at the Red Cross in Malmö. Through the contacts' help and continued snowball sampling one more interview with a Ukrainian refugee was scheduled and conducted. Furthermore, the Red Cross contact person was able to refer us to ABF (Workers Educational Association in Sweden). An email to ABF resulted in us getting in contact with a Swedish language teacher who invited us to conduct a group interview with her class.

Further to access the field, it was decided to conduct a targeted convenience sampling method (Bernard, 2017) and to use Facebook as an access tool to the field. To target the request for interlocutors we chose to direct our request to a group that was more likely to be fitting in the interview criteria. Thus, specific Facebook groups were joined. These groups promoted assistance and connected Ukrainians in Sweden, among other groups such as “Ukrainians in Sweden” or “Stand with Ukraine! Nordics”. The requests were written in English and Ukrainian. Unfortunately, the posts did not result in any further contact with Ukrainian refugees in Sweden.

The last Facebook request aimed to collect data in this research was sent into a private Red Cross volunteer Facebook chat, which could be accessed because of previous voluntary involvement, with the approval of the Team leader who acted as a gatekeeper (Bernard, 2017). As a result, one person was able to refer to what we would define as semi-expert in the field, as will be further discussed in the later section ‘*Interviews*’.

### 2.2.2 Personal Position and Identity

As phenomenology aims to describe and understand phenomena from a first-person narrative without prejudice and preconceived notions from the interviewer (Egholm, 2014) we will include in this section our own personal positions and identity. During our fieldwork, we noticed several factors that could affect our interviews and observations. This section will demonstrate an awareness of any personal biases or beliefs that could affect our findings and

thereby, limit the impact. Factors such as age, nationality, and language were out of our control, yet they could still impact our position in the field. As we are looking at the interlocutors' experiences in their own contextuality, our own context was important to understand.

The fact that we, the authors, live in Sweden and Denmark, countries where the Ukrainian refugees have fled to and are dependent on could unintentionally affect the researcher/interlocutor relationship, as it may create a social hierarchy as will be further elaborated in the *'Reflection'*. Further, the fact that both of us are younger than the majority of our interlocutors, could tilt the researcher/interlocutor relationship, as they possibly perceive us as not as significant as if we had been established researchers. However, this seemed not to be an immediate issue.

Further, war and the traumatic events that follow is a sensitive topic, so the differences in experience with this can affect the conversation between the interlocutor and us and how much is morally justifiable to ask (Bernard, 2017). As we are both students coming from countries that are perceived as well-off with significant social-, and personal security, it can be difficult to understand where other people are coming from, and while we have tried to uphold an awareness of personal opinions, this might still be affecting factors. Throughout the Master's program with a specialisation in Global Refugee Studies, we have been taught what refugeehood is and how such can affect lives. However, we are aware that refugees cannot be generalised and there is not just one specific description of their experiences. Especially, when working with refugees that are affected by different legal implications through the EU Directive. Moreover, prior to conducting the interviews we had an idea of what some of the preliminary answers would be, something that could have affected our results if we had not been aware of this. All these factors needed to be made aware of and considered when doing our research and the following coding and analysis of data, in order to keep our own position and prejudices out of the context.

### 2.2.3 Deploying Research Methods

After attaining access to the field, followed by the interlocutor recruitment through, among others, personal contacts and snowballing, the next step is to deploy the various research methods used to obtain the data needed. The following sections will present the research

methods of semi-structured interviews, a focus group interview, a group interview, and field observations – all taking part in this research.

### 2.2.3.1 Interviews

Prior to conducting the interviews, the primary modes of communication to plan possible interviews were the messenger applications “WhatsApp” and “Telegram”. As the interlocutors in majority speak Ukrainian and Russian, and our primary language in an international setting is English, we faced a language barrier. Throughout the online communication we used Google Translate to tackle the barrier. For the interviews, translators speaking Ukrainian and Russian assisted. The effects of the language barrier will be further discussed in the ‘*Reflection*’ section.

The perpetuity of an interview situation is described by the amount of control that is asserted over the interlocutor and their responses. The different types of interview styles range from unstructured interviews to completely structured interviews to set questionnaires. All of which are useful for different kinds of data collection and research (Bernard, 2017). Based on learned experience from previously conducted ethnographic fieldwork, semi-structured interviews seemed to be the best method to conduct our interviews. The semi-structured interview guide allowed us to guide the conversation in the direction that fitted our research question without being locked to a list of completely set questions and still let the conversation go where the interlocutor led (Bernard, 2017).

This at least was our goal, however in praxis, our interview guide tended to resemble a structured guide, which is why some of the interviews could be argued to be more structured. As the interviews were done through translation, it restricted the conversation. The challenges and implications of the translation will be further elaborated on in the section of ‘*Reflection*’. As can be seen in Appendix 2, the interview guide consisted of background questions and three main themes, hereunder 2 - 4 broad open-ended questions to instigate the conversation. This is normally what is expected of a semi-structured interview, yet the additional sub-questions to the guide leaned more towards a structured conversation. However, these were only meant to be used if the conversation halted and we would not obtain enough data from the natural conversation. The use of public transportation could be argued to be a topic that most people do not consider deeply, and it can be hard for people to elaborate a lot on their experiences. As our study was on this very specific topic, sub-questions were needed. The three main themes



were 1) Inclusion, 2) Public transportation, and 3) Free access to public transportation. The questions touched upon the interlocutors' past and present experiences in their everyday life, public transportation, and interactions with others. Our interview guide followed the phenomenological perspective as it focused on the interlocutors' experience with free access to public transportation in the contextualisation of their everyday life after fleeing to Sweden. Further, it acknowledged the intention with the experience from going from A to B and through this expanded on their *Life World* and social interaction with society.

Our first individual interviews were with interlocutors Anna (64) and Denys (68) (Appendix 4) and resulted in a less structured interview approach. These interviews were based on a lot of emotions and a great deal of storytelling, to the point where the verbal respondent had to be redirected, so the focus returned to our topic and not as much on stories about their previous livelihood. Stories are usually where the hidden details can be found but only if they still surround the specific topic (Marcus, 1995). In other interviews, such as the one with Mariya (33) we had to pose more questions to get enough data, making the interview more structured. The interview with Viktoriya (26) ended up providing us with knowledge in a different way than anticipated. As she worked in a centre for Ukrainian refugees, she was able to contribute with stories and experiences from other refugees, as well as her own. Therefore, we will argue for her to be an 'expanded' interlocutor with semi-expert knowledge. However, during the interview we needed to remind her to tell us about her own experiences and not just what others told her.

We had the opportunity to gather a group of Ukrainian women, who knew each other, to do a focus group interview (Bernard, 2017; Appendix 3). The benefit of a focus group is to get a deeper insight into the topic from an emic perspective and get a greater understanding to form the right questions for the following interviews (Bernard, 2017). The preliminary results from the focus group did exactly that. It gave us an insight that was very useful for the other interviews, such as the vital influence on everyday activities such as grocery shopping. However, one benefit of a focus group is how the participants' ping-pong off of each other while the interviewer can listen to the conversation in a more 'observer' way (Bernard, 2017). As the interview was in Ukrainian, the plan was for the translator to translate each statement, though that proved to be more difficult than anticipated. The interviews were conducted in a manner where the questions were posed in English to the translator, who then translated it into

Ukrainian/Russian. The response of the interlocutors was given in Ukrainian/Russian and then translated back to English by the translator. Based on this translated answer, the next question was asked. Even though the translator was very good at remembering who said what, it was not possible to translate after every statement as the conversation developed too fast and the ping-pong/observer aspect lost its effect. Lastly, we conducted a group interview that was loosely based on the individual interview guide. Again, translation was done continuously with the conversation, which left us with a deeper understanding of the broadness of the issue of free access to public transportation. Because of the use of translators in the majority of the interviews, a part of the quotes in the analysis will be written in the third person, while the quotes obtained in the interviews without a translator will be from a first-person perspective.

As the majority of our interviews were conducted with a translator to mediate between English and Ukrainian/Russian, the amount and the effect of probing techniques was fairly limited. Probing is in a great deal used as a way for the interviewer to get more information out of the interlocutor without asking more or new questions (Bernard, 2017). It is a way of responding to the interlocutor, which can be lost when the interview is not a fluent conversation, as can be the case with translated interviews. The majority of the probing that was used in these interviews were smiling and nodding; the ‘tell me more’ or ‘can you elaborate on that’; and the ‘summing up’ probing (Bernard, 2017). Lastly, we considered the language of the interview guide as well as the language used in recruitment and interview situations to foresee how it would affect and possibly colour our results and interlocutor pool.

### 2.2.3.2 Observations

As the interviews were conducted through translation, we were able to observe to a bigger extent the interlocutors' reactions to the questions, while we were waiting for the translation. One of the things that we noticed was the emotional reactions of the interlocutor to the various questions and information. It was possible for us to sense their frustrations and gratefulness at the same time, an example of this was when Anna and Denys got emotional when talking about their arrival to Sweden. Another when Kateryna laughed at the fact that she was not being given financial aid in Sweden because she still received a pension from Ukraine.

Moreover, we ended up in an accidental participant observation, when we went to Furulund to conduct our focus group interview (Bernard, 2017). One of the things they flagged

was the lack of regular public transportation, which we felt the effect of when we left the village. The next train to Malmö was two hours later. We ended up taking a train in the opposite direction to catch a connecting train in a bigger city that could bring us back to Malmö, illustrating the troubles of Ukrainians living in the countryside. This can of course be argued to be experienced differently for us than for the Ukrainian refugees as our contextualisation is different than theirs. Thus, the observations helped us to recognise emotional reactions of the interlocutors when discussing the issue, as well as it helped to understand challenges based on geographical locations.

### 2.2.3.3 Coding of Data

In accordance with an inductive research approach, the theories and concepts for this study were decided after the data was collected. In doing so, we looked at the responses from our interlocutors and discovered what they found important within their experiences with access to free public transportation. Afterwards, it was decided which theories and concepts would be most useful to answer the research question. With this in mind, it was agreed that the coding of the data would be done in a combination of an *emic* and *etic* coding approach.

Coding is about dividing the collected data into underlying themes and categories that will assist in the analysis and discussion. In the *emic* approach of coding, themes are developed on the basis of what the interlocutor finds important and focuses on in the interviews (Belk, Fischer, & Kozinets, 2013). The *emic* approach lets the researchers stay true to the interlocutors as they let the data speak for itself and demonstrate the significance for the participants – while still acknowledging preconceived notions (Belk, Fischer, & Kozinets, 2013). This also follows the inductive approach, correlating with our research design. As can be seen in Appendix 6, we placed the data into seven *emic* categories focusing on inter alia inclusion, economy, isolation, and passport.

The *etic* coding approach targets the data in a more researcher-minded direction, as the themes and categories are decided beforehand by the researchers with the research question and theories in mind (Belk, Fischer, & Kozinets, 2013). As this study wanted to investigate the experiences of free public transportation and the effect it had on everyday life, six themes were chosen for the *etic* approach. These themes focused on power structures, everyday life, and social hierarchy, as can be seen in Appendix 6. While this method can be seen as a deductive

approach, (Belk, Fischer, & Kozinets, 2013) since the theories and concepts were not decided before the collection of the data and the initial read-throughs, we argue that the use of etic coding in this perspective still undergoes an inductive research approach.

#### 2.2.3.4 Ethical Considerations

Due to the complex nature of the topic we had to make certain ethical considerations and limitations to this research. Ethical considerations are especially of relevance during fieldwork and interviews, as a crucial guideline is “to not harm” the interlocutors' mental or physical well-being (AAA, 2012). In the following section, it is elaborated which considerations were made throughout this study.

As there are many different approaches to tackle all relevant ethical considerations, we have decided to follow Bernard's (2017) and the American Association of Anthropologist's (AAA) approaches to honestly ask ourselves “Is this ethical”? The truth is that this study included interviews with refugees who have fled their home country not even a year before the time of the interviews. While they live in Sweden now, their family, friends, and people still live in a country overshadowed by the war. By recognizing this during the interviews we aimed to be as sensitive to the issue as we could, without taking on a bias or tainting relevant questions of the interview guide.

One of the main considerations was the language that was used during the interviews and for the “Page of Consent” (AAA, 2012; Eaton, 2020; Conley et al. 1979). As many Ukrainians speak Russian and Ukrainian due to the country's history, we had to make a decision on what language we wanted to use for the interview requests made on Facebook and the page of consent. We were aware that choosing a specific language could be understood as a political statement (Conley et al. 1979). Thus, by using Ukrainian we followed the European parliament's consent, as well as the UN Resolution (UNGA A/ES-11/L.7, 2023; European Parliament, 2023) that Russia's full-scale attack on Ukraine is unjustified. Therefore, to reach all possible interlocutors and ensure that they have read and understood the “Page of Consent”, we decided to use Ukrainian. In addition, using Ukrainian instead of Russian may have helped us build rapport with the interlocutors. The same logic was followed in this study for specific wording.

To allow the interlocutors to speak freely we used a translator that spoke Russian and Ukrainian and then let the interlocutors decide which language they felt more comfortable with. It is to mention that the translators used were not professional translators and had a personal relationship with the interviewers. Thus, there was a risk that the communication between interviewer and translator was influenced by personal relations. For instance, it could animate the translator to comment or question the interview guide. To avoid this, we conducted a short briefing before every interview in which we told the translator that this interview must be seen as a professional meeting. Further, it was highlighted that it was of importance to translate the interlocutors' answers and our question as close to the original phrase as possible. Private comments or opinions of the translator had to be avoided throughout all interviews. However, using a translator and conducting interviews in English and Ukrainian/Russian has limited us in understanding the possibly available data and thereby, hinder the analysis as will be further discussed in the section '*Reflection*'.

This observation aligns with the interlocutors' well-being. As mentioned at the beginning of this section, the war is a rather new and still ongoing event that can heavily traumatise the interlocutors. Thus, we decided to not directly ask any sensitive questions that focus on the war in Ukraine. However, as sensitivity is a subjective impression, we could never guarantee that the questions asked would not bring up or remind the interlocutors about traumatising events. To avoid such, we conducted semi-structured interviews that would pose our questions but leave it up to the interlocutor how much they wanted to go into detail. Nonetheless, some interlocutors got emotional throughout the interviews. In those situations, we tried to remain neutral but understanding – allowing them to feel comfortable to be emotional in front of us.

Another ethical consideration must be made in regard to personal relations between the interlocutors and the gatekeepers that referred us to them through snowball sampling. Most of the gatekeepers have previously helped or supported the interviewees with finding accommodations, introducing them to social events, or similar. This could imply that the interlocutors felt obliged to talk to us to return the favour to the people that have helped them. Thus, we needed to assure all interlocutors multiple times that the interviews should be viewed as a “safe space” and that they always have the option to be anonymous.

### 2.2.3.5 Literature Search

For the literature review, the academic literature was obtained through Aalborg University Library online search platform, Scopus, and in collaboration with the research institute K2. The search has been conducted with the following keywords:

*Table 1: Keywords used for literature search.*

	<b>Keywords</b>
Search 1	Refugee*; Migrant*; Ethnic minorit*; Minorit*; Integrat*; Asylum seeker; Ukrainian refug*; Social exclusion; Spatial segregation
Search 2	Transport*; Mobilit*; Mobility justice; Accessib*; Public transport; Transport barriers; Transport disadvantag*

As will be discussed in the following section, there seems to be a gap in comprehensive literature that discusses refugees and the access to public transport. Hence, it was decided to also include literature that discusses the mobility and access to mobility of other minorities or people with barriers to mobility, e.g., older people. After a screening process that excluded articles and books that were deemed less relevant in regards to the research question, 9 articles and books were used for this research.

## 3. Literature Review

Transportation and mobility are research fields that often are overlooked by the general public. To understand the literature framework surrounding our study of access to public transportation for Ukrainian refugees, it is essential to know the extent and content of existing relevant literature. This section will present just that.

Transportation and mobility literature gives an indication of how important the ability of being a part of a socio-cultural society is for an individual and how much this depends on the accessibility and availability of access to transportation infrastructures. Hagan (2020) argues, in his article about older people in rural Northern Ireland, that the access to transportation improves the quality of life and mental well-being. Additionally, he observes how transportation is much more than a means to go from A to B as it takes part of the concept

of ‘The Third Place’. This concept describes the mode of transport, where individuals have the opportunity to meet new people, socialise, and experience a form of togetherness. Thus, it is seen as a way to prevent social or mental loneliness. Further, relevant literature supports this by underlining how access to transportation enables social participation and inclusion into society, for instance in accessibility to reach employment, social activities, and education.

However, what is strongly debated in the literature is the consequences of not having access to transportation due to external or internal capability restrictions and mobility constraints. Lucas et al. (2016) discuss in the article ‘Transport Poverty and Its Adverse Social Consequences’, how transport poverty, while not fully academically determined, can be measured through four instruments of transport affordability; mobility poverty; accessibility poverty; and exposure to transport externalities. These entail 1) whether an individual is forced to distribute more travel cost than reasonable according to income, which can lead to social and essential expenditure sacrifices; 2) the systemic lack of transportation and mobility options such as infrastructure and services, leading to mobility stuckness or immobility; 3) whether an individual is able to reach their daily activities with a reasonable cost, time, and ease while considering the quality and safety of the travel experience. The latter instrument correlates with Hagan’s (2020) argument that the access to transportation has a big influence on social inclusion of the individual, thus emphasising the impact accessibility poverty has on social exclusion. A statement that is backed up by a majority of relevant literature used in this review. 4) The last instrument deals with the environmental related effects of transportation poverty, such as exposure to pollution, traffic-related pedestrian accidents, and disadvantages on livelihoods and communities from transport infrastructure projects – especially affecting low-income communities. It is in particular this inequality between high-, and low-income individuals that is debated in transportation and mobility literature.

Lucas et al. (2019) argue in the book ‘Measuring Transport Equity’, how the negative consequences of unjust distribution of mobility resources and accessibility often are disproportionately affecting vulnerable individuals such as older people, low-income and children. In accord with Lucas et al. (2016), this book lists pollution, fatalities, and especially social exclusion and reduced community well-being as the main consequences of transport inequity for vulnerable social groups. In her own research, Karen Lucas (2012) defines social exclusion as the inability to take part in ordinary activities and relationships and the lack of

resources and rights for general everyday life. Lucas emphasises the importance when studying mobility-related exclusion, of understanding that social exclusion deals with the interactions between factors of the individuals, such as gender, age, ethnicity, disability, and factors of societal structures such as unavailable infrastructure (2012). Further, Lucas et al. (2016) claim that transportation investments based on the agenda of economic and environmental growth are prone to benefit non-low-income individuals. While a great deal of transportation and (im)mobility literature is based on older and disabled people among others, a few researchers have examined the effect it has on immigrants and refugees. Andersson (2012) examines, in the chapter ‘Understanding Ethnic Minorities Settlement’, the patterns of national, interregional, and intraregional mobility regarding ethnic minority settlement in Sweden. Employment, finances, housing situation, social networks, and demographics all take on different roles in how likely people are to migrate around the country. While the category of labour market migration presents a deviance, immigrants show in most other categories to have a higher tendency to move than native Swedes. Though low-income often is predicted to be a factor for immobility, Andersson’s research indicates that researched subjects on social allowance show a higher probability of moving than those who are not. Further, immigrants are often located in the outskirts of bigger cities in ethnic minority communities, especially around Malmö, Stockholm, and Gothenburg (Andersson, 2012).

Andersson is not the only researcher who has been looking at immigrant mobility. In the article ‘Short-distance Mobility of New Immigrants in the Rhine-Main Region in Germany’, Isabella Geis (2019) observes mobility as a vital part of social participation and integration into a host society. This is followed by Hagan (2020) who claims that “*mobility is the glue holding social communities together*” (p. 2521) and that it is a necessity to uphold a sense of normalcy and independence. Though Andersson looks at mobility patterns of *who* and *how much*, Ozkazanc (2021) and Smith et al. (2022) debate what effect mobility and access to transportation or lack thereof has on refugees’ settlement. In the study of Syrian refugees in Turkey (Ozkazanc 2021), refugees are placed into established Syrian-only communities with slight transportation accessibility. Thus, their lack of mobility results in a segregation of the Turkish society, in accordance with Geis’s (2019) argument that the studied refugees in Germany living in isolated areas are more at risk of being less mobile and having fewer social networks resulting in social exclusion and unemployment. Geis’s (2019) investigation of mobility constraints and opportunities for refugees, illustrates that refugees have a different



mobility behaviour and less reliance on car mobility than native Germans, further emphasising the importance of public transportation. What is visible in the relevant transportation and mobility literature is how big of an impact mobility and access to and availability of transportation has on social, economic, and cultural inclusion into a society, especially for vulnerable and low-income individuals. Ray and Reed (2005) support this by stating that one of the core conclusions in mobility studies is that immigration can lead to social segregation or exclusion if immigrants are restricted to specific areas of a community and thereby only have limited contact with the host society and its population. Smith et al. (2022) argue in the article 'Transportation Mobility and Well-Being Among Tucson Refugees', that even with mobility and accessible transportation infrastructures that can form social connections and employment, various barriers can hinder refugees' social integration into the host society and their perception of well-being. Especially, language, simplicity, economy, technology, and internal and external culture influence their use of public transportation and in correlation their everyday lives post-settlement. Concurrent with this, Ozkazanc's (2021) reasons for the Syrian refugees' segregation of Turkish society are transportation accessibility and economy, however the differences are the similar language and cultural barriers, indicating that these are not necessarily the main attributions to social exclusion.

What this literature has in common is the examination of the impact that a lack of availability and access to proper and just transportation have for vulnerable social groups. While Hagan (2020) illustrates in his research the positive effects public transportation has on older people's mental health and social inclusion in the concept of 'The Third Place', most of the literature relevant for this study examines the issues following *not* having transportation access or availability. As Geis (2019) states, it is uncommon for free or discounted public transportation for refugees to occur. As a result, there is a gap in the literature examining the effects on social and everyday life *if* refugees had access to free public transportation. It is this exact research gap that this study aimed to fill. Since the free access to public transportation has been revoked in most European countries it was possible to do a comparison of everyday life and well-being of Ukrainian refugees when they *had* free access and when they *did not*. Such comparison could possibly give an insight in refugee inclusion from an angle that has only been speculated this far. By combining the two research spheres of mobility and refugee studies, combined with the phenomenon of free access, this research will add to the underrepresented discussion of refugee mobility.

## 4. Theories and Concepts

As this research aims to answer how Ukrainian refugees experienced the phenomenon of free public transportation and how this influenced everyday mobility and social inclusion, the following theories and concepts were chosen for the analysis. The mobility concepts of *Everyday Mobility* and *Mobility Justice* are elaborated in an intertwined explanation of the basic concepts that define mobility. This is followed by an examination of *Time-Geography*, elaborating on how the context of time and space can produce mobility constraints and enablers. The phenomenon of free access to public transport will be approached through the theory of *Recognition* that enlightens the understanding of everyday mobility and social inclusion, based on the concepts of social hierarchy and legal equality. Lastly, to enhance the understanding of the ability of refugees to act within said constraints and enablers, the concept of *Agency* will be shortly discussed.

### 4.1 Mobility, Mobility Justice, and Everyday Mobility

Mobility is exercised and conceptualised in different ways. Mobility can include everyday grocery shopping, a holiday trip to another state, or the flight for safety across national borders. Although mobility can be exercised in different forms, Cresswell argues (2010) that mobility is always felt through the body as mobility always begins and ends with the movement of the physical body. Urry (2007) argues that mobility is influenced by different conditions and structures that enable or hinder mobility. He argues that network capital is the precondition that serves the capability of the individual to be mobile. Such can be for example a certain legal status like under the EU Directive (Elliott & Urry, 2010), or the financial means to buy a ticket. However, mobility and enabling capital are deeply connected to power relations that can regulate the movement of the individual or of a group (Bohman et al., 2021; Sheller, 2018; Stjernborg, 2019). Urry (2007) and Hägerstrand (1970) argue the regulations are based on vertical power structures in which society is conditioned according to the power that is attributed to the individual's status. Such can be influenced inter alia through ethnicity (Cresswell, 2010; Sheller, 2018; Urry, 2007), or social class (Urry, 2007). Further, the social context connected to a social position can have material and physical consequences (Cresswell, 2010). In addition, the social context connected to a social position can have material and

physical consequences (Cresswell, 2010). Thus, power relations enable or challenge mobility. This can result in a refugee moving differently than a tourist (Cresswell, 2010).

With mobility being regulated and restricted by power structures and the different meanings ascribed to the individual, mobility can be validated differently (Adey, 2009; Cresswell, 2010). This also influences everyday mobility. As everyday mobility, one can understand the movement of everyday life that allows the individual to participate in society. This entails the social, physical, and mental capacity to do so (Stjernborg, 2014; Urry, 2007). Berg (2016) argues everyday mobility can contribute or even be vital to structure everyday life, for example, when Ukrainian refugees structure their day around the commute to the language school. Nonetheless, influenced by power structure, mobility is not always exercised in equal form. Sheller (2018) argues for awareness of the concept of Mobility Justice which elaborates on the unequal distribution of mobility and resources that are connected to the individual's (im)mobility. It goes beyond mobility and argues for the interconnectedness between all attributes that can influence mobility. This includes inter alia the freedom, the accessibility, and physical barriers to movement (Sheller, 2018).

Sheller (2018) claims that mobility is a concept not available to everyone in the same way. It is influenced and restricted by outside factors that condition the possibility to movement. Such can be, among other, a physical constraint to accessibility, for example when the placement of Ukrainian refugees collides with the physical ability to reach transport nodes that are not in proximity and thus, difficult to reach. Sheller (2018) argues uneven access and distribution of the possibility to movement influences the individual's possibility to move within a society – highly influenced and reinforced through power relations that place the individual in a cultural, historical, and social context (Cresswell, 2006; Sheller, 2018; Sheller & Urry, 2006; Stjernborg, 2017). Thus, applying the concepts of mobility to Ukrainian refugees can allow insights into the possibility to participate in society through the free access to public transportation, while placing them in a cultural and social contextualisation. In order to understand the crucial impacts that mobility can have on everyday life, one must understand the correlation of power structures and mobility.

## 4.2 Time-Geography

A bottom-up approach by Torsten Hägerstrand (1970) argues for a similar interrelationship between external factors and the mobility of the individual. Furthermore, Hägerstrand argues for a correlation between the time and location of the individual body, which is restricted by the specific surroundings that challenge everyday mobility. He argues that daily activities of movement require resources that need to be available at the specific time and the specific location of the individual body that wants to move.

However, Hägerstrand argues alongside Cresswell (2010), Sheller (2018), and Urry (2007) that migrants move differently within a society than national citizens do. He claims migrants are more than others confronted with legal and cultural norms that can restrict their mobility in a time-space context. Such constraints, Hägerstrand claims, are imposed by society on everyone and cannot be ignored or circumvented by the individual. However, how those constraints influence everyday movement depends, as mentioned before, on the status and the resources of the individual. This analysis will use the constraints in Time-Geography to understand the structures that enable or hinder agency, the use of public transportation and social inclusion for the Ukrainian refugees. Structures that pose a barrier to mobility will hereafter be called “authority constraints”, while structures that enable mobility will be called “authority enablers”.

There are three common constraints that Hägerstrand mentions: coupling constraints, authority constraints, and capability constraints (1970). In this research *coupling constraints* was not an important factor during the interviews therefore, it was decided to exclude from the analysis. *Authority constraints* are according to Hägerstrand the constraints imposed by an authority that is in a power position. Such a position can be contained by an individual or by a group and is over a certain domain. Here we will include the notion of authority enablers as well. As a domain, Hägerstrand defines different areas in which power can be executed by the power holder. The authorities in question for this research are mainly the Migration Agency, who for instance has power over the monthly allowance given to Ukrainian refugees and the Transport Agencies who among other control the implementation and abolition of the ‘free ticket’. Thus, a domain can take different forms. Further, it can have a legal and permanent status, such as for example, the EU Directive which the Ukrainians are placed under (Hägerstrand, 1970; Stjernborg, 2021). The availability and access of the domain can vary

between individuals and be constrained by the authority. By investigating these constraints and enablers we presented the significance of the power structures and how these affect the Ukrainian refugees' agency in everyday life.

The following constraint mentioned by Hägerstrand deals with the *capabilities* of the individual. This entails the constraints that impact the individual based on their daily surroundings, such as housing and physical restrictions of the body. The individual has basic needs that need to be fulfilled. These basic needs can vary between individuals or have an individual status of importance. In this study, the basic needs will focus on the experience and use of public transportation and how the fulfilment or non-fulfilment impact everyday life. The tools to access those basic needs can restrain the individual in their everyday mobility. For example, to be able to take part in society through public transportation, one must have the physical ability to use the public transportation, the cultural understanding of local modes of transportation, as well as the finances to pay for the ticket. The capability constraints that will be in question are financial leeway, location, physical ability, etc., and will help us understand how internal factors impact the experience with public transportation.

### 4.3 Recognition – a Theory of Justice

To achieve a state within the principle of justice, Axel Honneth uses the normative theoretical measures of recognition. In addition to a more descriptive concept of recognition, Honneth presents a way to attain a recognition-theoretical conception of justice. In doing so, he looks at social, legal, and ethical aspects of creating a social identity within the domain of political ethics or societal morality (Honneth, 2004). Honneth introduces three independent spheres-specific principles of recognition as essential parts of social justice. He argues that what is considered 'just' is measured according to the responsiveness to these three principles of 1) intimate relations (love); 2) legal equality (law); 3) and justice to achievement in social hierarchies (social esteem). These principles investigate morality in dealing with social identity and how an individual performs within the structures of legal settings, societal norms, personal autonomy, and the bond between intimate relationships (Honneth, 2012). It is these three principles that collectively condition what is understood as the notion of social justice in the current context and time (Honneth, 2004).

In achieving said normative principles of recognition and the social interaction between actors in a society, social integration becomes a feasible reality through the process of inclusion in the contextualization of regulated forms of recognition (Honneth, 2004). In contrast, the absence of recognition in either of the three spheres can result in an experience of discrimination and mortification, harming the identity and autonomy formation and inclusion of the individual. It is to be understood that social integration occurs through the principles of recognition in which the individual takes part in the societal life world. It is important to remember that the framework for social recognition can change alongside the structures of a society (Honneth, 2004). The concept of recognition is to be understood as a way of responding to the learned qualities of our life world, and how they are perceived in others. It is a way of dealing with individualization and the process of social inclusion in a way that the individual will be able to become a full member of society (Honneth, 2004).

Recognition can be present in the attributed status of an individual, which they could not have achieved previous to the specific recognition of the current state, such as the status of an EU Directive refugee. It can also be understood as an act of perception where actors become aware of the status an individual has independently from previous social perception (Honneth, 2012). It is in particular the former understanding that is significant for this thesis. What must be recognised is how recognition signifies political ethics or societal morality in the social lifeworld as an everyday phenomenon (Honneth, 2012). Looking at Honneth's three principles of recognition, this thesis will focus on the two latter, as 'intimate relationship' did not hold significant importance for answering the research question. To fit the approach of this research, it was decided to use the wording social inclusion instead of social integration as Honneth suggests. Social hierarchy and legal equality can aid us in understanding how legal and social structures impact the inclusion and everyday life of Ukrainian refugees.

#### 4.4 Agency

The concept of agency describes the way an individual or a group are able to act out of free will (Schultz & Lavenda, 2014). For the Ukrainian refugees, it lies in the power they have to navigate and act in ways that shape their experience, in this case especially experience with public transportation, and everyday mobility and is an important factor in the individual or collective drive of social and/or legal changes. Though, agency can be hindered or supported by internal and external factors (Schultz & Lavenda, 2014). In this study, these internal and

external factors will be understood as the various constraints and enablers that impact the agency and everyday life of the refugees. In a refugee setting, agency is used by refugees in navigating legal, social, or economic precarity. Such can be monthly allowance, 'free ticket', and social inclusion, as well as power structures in a society and their current situation, i.e., the social hierarchy. These structures and precarity influence in turn the agency of the refugee, as they can be forced to legally and normative act inside of the structure (Paret & Gleeson, 2016). Exemplified, how Ukrainian refugees have agency over their everyday life inside of the structures of Swedish society, such as access to public transportation.

The theories and concepts of *Mobility Justice*, *Everyday Mobility*, *Time-Geography*, *Recognition*, and *Agency* have been chosen for this thesis as they assisted in answering the research question of the use of public transportation and social inclusion. The mobility theories and concepts illustrated how various power structures impacted the mobility of the individuals and how it impacted a just notion of the accessibility and availability of public transportation. *Everyday Mobility* in turn examined social participation or the lack thereof through the ability to be mobile. Further, agency was used to understand the boundaries that the refugees were able to act within and how far their own personal actions were hindered or enabled by the mobility constraints or enablers. Lastly, the *Recognition* theory examined how social hierarchies and legal equality regarding the use of access to free public transportation influenced social participation and the creation of an autonomous social identity of Ukrainian refugees in Sweden.

## 5. Context

To understand the framework surrounding the Ukrainian refugees in Swedish society, it is of importance to acknowledge the historical, legal, and social context that influenced their status. In the following sections this will be illuminated.

### 5.1 Historical Background

Ukraine and Russia have a long-standing history. An aggravation of the relationship occurred in the late 2000s/early 2010s when the Russian President Medvedev warned Ukraine against a membership of NATO (Jepsen & Poulsen-Hansen, 2023).

In 2013, when Ukraine was leaning towards a European collaboration, the pro-Russian Ukrainian President Yanukovich abandoned the proceedings for the EU Association Agreement, arguably acting under pressure from his Russian allies (Masters, 2023). This decision was highly seen as a betrayal by a corrupt government and spurred significant demonstrations in the country (Masters, 2023). In the early months of 2014, internal unrest led to what is known as the Maidan uprising, which ensued President Yanukovich's flight to Russia and the call for election (Jepsen & Poulsen-Hansen, 2023). Russia responded to the unrest by invading most of Crimea through pro-Russian militia and Russian troops, followed by a referendum from the local pro-Russian government that ended in favour of affiliation with Russia (Walker, 2023). Ever since Russia has maintained its control over Crimea and supported pro-Russian militia forces. Further, pro-Russian militia managed in 2014 to secede large areas in the Donetsk and Luhansk provinces and declared them to independent republics. Since then, armed conflict between the Ukrainian government and Russian-supported militia have continued in the Donbas region (Walker, 2023).

On February 24, 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, with troops attacking from Belarus, Russia, and Crimea. With the claim of a special military operation meant to protect the Russian minority in Donbas and Luhansk, Russia struck Ukrainian military assets and expanded its invasion by targeting cities across the country (Masters, 2023; European Council, 2023; Gurcov, 2023). With military and economic assistance from the West, Ukraine has made significant counter offensives against the Russian forces ever since, recapturing notable territory. At the anniversary of the invasion, it was estimated by the West that more than a hundred thousand Ukrainians have died or been wounded in battle while the Russian numbers are likely to be even higher (Masters, 2023). The war has put a strain on international politics, increasing tension between NATO and Russia, and has had significant consequences for food security, economy, and energy security among others (Masters, 2023; Gurcov, 2023). Millions of Ukrainians are displaced both internally and externally, with more than 8 million Ukrainians in Europe alone (UNHCR, 2023b).



## 5.2 Legal Context

Although it is widely believed in society that refugees are all people that have fled from their home country, this is not quite true. There is a strict definition under which people that have refugee status are defined. To be a refugee under the refugee convention – meaning: to have the right to receive provisions for refugees and be protected under the refugee convention – several criteria are checked individually and must all be fulfilled in order to receive refugee status (Refugee Convention, 1951). These criteria state that:

*“[...] owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.”* Article 1.A (2) Refugee Convention 1951

Nonetheless, besides the legal definition of refugees, the term is colloquially used to name people that look for protection in a host country and that had to flee their home country. Thus, within society asylum seekers are also often called “refugees”. As mentioned in the earlier section ‘*Delimitations*’, we have decided to call people that have fled from Ukraine to Sweden; following the events that started on the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 2022, refugees. Although they are not protected by the Refugee Convention and do not possess legal refugee status, they are protected under the Temporary Protection Directive by the EU.

For legal refugee determination, an individual assessment must be conducted for every asylum seeker. This creates a burden for the host states that must provide the resources (financially, timewise, personally, etc.) to conduct those individual assessments. Thus, in 2001 the Council of the European Union established the Temporary Protection Directive (2001/55/EC). This directive aims to expedite and simplify the process to handle mass influx of refugees. To relieve the burden of the asylum application system the Directive can be enforced after the Commission has applied for the activation of the Directive and the Council approves. However, this has never been done since the establishment – until the 4<sup>th</sup> of March when the Council passed a vote unanimously that the temporary protection shall apply to

Ukrainian refugees that fled the war in Ukraine. But how does the EU Directive actually protect?

The Directive permits people that fall under the Directive (in this case Ukrainians fleeing after February 2022) to reside in any European member state until the Directive ends, which can be up to three years after the implementation (Migrationsverket, 2023a). Further, among other provisions, it allows access to welfare, access to medical care, family reunification, work, education, and access to appropriate accommodation (European Commission, 2022; UNHCR, 2022). In Sweden, in contrast to refugees protected under the Refugee Convention, Ukrainian refugees cannot apply for asylum when they are registered under the Directive (Migrationsverket, 2023a).

The daily allowance received by the Swedish Migration Agency for Ukrainian refugees under the Directive is regulated according to the current living situation and follows the same regulation as for refugees under the Refugee Convention. However, the daily allowance is also dependent on the housing location. According to the Migration Agency an adult refugee living in a shared household will be appointed 61 SEK ( $\approx$  5,45 Euro) per day, while children will receive between 37 ( $\approx$  3,30 Euro) and 50 SEK ( $\approx$  4,47 Euro) depending on their age (Migrationsverket, 2023b). As all of the interlocutors were adults living with family, spouses and/or children, these are the figures this thesis will work within. Summing up, the monthly allowance would be 1830 SEK ( $\approx$  163,45 Euro) per adult and between 1110 ( $\approx$  99,14 Euro) and 1500 SEK ( $\approx$  133,98 Euro) per child (assuming a month is 30 days). This allowance is earmarked food, clothes, health care, leisure activities, and other necessary consumer goods. In addition, as will be elaborate in the analysis, some refugees receive financial compensation for public transportation to participate in language classes.

Furthermore, in 2020 a new regulation changed Swedish Migration Law (Socialförsäkringsutskottets Betänkande, 2019). The change in law, which is also referred to as EBO (Eget Boende), states that asylum seekers can have their daily allowance deducted or suspended. This is the case when asylum seekers decide to live in areas or municipalities that are considered “*socio-economic challenged*” (Fröberg, 2020; Library of Congress, 2019; Migrationsverket, 2022). Areas that are not considered as challenged, often called “Green Zones”, are however, often placed outside cities or on the outskirts. It is argued, the new law is aimed to support the integration of asylum seekers and decrease segregation (Fröberg, 2020).

EBO also applies to Ukrainian refugees in Sweden (Pelling, 2022). However, Ukrainian refugees in Europe have been met with a so-called “solidarity wave” as additional support.

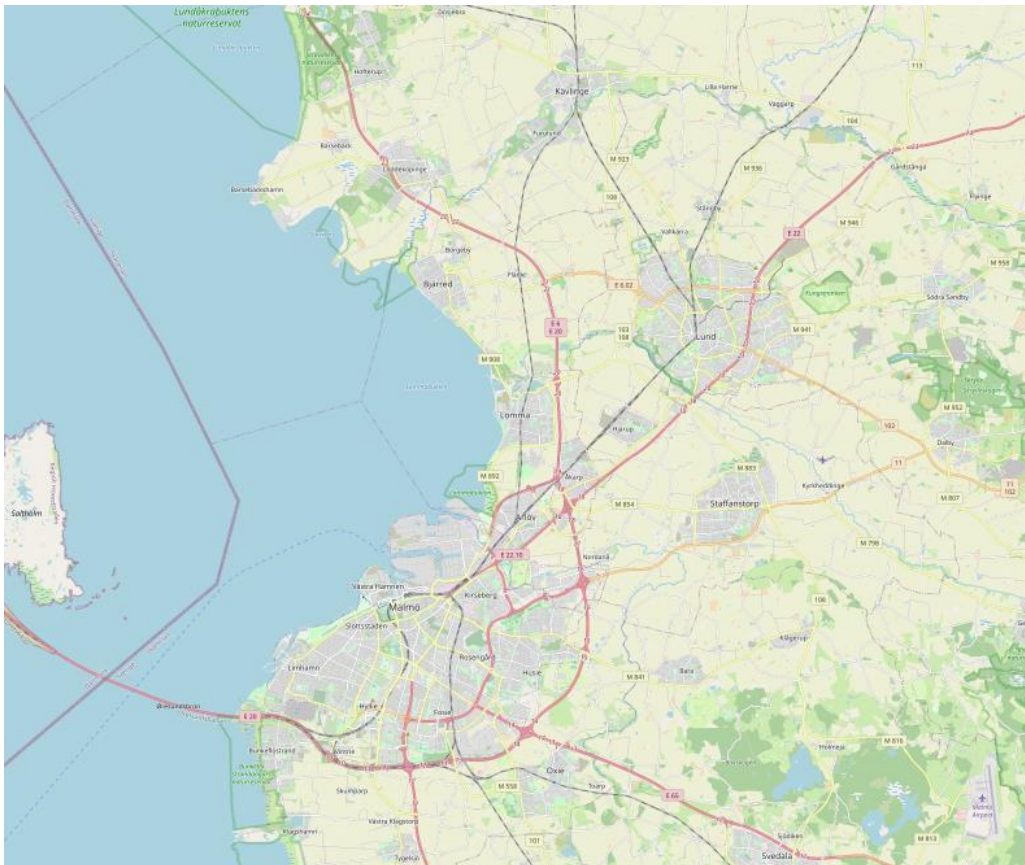
### 5.3 Solidarity Wave

The high amount of refugees and the seriousness of the war in Ukraine, a European country, has resulted in a wave of solidarity across Europe. Since the beginning of the war, there have been significant financial and military donations; accommodation assistance for refugees; and a long list of sanctions against Russia (European Commission, 2023; Illmer, 2022; ifw., 2023). At the beginning of the invasion, news outlets reported on civilians from all over Europe driving to the Ukrainian border with either humanitarian aid, such as clothes, baby items, food, etc., or to give them a lift to a safer place. This idea of solidarity can be understood as a unified sense of purpose rolling over Europe. Scholars like David De Coninck (2022) and Eleni Karageorgiou (2022) argue that the current refugee situation can be seen differently compared to other refugee influxes, such as the one in 2015 or the Afghan war. Different contexts such as the war is happening *in* and *to* a European country, ethnicity, solidarity, and a form of conscious collective come into play in a way it has not before (De Coninck, 2022; Karageorgiou & Noll, 2022). As a solidarity measure, the European countries gave free access to urban and international public transportation for Ukrainians if they could show a Ukrainian passport (VisitUkraine, 2022a). An unprecedented measure in the European-refugee conversation.

### 5.4 Case Study on Sweden

For this research, Sweden was chosen as a case study. Sweden is continuously aiming to sustainably develop and increase social sustainability. One focus of this development is based on transportation infrastructure and enhanced access to public transportation for everyone, as can be seen for example through a new Bus Rapid Transit system or a new train station in Rosengård that aim to tackle social segregation and increase transport justice (Derakhti & Baeten, 2020; Melin, 2020; Stjernborg, forthcoming). Thus, Sweden aims to enhance mobility justice and widely acknowledges the importance that access to public transportation can have for social life.

Figure 1: Map of Malmö, Lund Region © OpenStreetMap (1:312300)



Due to the geographical proximity that enabled snowball sampling, the majority of interlocutors live in Skåne, the most southern region of Sweden with more than 1.4 million inhabitants in 2019 (see Appendix 5 for a map of Skåne and Stockholm). Malmö is the third biggest city in Sweden with more than 350,000 inhabitants. Within Skåne, public transportation is administered by Skånetrafiken with more than 14,000 buses and trains running on a daily basis, used by more than 450,000 people (Region Skåne, 2023 a,c). An hourly ticket can be purchased for 31 SEK ( $\approx$ 2,77 Euro) for an adult, a daily ticket for 62 SEK ( $\approx$ 5,54 Euro), and a monthly ticket for 624 SEK ( $\approx$ 55,73 Euro)(Skånetrafiken, 2023). Prices between two cities are more expensive, e.g. a single ticket between Malmö and Lund can be purchased for 58 SEK ( $\approx$ 5,08 Euro). For Ukrainian refugees the access to public transportation was free from the beginning in March 2022 and ending on November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022 (Region Skåne, 2023b). In Stockholm, Sweden's capital with more than 1.7 million inhabitants, Ukrainian refugees have continuously free access to public transportation since March 2022 (SL, 2022; World Population Review, 2023).

To summarise, Ukraine and Russia share a long history that peaked in 2022 with a full-scale Russian invasion. The majority of the international community reacted with a so-called solidarity wave that showed sympathy and support for Ukrainian refugees that had to flee Ukraine. Part of this solidarity was the EU Temporary Directive that gives rights to Ukrainian refugees that aim to make the integration processes easier for host states and refugees. However, it also prevented them from applying for asylum under the Refugee Convention, which can leave Ukrainian refugees in a state of limbo. Nonetheless, also part of the solidarity wave were different mobility initiatives that offered free access to public transportation. As Sweden continuously aims to sustainably develop and increase social sustainability, as well as it was one of the countries that continued the 'free ticket' for the longest time-period, Sweden offers a good case to study in regards to the experiences of Ukrainian refugees when using the 'free ticket'.

## 6. Analysis

The analysis of this paper will be conducted on the basis of the data collected through the research methods, the concepts of *Everyday Mobility*, *Time-Geography*, and *Recognition theory*, supported by the relevant scholarly literature. The notion of *agency* will be incorporated into the different chapters as a support to the theories and concepts. The analysis will *commence* with a chapter examining the everyday mobility and everyday life activities of Ukrainian refugees. Further, by using a Time-Geography approach, it will be examined how structures such as personal economy, capabilities, location, and legal aspects, etc. impact the everyday life and experience of public transportation for the Ukrainian refugees participating in this research. A section of this chapter will investigate authority constraints, enablers, and structures at a time when Ukrainians had free access to public transportation and how such enabled and restricted social participation and inclusion of Ukrainian refugees. This section is followed by the abolition of the 'free ticket' and authority constraints that consequently restrict mobility. Further, it is analysed how Ukrainian refugees experience the use of public transportation ever since. The third section elaborates on capability constraints and analyses inter alia physical and cultural constraints. The *second* chapter will combine the social and structural aspects of mobility from chapter one in an analysis of inclusion, social participation, and social acceptance as it looks at social hierarchies and legal equality through the principles of recognition as a justice theory.

## 6.1 Mobility

This chapter of the analysis focused on daily activities at the time of the interviews and elaborated on social inclusion in everyday life. This is followed by an analysis that investigated the structures of the Time-Geography approach.

### 6.1.1 Everyday Mobility

To answer the research question that focuses on the experiences of Ukrainian refugees with public transportation and how this has influenced their daily life, one must question how mobility and interrelated power structures can enable and restrict mobility and thus if this can influence inclusion into a host society. In the following, the collected data will be analysed in relation to concepts that explain and expand on the notions that (im)mobility can have on everyday life and participation in society.

One way to analyse such is to look at the everyday life of Ukrainian refugees. Everyday mobility enables participation in society (see e.g., Stjernborg, 2014; Urry, 2007). When asked about their everyday life, the majority of the interlocutors argued that language courses and bringing their kids to school were the main activities. This also applied to Anna (64), who fled to Sweden with her husband and spent a normal day in a Swedish language course.

*“Monday to Friday and she spends there half a day and until 1:00 o'clock she's in the school. And then she if she doesn't have any personal errands, she comes back to home and then they have some like, late lunch with her husband. They may take a walk around the block.”*

(Anna, 64)

The majority of the interlocutors interviewed argued that learning the language is a crucial part of their daily activities. Further, the language courses offered places to socialise with fellow Ukrainian refugees and to share experiences. Speaking the language was seen as a vital part to socialise and become part of a new society and thus, promoted inter alia by the Swedish Migration Agency (Migrationsverket, 2023b). Alongside Berg (2016), who argues that transport can structure everyday life, one can argue that participating in a language course can as well. The vast majority of interlocutors visited a language course for multiple hours per week. Therefore, language courses presented an inherent part of the everyday life of the interviewed Ukrainians. Most interlocutors used and preferred public transportation to reach

the Swedish classes, which thus, allowed us to assume that the use of public transportation enabled social participation in the form of a language course.

For Bohdana (42) the access to public transportation was still free, as she lived in Stockholm. A regional initiative in Stockholm enabled Ukrainian refugees to use public transportation for free when they showed their passports. Her everyday life was structured a little differently, as she worked as a substitute kindergarten teacher.

*“So, at around seven she arrives by bus to the central point where the transportation is. And then at 7, she receives the message if she, if someone is in need of replacement. So, every morning she waits until seven, if she receives a message. And if someone needs a teacher.”*

(Bohdana, 42)

Apart from going to work, she and her family often used public transportation to go to Stockholm city centre to visit parks or museums. She argued, not using public transport was no option for her as she and her family needed it in their everyday life. Hence, Bohdana feared the day that public transportation would cost her money.

Further, the ‘free ticket’ provided by the Swedish authorities had a great impact on the everyday life of the Ukrainians in this study both mentally and physically. 64-year-old Anna, who came to Sweden with her husband Denys (68) in late March 2022, experienced the ‘free ticket’ as a leeway for social inclusion and understanding the foreign country she had fled to. While she described the various activities she took part in during the ‘free ticket’, such as scouting for fabric in humanitarian help centres, she also exemplified the sense of security she got from not having to worry about bus tickets in a new country:

*“With having free bus access, she didn't feel scared or very much uncomfortable because she knew she could get on any bus pretty much and just get around and ask people how to get to this address if she had my destination address written down somewhere. [...] And it definitely made them feel more secure and more easy to navigate and move around.”* (Anna, 64)

Further, Anna (64) argued that without the free access in the beginning, her mobility would have been limited to daily trips to the supermarket. This was supported by Bohdana (42), who argued that free access to public transportation was especially helpful as it “simplified” life in the beginning after they arrived in Sweden. Mariya (33) further supported this concept and argued that it helped especially with getting to know Swedish culture and social life.

*“We used it [the free ticket] quite a lot and we've been very happy. Yeah. Yeah, that it was free. It was just. We felt very welcomed in this way [...] when you have this home [host country] accepting you, you want also to be open” (Mariya, 33)*

Throughout all interviews conducted for this study, the social and mental benefits of access to free public transportation were emphasised. Further, it was explained how it made Ukrainians feel welcome, wanted, and provided life value. Viktoriya, a 26-year-old Ukrainian refugee from the Eastern part of Ukraine, who came to Sweden with her family, supported Anna's claim on the mental effects of the 'free ticket':

*“[...] if you have free travel, you can afford to travel more, you can feel more confident and stress relief even because you can pay attention to something else, not like war. And you're a refugee. So that's important.” (Viktoriya, 26)*

Furthermore, it was mentioned that it allowed easy management of different bureaucratic appointments (Mariya, 33), the job search (focus group), getting to know society (Anna, 64), or just seeing new places (Viktoriya, 26).

In contrast, the participants of the focus group that were interviewed for this research lived in Furulund, located 15 kilometres from Lund and 30 kilometres from Malmö (Figure 1), with public transportation only going once an hour. A notable change from living in Arlöv, a suburb to Malmö, as one of the families did before. The closest grocery store, school, language class, anything in general other than housing, was located in Kävlinge, a town 2.9 kilometres away (see Figure 1). This rural location had especially a significant impact after the abolition of the 'free ticket'. With buses only going once an hour and a monthly fare that would take up a big portion of their monthly allowance, this results in the group often having to walk for 40 minutes to carry out even the smallest everyday tasks. In this, they had to weigh out the time and cost of executing their daily activities as they bordered on the excessive and unreasonable compared to the size of the activity. This correlates with the notion of *accessibility poverty* of Lucas et al. (2016) and Hagan's (2020) claim of the relationship between social inclusion and access to transportation. This can be reflected in their everyday life.

*“[...] it's pretty much just doing things around the house and just taking walks when the weather is good going to the forest for a walk. And that's pretty much it. There's not much else to do here. Now, when the weather is bad and they can't go anywhere without public*



*transportation, the kids only just sit at home and play on the phones because they can't go outside.” (Maryska, 53 and Kalyna, 27)*

With a lack of transportation and mobility options, the women experienced a form of *mobility poverty*, covered by Lucas et al. (2016), and were undergoing a form of mobility stuckness and social exclusion, based on the lack of accessible and affordable public transportation.

The collected data showed that the majority of interlocutors used public transportation very consciously and with consideration if a trip would be worth the financial cost of the ticket. It can be seen that everyday mobility was structured by a job, kids, or the language school. Furthermore, it was influenced by financial constraints or power structures that restricted mobility, as will be elaborated on in a later section. As everyday mobility is highly influenced by power relations, it will be elaborated in the following, how power relations, enablers and constraints have influenced not only everyday mobility but further, the inclusion of Ukrainian refugees.

### 6.1.2 Structures Related to Time and Space Impact Everyday Life

What has been affirmed in the previous section is the significance free public transportation had on everyday life. Additional factors, which influenced this inclusion and the everyday life of the participating refugees were the structures surrounding the use of public transportation in Sweden. While there were a noteworthy amount of similarities that both enabled and restricted the fluency of the participants' mobility, everyday life, and inclusion, this study was also able to uncover disparities in the individual's circumstances. These circumstances were concerning both authority and capability constraints and enablers as explained in the section of '*Theory and Concepts*'.

#### 6.1.2.1 Authority Constraints and Enablers

In the following it will be analysed how the access to free public transportation has influenced the inclusion of Ukrainian refugees, and further, how such was enabled and restrained by authority structures. The most significant authority constraints and enablers worth mentioning were the creation and abolition of the 'free ticket', the implementation of EBO when placing Ukrainian refugees, and the financial monthly allowance, which resulted in social exclusion.

## **“Transport is Life” – Social Inclusion**

The free access to public transportation was introduced in March 2022 and lasted in Skåne until November 2022. The data collection showed an insight into the extensive use of public transportation and the impact it had on social inclusion while the access was free for Ukrainian refugees. The participants in the focus group stated unanimously that with free access to public transportation, they participated almost every day in a social event.

*“So not just language, anything that was organised or happening, they were participating in everything. With the big focus actually for children's activity.”* (Focus Group)

As stated, the ‘free ticket’ acted as an authority enabler provided by the Migration Agency to enable free movement for Ukrainian refugees. The free access to public transportation allowed them to commute daily to bigger cities like Malmö or Lund. The bigger cities had a lot of events organised for Ukrainian refugees, e.g., yoga classes, art events, exhibitions, or activities specifically for children. Further, it allowed access to meet other people and socialise or exchange tips and experiences with other Ukrainians. The focus group argued that having free access given by the ‘free ticket’ from the Migration Agency made a huge difference in their life as:

*“It's all about having the opportunity to participate in other activities. [...] It was a way to meet people and not just fellow Ukrainians, yes, but also to meet a lot of Swedish people who were organising all of that. [And that's] there was an opportunity to actually make some connections”* (Myroslava, 37 and Maryska, 53)

The youngest interlocutor, Viktoriya (26), participated in different events and excursions around Sweden that were often organised for international participants. For Viktoriya (26), transportation was more than going from A to B. Throughout the interview, it was stressed how important public transportation was for her social life. She argued:

*“The question is about commute and attending some events to live more social life, not feel isolated from the society because you have been placed in some city or even within the countryside somewhere outside civilization.[...] if you have a free travel, so you can afford to travel more, you can feel more confident and stress relief even because you can pay attention to something else, not like war. And that you're a refugee.”* (Viktoriya, 26)

Participating in social events was for Viktoriya (26) a way to participate in society – in Ukrainian, international, and Swedish society, which aligns with the academic literature on the enabling impact that mobility and access to transportation can have (see e.g., Geis, 2019; Hagan, 2020; Lucas, 2012). It further strengthens the concept that everyday mobility is a gateway for social participation. Ivanna (n.d.), who was a participant in the group interview, argued that the free access supported her and fellow Ukrainian refugees in their, what she called, “integration” process. Kateryna (68) shared a similar experience and argued that she used public transportation especially to see new places and explore the city. Thus, the ticket offered Ukrainian refugees a way to live what was often called “a normal life” (Denys 68, Anna 64, Mariya 33, Kateryna 68, Ionna 41). Artem (63), a participant of the group interview argued that transportation was more than that. “*Transport is life!*” he claimed at the end of the interview.

*“Free travel is a top priority for Ukrainian refugees because everything is connected to free travel. You know, Medicine hospital, Language courses. Each student here there attending at least two [language] schools, and it's also helpful in mental way and also to deal with government, for example, to visit Immigration Services in different questions and also Ukrainian embassy. Just go over there for documents. It's not a secret that many Ukrainian refugees asking for help and psychologists.” (Artem, 63)*

The analysis of the collected data for this thesis, however, showed that the free access to public transportation has allowed the interlocutors to participate in society and socialise. Social participation was executed in different forms and with different focuses, nonetheless, the data showed that for all interlocutors the free access promoted inclusion. Lucas (2012) states that social exclusion can result from the inability to participate in social activities. The results of the interviews conducted show that the free access to public transportation enabled everyday mobility and thus, the possibility to circumvent social exclusion. Furthermore, it highly impacted the physical and mental well-being of the interlocutors as the 'free ticket' also provided simplified access to health care. Social activities and participation in society enabled the subjective feeling of inclusion that sometimes would overshadow the awareness of being a refugee and could, therefore, influence mental well-being. To answer the first part of the research question with a specific lens at the concept of everyday mobility, it can be said that access to everyday mobility has increased the inclusion of Ukrainian refugees. The initiative

to allow free access for Ukrainian refugees presented an authority enabler that empowered mobility.

That is not to say that there were no issues during the ‘free ticket’. Some interlocutors narrated how there were at times clashes with authority figures in public transportation. While most encounters have been positive, a few left an unwelcoming feeling in the Ukrainian participants. During the last group interview, an incident was disclosed where the bus driver did not want to service Ukrainian refugees and told the Ukrainian passengers to leave the bus several stops from their destination, even though they had the proper documentation. Viktoriya (26) told about encounters where the bus drivers would not accept the mandatory passport as proof but demanded to see a Swedish “ID” proving refuge. It was at times seen as a coin toss in who would check and whether the ‘free ticket’ would be accepted. Occasionally, the passport would be accepted but only barely acknowledged, leaving the refugees with a nervous and bothered feeling (Mariya, 33; Viktoriya, 26). In addition, the rule of having to show a passport as proof resulted in one of Bohdana’s (42) children losing the passport on the bus and not being able to get it back. Such issues with passports made the majority of interlocutors suggest some other kind of proof, so stigmatisation and mistakes would be limited. Nonetheless, the free access to public transportation enhanced the ability to use their agency and take an active part in shaping their everyday life whether it would be taking part in cultural and social activities or entering the job market. This is backed by an interlocutor’s account:

*“It [free travel] makes the integrational process quicker for them. [...] but now [after the abolition] it makes this process just impossible for them.” (Group Interview)*

### **“All the Doors Are Closed” – Abolition of the ‘free ticket’**

Mariya, a 33-year-old woman in Malmö, who did not receive financial allowance from the Migration Agency understood the dilemma of whether the ticket should be free or not. On one hand, it is unfair to expect that public transportation would always be free for Ukrainian refugees, however she did see the immense benefit it had for inclusion. According to her:

*“it's normal to start paying for transportation, but if you don't adapt to this. Public transport is a big help and I will tell you that a lot of Ukrainians, especially 45 plus, they don't speak good Swedish and they don't speak good English. It means their adaptation period will be much longer.” (Mariya, 33)*

Upon arriving in Sweden, the Ukrainian refugees in this study often found themselves being placed and moved around between various areas in Sweden by the Migration Agency. The initial locations often resided in the outskirts or in rural Sweden. Accounts from Myroslava (37), Bohdana (42), Ihor (32) and her family, Mariya (33), Kateryna (68), and Ionna (41) illustrated this as they initially were placed in towns like Norrköping, Västerås, Arlöv, Stångby, and the outskirts of Malmö before placed in their current homes. This corresponds with Andersson (2012) as he claims that immigrants are prone to migrate around the country before settling down and are often located in the outskirts of cities like Malmö. In accordance with EBO, refugees, who are placed by the Migration Agency in order to be able to qualify for financial support, have little agency in the matter of their location if they would want the often much needed subsidy (Fröberg, 2020). As previously mentioned, the argument for this legislation is to strengthen inclusion and diminish segregation (Fröberg, 2020), however, when being placed in the so-called “Green zones” that are often located in the outskirts or in smaller villages, it can be argued that inclusion was diminished. Ukrainian refugees often did not have the option or ability to take part in Swedish society based on their location and their limited access to public transportation. A statement supported by research done by Lucas (2012) and Ray and Reed (2005) who identify the placement of immigrants and limited contact with society as a core reason for social exclusion.

The participants in the focus group were all placed by the Migration Agency in a small village called Furulund, as described in the chapter on *Everyday Mobility*. Because of the accommodation they have received from the Migration Agency and the sparse availability of public transportation, the Ukrainian women argued that their lives had become monotonous, and restrictive since being placed in Furulund and the abolition of the ‘free ticket’ (Kalyna, 27). This seclusion, lack of mobility options, and lack of financial means hindered the Ukrainian women’s agency as they were forced to act within the boundaries set by the legislations of the Migration Agency. Lucas (2012) defines social exclusion as the inability to take part in everyday activities and lacking the resources to do so. Thus, this strengthens the argument that the women placed in Furulund were faced with social and legal structures that hindered their inclusion. Furthermore, their socialisation was announced to be limited to other Ukrainians who lived in the area and a few older Swedish neighbours. Moreover, while placed in Furulund after the abolition of the free ticket, the group was limited in their everyday life activities as well as their participation in additional language classes in Malmö that would

improve their inclusion into Swedish society. Geis (2019) and Ozkazanc (2021) illustrate in their research how being placed in isolated areas increases the risk of refugees being less mobile and having fewer social networks, which concurs with the statements of the women living in Furulund. Furthermore, the isolation from the bigger cities and the lack of financial assets to visit such posed a challenge for them and negatively influenced their well-being.

*“Actually, that's why they all agree that most likely they would go back to Ukraine quite soon.”* (Focus Group)

When examining the everyday life of Bohdana (42) placed in Stockholm, Mariya (33), who found her own home in Malmö without help from the Migration Agency, and Viktoriya (26), who was placed in Malmö after a short period in the countryside, there were differences to be found compared to the secluded life in Furulund. When living closer to bigger cities, not only do the public transportation options expand, but the possibilities to participate in social events and society increase. Though this was not always the case, depending on the capability constraints, which will be explained further in a later section. Subsequently, these three participants were all employed and took part in social events, such as demonstrations (Viktoriya, 26), social dinners (Mariya, 33), and museum visits (Bohdana, 42), in a way that the group from Furulund did not have the ability to. Lucas et al.'s (2016) four instruments for measuring mobility correlate well with the structural hindrances to the everyday life and mobility of the Ukrainian refugees. While the fourth instrument related to environmental effects on transportation poverty does not play a role in the case of the placement of Ukrainian refugees, the three former instruments support the notion of how placement and mobility stuckness can lead to social exclusion. The ‘free ticket’ allowed Ukrainian refugees to overcome mobility stuckness and to take part in social life.

*“it makes the integrational process more quicker for them. It's very important for them because they're living in another country, in a foreign country, so they need to know more about this country, but now it makes this process just impossible for them. [...]*

*All the doors are closed.”* (Artem, 63)

This argument made by Artem (63) is backed by academic literature that argues that the lack of affordable access to mobility can increase the risk of isolation and create barriers to social participation and socialisation (see e.g., Geis, 2019; Hagan, 2020; Lucas, 2012). This is

supported by a statement from Viktoriya (26) on the importance of where they were geographically placed and their access to mobility.

*“[...] So that's why the question is about commuting and attending some events to live a more social life, not feel isolated from society because you have been placed in some city or even within the countryside somewhere outside civilization. We need to get access to the supermarket and everything to buy groceries.” (Viktoriya, 26)*

With this comparison it can be argued that the placement appointed by the Migration Agency held a significant contribution in the configuration of everyday life, the accessibility of public transportation, and the individual's use of agency. This research shows that such can lead to isolation, influence mental well-being, and decrease social participation.

### **“If you pay for transport you basically do not eat” – Financial Implications**

Financial circumstances were experienced as a major influence on the Ukrainian interlocutors' experience with the use of public transportation. The use of public transportation was a considerable component in their experience of their everyday life. As mentioned in the context, the monthly allowance provided by the Migration Agency is connected to the Ukrainian refugees' placement, adding to the limited agency in deciding where they wished to reside. Such can be seen as the consequence of wanting to receive financial aid to assist them in a foreign country without a job, especially after the abolition of the 'free ticket'.

A great concern lied with the amount of money participants received monthly compared to the price of public transportation. Corresponding with the monthly allowance conventional refugees receive from the Swedish government, the amount Ukrainian refugees received under the EU Directive is depending on their living situation. The Ukrainian refugees were basing their everyday economy on the 1830 SEK monthly allowance they get per adult. In addition, as the majority of the interlocutors lived in the Malmö region, the ticket prices focused on Malmö, which was illustrated in the context of the case study. In this calculation drawn from the context section, we understand that purchasing a daily ticket would take up the entire daily budget for an adult Ukrainian refugee and a monthly ticket would take up more than a third of the monthly budget, leaving very little left for the rest of the earmarked expenses. Being forced to distribute a higher amount of travel cost than is reasonable compared to their income as Ukrainian refugees, plays into the aspect of *transport affordability*, claiming that this can lead

to sacrifices in necessities and social life (Lucas et al. 2016). Further, a majority of the authors of the relevant literature claim that social exclusion, mobility stuckness, and lack of transportation infrastructures are more prone to impact vulnerable people like refugees because of, among other, their economic circumstances and location.

With the decision of the abolition of the ‘free ticket’ it can be argued that the Migration Agency assumed that Ukrainian refugees would be able to not only survive but possibly take part in Swedish society with this amount. If this is not the case, one can question if Ukrainian everyday quality of life became less of a priority. With great despair, the Ukrainians in this study were forced to manoeuvre their everyday life within this economic situation. This greatly impacted the activities and freedom they experienced throughout the ‘free ticket’.

*“The fact is that if they pay for transport they need to basically not eat and not buy anything besides the bus ticket. If they still decide to buy food and not the bus ticket, then they are cut off from language courses which they were super willing to take” (Maryska, 53).*

Supplemental, for some Ukrainians there was the possibility of receiving additional financial aid from the Migration Agency regarding transportation to and from language courses. Though, it came with conditions. The language school had to be located more than three kilometres away from the refugee’s housing and the refugee had to provide a document proving that they were attending said language classes. It was these conditions, which acted as authority structures that both Lucas (2012) and Geis (2019) understand as being a part of the reason for social exclusion or at least limitation as it secludes Ukrainians refugees who could not fulfil these conditions. For Anna (64), Kateryna (68), Ionna (41), and several of the participants from the group interview, this has been a big help. However, during the interviews there has not been a consensus on how this financial aid worked. Kateryna, Ionna, and Anna handed in written proof every third month as well as transport ticket receipts, which gave them an extra monthly allowance to cover the additional cost. However, the participants in the group interview, who were eligible for this compensation, only received compensation for a specific amount of days, i.e. the days they had language class. By such means, it can be argued that there was a difference in the structures these participants could act within, modifying the experience of the use of public transportation for the individual. The participants with an extra financial aid for a monthly ticket, compared to the limited ticket, had a greater leeway to use their agency. However, it is important to remember that such tickets were restricted to the city zone of the



language school and therefore could not be used for recreational activities outside of the zone. An additional financial consequence was the stress from the implications that came from missing their transportation due to cancellations and from mobility stuckness. As interlocutors could not buy tickets over the app, because of the lack of a person number, they had to buy tickets in advance. In Sweden, the person number is an individual's social security identification required for most basic things such as full access to a bank account, purchasing an internet subscription, or as a Ukrainian refugee, even buying a ticket online for public transportation. However, this caused mental stress if the transportation was cancelled and the money used for the ticket was misspend and therefore, unavailable for other necessary expenses. The Ukrainian women, who lived in Furulund, were affected by the structure regarding financial aid for transportation to language class differently. During the 'free ticket', the group went to language classes in Malmö. After the abolition they applied for compensation from the Migration Agency, though because there was an option to take a language class in Kävlinge or other much closer towns, their request was denied. As mentioned earlier, Kävlinge is located 2,9 kilometres from Furulund (Figure 1), which meant that the group of women were not eligible for aid, leaving them without extra financial leeway.

Nonetheless, a few of the interlocutors did not receive any financial assistance from the Migration Agency. Viktoriya (26) and Bohdana (42) both lost their allowance when they got a job, Mariya (33) did not want to be dependent on the Migration Agency and refused the allowance, and Kateryna (68) was denied allowance since the Migration Agency saw her retirement payment from Ukraine as sufficient.

### **“Feels Like Being in A Cage” – Isolation**

As elaborated on in the concept section, mobility is connected and conditioned by the power that is attributed to the specific form of mobility. Refugees are usually perceived to face more challenges regarding access to mobility (Ray and Reed, 2005; Ozkazanc, 2021; Geis, 2019). Their mobility can be restricted in multiple forms, for example on a macro level at border crossings or on a micro level, based on a lack of access to public transportation. Geis (2019) argues especially migrants and refugees heavily depend on available transportation in order to integrate, however, they are also more prone to be located in areas that lack comprehensive access to public transportation. Lucas (2012; Lucas et al., 2019) argues that this can not only lead to social exclusion and segregation, but further, it is a risk that makes especially refugees

vulnerable. In the case of the Ukrainian refugees, mobility was given through free access to public transportation. Nonetheless, it was enabled and restricted by different authority constraints and enablers.

When the ‘free ticket’ was revoked by the Swedish authorities on November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022, the structures within which the Ukrainian refugees could navigate changed. Activities and outings that previously offered quality to everyday life and social inclusion became restricted by economic factors. Mariya (33) and some participants of the group interview also argued that after the abolition they had limited their social contacts and visited friends and family less. Viktoriya (26), who worked at an NGO that organised meeting places and excursions, among others, for Ukrainian refugees, argued that she saw a big difference in the number of participants since the abolition.

*“[with free access to public transportation] if we have 50 participants, 30 of them are Ukrainians, OK? And once the travel wasn't free, we experienced like 10 Ukrainians who can afford to [come and] travel.” (Viktoriya, 26)*

Although we cannot clarify if the decrease in participants was connected to the lack of free access to public transportation, we can say that the majority of the interlocutors had limited their everyday mobility with public transportation to a minimum since the abolition of the ‘free ticket’.

It quickly became a question of whether food or public transportation for things like additional language classes and activities for children were of highest priority. What else became clear from the interviews was the concern related to health issues and how the Ukrainian participants would afford to take public transportation to health check-ups and hospital visits, while still affording basic necessities like food and clothes. Denys’s (68) health issues became a priority over his and his wife's excursions. For them, the change meant limited mobility. Although Anna (64) still had free access as she received financial compensation from the Migration Agency, she argued that they travelled less together after the abolition, due to the financial burden that buying a ticket for Denys meant. Further, she mentioned, she would enjoy taking her husband to a church in town, however, since he could not walk long distances due to health issues, a daily ticket would not be worth it. For her, the time they could use the ticket while Denys (68) would be able to walk, would not compensate for the price of the ticket

costs. Artem, a 63-year-old refugee living in Malmö, expressed the same concerns regarding the ability to get to medical appointments. Further, he was concerned about the negative mental health impact the abolition had. This was supported by Anichka, a 40-year-old mother from Lomma, and Myroslava, a 37-year-old mother from Furulund, who highly focused on the mental health of their children and the importance for them to be able to meet other children. The feeling of isolation was mentioned by the majority of interlocutors and was by Ivanna (n.d.), a participant in the group interview, with great affirmation described as the following:

*“The most horrible thing for a person is to be isolated so it feels like being in a cage. And when the person is sitting in one place surrounded by walls, they feel more depressed than this”* (Ivanna, n.d.)

Further, interlocutors described the feeling of isolation as horrible (Myroslava, 37), depressing (Ivanna, n.d.), or restricting (Mariya, 33). Other interlocutors promoted this statement and argued that they met fewer friends (Anichka, 40; Mariya, 33) or family (Ivanna, n.d.) after the abolition. Furthermore, social activities were limited to events and activities in closer proximity. This feeling was increased for people who were located in smaller villages, for example, the participants of the focus group. Hence, as discussed in literature, many refugees are placed in outskirts or smaller villages and cities, which further increases their vulnerability to face social exclusion (Andersson, 2012; Geis, 2019; Lucas et al., 2016). By ending the initiative that offered free access to public transportation, Ukrainian refugees were suddenly increasingly delimited and excluded from mobility and thus, social participation.

It should be considered that in some categories, structures overlap between authority constraints and enablers and capability constraints. The economic structures placed upon the Ukrainians by the Migration Agency impacted their capabilities to pay for public transportation as well as other everyday necessities. This creates an overlap of constraints and enablers in how their everyday life quality was experienced. An additional intersection could be how the authority constraint and enabler of the EU Directive allowed them to get quicker into the labour market, though the restrictions in applying for a Swedish person number because of their EU Directive refugee status, transformed into capability constraints as it limited their ability to take part in Swedish society (2001/55/EC). Since this is an authority constraint that merges into a capability constraint, as the person number is something they do not possess, it will be elaborated in the section of Capability constraints.

### 6.1.2.2 Capability Constraints

The most significant capability constraints were financial limitations, physical limitations, the lack of a person number, and lastly, cultural limitations. As the former three could be considered as a merge between capability and authority constraints and enablers, those will be analysed first.

As specified, the monthly allowance from the Migration Agency transforms over to the financial capability of the individual Ukrainian refugee. Personal economy was one of the topics each interview kept circling back to, highlighting the importance and worries of such. With only 1830 SEK ( $\approx$ 163,45 Euro) available per adult per month, not taking into account any personal savings, the Ukrainian refugees had to consider and weigh what was important to spend money on each month. Throughout the interviews, the dilemma of whether they should buy food and other basic necessities or take public transportation was highlighted, further supporting the notion of *accessibility poverty* (Lucas et al., 2016). While the interlocutors had the desire to use public transportation and take part in Swedish society through activities, their financial situations were seen as a barrier as it did not allow them to do as they pleased. Ivanna (n.d.), a woman from Lomma, explained how she could afford visiting her son less, as he lived in another city, and Anichka (40) explained how whenever she had to buy clothes for her child, she had to include the cost of the public transportation. Further, two interlocutors, Mariya (33) and Viktoriya (26), who both worked with other refugees in respectively a yoga studio and a refugee centre, could, as mentioned in the *Authority Constraints and Enablers*, feel the change in how many participants showed up after the abolition of the ‘free ticket’:

*“[...] these classes I was teaching all the time when it was free transportation. And then after that some people stopped coming because they don't want to pay and they or they don't have to pay extra. Yeah. And some people from Skåne would come into the classes from other cities. They also can't do this anymore.”* (Mariya, 33)

All participants informed, during the interviews, how their use of public transportation had limited significantly after the abolition. Things like visiting other areas of Sweden, taking part in demonstrations in other cities, going to a Language Cafe, and visiting out-of-town friends and family were deprioritised, solely based on financial restrictions. This presents a social exclusion based on economy correlating with the research by Lucas (2016). Some of the Ukrainians revealed that to overcome the financial burden of having to buy several monthly

tickets for the whole family, they shared the tickets. However, when sharing a ticket, it was only possible to use the ticket for one person at a time, leaving a constraint. It was in general a way to share the financial issue, however, it did not solve the social issue of wanting to go out at the same time or the practical issue of getting chores done outside of the house simultaneously.

Circling back to one of the structures that also occurred as an authority constraint, location and distance to destinations and bus or train stops interfered with the interlocutor's ability to use public transportation. A capability constraint related to this location and distance was the individual's physical ability to travel such distances. Denys (68), married to Anna (64) had a number of health issues, among other, physical restrictions when walking. While the pair was placed in the outskirts of Malmö, the nearest bus stop was a ten-minute walk from their house, and too far for Denys to walk regularly. This restricted him a great deal in the use of public transportation and social inclusion, as he often was confined to the house, leaving Anna to do the daily chores outside of the house. Another example was presented by Viktoriya (26), who lived with her grandfather. When asked if she paid for his monthly bus ticket, she replied that because of problems with his legs he could not get out of the house to use public transportation. This was followed up by a generalisation of daily activities of the older people she worked with in the refugee centre:

*"[...] of course you can go to the Botanical Garden, for example, but if it's an elderly person, sometimes they cannot walk so many kilometres to reach some places, so they are stuck in one area. Unfortunately."* (Viktoriya, 26)

Considering this, Denys (68) and Viktoriya's grandfather could not be the only Ukrainian refugees who have fled to Sweden with disabilities impacting the ability to use or reach public transportation. In the book "Measuring Transport Equity" (2019), Lucas et al. argue how unjust mobility distribution often disproportionately impacts vulnerable individuals. The results of this study correlate with said argument as Ukrainian refugees can be categorised as low-income individuals, yet especially in regards to older or disabled refugees such as Denys and the unnamed grandfather. If such people were placed according to EBO outside of or in the outskirts of cities with a notable distance to public transportation, their ability to take part in the experience of public transportation would be hindered by both internal and external structures and thereby, affecting their everyday life. Apart from this, the distance to bus or train

stops was not an issue for the majority of participants. As long as there was a connection, they did not mind having to walk to reach the stops.

Adding on, because of the legislation of the EU Directive, Ukrainian refugees that fled to Sweden have different structures to act within compared to conventional refugees. While conventional refugees after seeking asylum and after a specific period of time, are able to apply for a Swedish person number, this was not possible for the Ukrainian refugees because of the consequences of the Directive. This constraint was shortly mentioned as an authority constraint and will here be further elaborated as a capability constraint. Several interlocutors accounted for issues with the lack of a person number, here among, Bohdana (42), Mariya (33), and various participants in the group interview. They had been provided with a restricted payment card by the Migration Agency for their everyday expenses, however, with this card they could not do purchases of tickets online or on an app. To be eligible for a card that can, one must have a Swedish person number. The lack of said person number forced the Ukrainian participants to always go to a public transportation office to buy a physical ticket, creating a barrier as such offices were not always close or even in the same town, as in the case with the women in Furulund. Mariya (33) and Bohdana (42) explained how in addition, to be eligible for a bank account and thereby a credit card to use online, one also had to have a job. This could be difficult to achieve if one does not have access to public transportation, as stated by the interlocutors several times and especially by Viktoriya (26). Not having a Swedish person number and not having access to a proper credit card became a capability constraint for Ukrainian refugees as every time they needed to buy a ticket for public transportation it became a big procedure. Therewith affecting the experience with the use and access to public transportation, yet again restricting their agency and “forcing” them into a more secluded everyday life. Therefore, even with proper mobility infrastructures and access to transportation, barriers such as technology and culture could affect social inclusion, a statement backed by the article of Smith et al. (2022). Some found ways to overcome these restrictions, such as Anna (64) and Denys (68) who drew on their daughter to buy them tickets, and Kateryna (68) and Ionna (41) who could get assistance from a Ukrainian friend who had lived in Sweden from before the war. Therefore, the constraints with a person number were a vital issue for the participant.

Another internal structure that could impact the experience of public transportation and everyday mobility was the differentiations in culture between Sweden and Ukraine. While

Mariya (33) announced that she did not experience a major cultural difference between the two countries, the conducted interviews have deduced a few. The initial difference encountered dealt with modes of transportation. Sweden is categorised as a bicycle country, where more than 68% own a bike and more than 35% use it weekly (Ipsos, 2022). Biking is used as a substitute for other modes of transportation including public transportation, especially when dealing with shorter distances. It is seen as a big part of Swedish culture with 77% knowing how to ride a bike. It is this biking culture that some of the Ukrainians have commented on, in particular biking in all kinds of weather.

*“In Ukraine people don't usually bike in big cities. First it's hills. Second, roads not everywhere have bike roads. [...] but we are not used to drive in the rain. And in the wind, not our scene. The bikes in winter are still for me a mystery.”* (Mariya, 33)

Only a handful of the participants owned a bike and another handful perceived the potential dangers behind it, especially if they were to let their children bike in situations that Anichka (40) deemed as *“dangerous because of the weather. It might be windy, rainy, snowy.”* Ivan, a 40-year-old man, who lived in Malmö, saw biking as a real possibility for shorter distances to save money on public transportation. Ihor (32) and Myroslava (37) both announced that they had bikes and used them for emergency shopping, assisting the other women, who lived in Furulund, or bringing the children back and forth. However, the majority agreed that biking was not an alternative for them and especially not during winter. Nonetheless, this would provide them with more agency to participate in society. Geis (2019) argues in her article that refugees often have a different mobility behaviour than natives. In this case, the difference lay in the use of bicycles as an alternative to public transportation – with the Swedes having more tendency to do so than Ukrainians – underlining the importance of public transportation for Ukrainian refugees.

## 6.2 Recognition Theory

In the previous chapter, the mobility analysis has shown how legal and social structures impacted the use of public transportation and the inclusion into Swedish society for Ukrainian refugees by enabling or hampering the interlocutors' agency in their everyday life. Location, socialisation, and use of public transportation shaped the construction of the Ukrainians everyday mobility as means to social participation while financial and personal capabilities were significant factors in the experience of using public transportation. This chapter will

combine the structures of mobility and social inclusion in everyday life and examine the creation of a social identity and social justice related to inclusion and the use of public transportation. Through recognition of the Ukrainian refugees, one can better understand their process of social inclusion and their ability to perform under the social and legal structures from the previous chapter. This chapter will look at justice in social hierarchy and legal equality when trying to answer the research question of how and to what extent Ukrainian refugees experienced the use of free public transportation and how such influenced social inclusion.

### 6.2.1 Social Hierarchy

As asserted, the use of public transportation is a significant factor to social inclusion. Several factors come into play for the experience of this use of transportation as already examined. Some of these factors and experiences when using public transportation, impacted the creation of a social identity as a Ukrainian refugee in Sweden and partaking in Swedish society. These experiences and factors are what is known as the establishment of a social hierarchy that recognises the interlocutors in a specific position in the social inclusion.

As this research focused on the use of public transportation and the effects on inclusion for Ukrainian refugees, the experience of public transportation acted as our main field site when examining the social hierarchy. Herein, public transportation served as a place that could trigger a variety of emotions for the interlocutors. Several interlocutors here among Bohdana (42), Denys (68), and participants in the group interview had experienced, what they deemed a noteworthy, show of support by bus drivers. The interlocutors experienced that when they entered the bus and the bus driver recognised them as a Ukrainian refugee, they would say “Slava Ukraini” or “Glory to Ukraine”, showing their support to Ukrainians and the context they lived in. Viktoriya (26) shared the experience of such pleasant encounters in public transportation, as she too had encountered emotional and social support, as a driver told her when he saw the passport “*Wow. [You] are from Ukraine. Welcome. Welcome. I'm so glad that you are here*”. These comments stirred up positive emotions in the interlocutors, which became even more apparent when the interlocutors teared up while telling their stories. Positive emotions and the feeling of being welcome in the host country built up the Ukrainian refugees’ self-esteem, improved the identity they needed to establish when coming to a new country and enhanced their participation in society. As Honneth states in his theory of recognition



*“participating in the public realm means participating without shame”* (p. 351, 2004) then the feeling of being welcomed and accepted by the inhabitants in a host society plays a significant role in the ability to create a social identity and take part in social inclusion. Further, it created a more blurred social hierarchy as it allowed for the Ukrainian refugees to feel like an equal and valued part of society.

A different aspect, which can be drawn from the structures in mobility is the social value that was connected to a passport. It was mentioned repeatedly during the interviews as a part of the experience of using public transportation. They explained the need to document their Ukrainian refugee status for free public transportation by showing a Ukrainian passport. The Ukrainian interlocutors experienced the act in itself as a way of being “forced” into a specific category in the social hierarchy of Swedish society. As, among others, Bohdana (42), Viktoriya (26) and Mariya (33) conveyed, by showing their passport when entering a bus or train, they openly showed to everyone that they were Ukrainian refugees, positioning their external identification for the outside to respond to. One could argue that by doing so, their previously recognised identity as Ukrainian individuals had changed due to the context of time and space. This resulted in them being recognised as refugees in the current perceived life world. Mariya (33) explained how every time she and her sister would enter a mode of public transportation it would be followed with stress and a feeling of having to “prove” themselves through the passport. In addition, for them it was a very personal act, as showing the passport was a way of exclaiming *“Hello. I’m from Ukraine. Look”*, and that it was a constant reminder of *“I am refugee, I am refugee, I am refugee”* (Mariya, 33). This caused a feeling of people staring and mentally placing them in a specific social position in relation to society, something that created emotional discomfort for especially Mariya's 17 years old sister. Mariya (33) followed up by stating how such experiences created a divide between the Ukrainian refugees and Swedish society and that while they were getting a great deal of support in Sweden, the attention and recognition of their position when taking public transportation screamed:

*“This is a refugee. You're not a girl or woman, young woman or whatever in the train anymore. You are a refugee from Ukraine.”* (Mariya, 33)

In contrast to the earlier mentioned positive feelings that were created when people recognized the interlocutors as Ukrainians, some interlocutors perceived interactions like the one Mariya described rather negatively. Viktoriya (26) shared a similar experience where she had felt

somewhat uncomfortable gazes on her when showing the Ukrainian passport and explained how it made her feel “[...] *a little bit like a white crow in a society*”. Followed up by an opposed statement from her father, on how the recognition as a refugee was nothing to worry about, it was just the way their lives were currently shaped:

*“It's ok because we ARE refugees, we need to save some money and the money we are receiving from migration service. [...] It's perfectly fine. Don't worry about this. How people are looking at you.”* (Viktoriya, 26, quoting her father)

Instead of feeling included, the passport that indicated that they were Ukrainian refugees created a feeling of being different and also to be perceived as different from the rest of society. The status of a refugee is something very specific to the general public and it is a different category to be placed in than the general public. While the interlocutors were indeed Ukrainian refugees, when reminded and perceived of being so, it can affect their self-identification and their social inclusion into Swedish society by feeling “different”. This can result in an impact on the social hierarchy, or at least how the Ukrainians perceive their own position in the hierarchy, as they were recognised outside of the ordinary Swedish society. Moreover, when the use of public transportation became a significant factor in this feeling, it automatically affected the experience of using public transportation. An impact that Bohdana (42) also experienced in the divide between Ukrainian refugees and Swedes, and the possible stigmatisation of their identity, as she felt ashamed when she used the free access with her whole family. Referring back to Honneth's notion that social justice includes “*participation without shame*” (p. 351, 2004), it can be argued that the social inclusion and creation of a social identity is hampered for Ukrainian refugees as discrimination harms identity, autonomy formation, and inclusion of the individual.

Bringing back the relationship between the Ukrainian refugees and the bus drivers, ticket inspectors, and train conductors from the section on *authority constraints and enablers*, Viktoriya continued her descriptions of experiences she had on public transportation with “authority” figures. Besides having to undergo a variety of emotions when showing the passport and exposing her nationality, Viktoriya experienced a ticket inspector from the regional public transit company taking the passport away from her without her consent, to verify that she was in fact who she claimed, leaving her with a “horrible” feeling. As already established, the passport acted as an identifier for Ukrainian refugees’ position, a symbol of her

identity as a refugee in Sweden and was the most important legal document for refugees. When the ticket inspector took away her passport, he indirectly placed himself in a higher power position than her and took on a legal identity wherein he was allowed to take the passport from her. This emphasised the relationship between the refugee and ticket inspector, where the refugee was recognised by the authority figure as someone in a lower societal position and someone, who the inspector had power over. It strengthens the notion that the passport was to a notable degree an actant in creating an identity in Swedish society for Ukrainian refugees. However, it is important to notice that those feelings of discomfort never hindered the interlocutors from using public transportation and taking part in Swedish society to the best of their ability. The interlocutors argued that such experiences were rather rare and that usually, they felt welcomed by Swedish society, even though they were identified as different actors than the regular Swedes or immigrants. Furthermore, it should not be taken away that the refugees perceived the free access as a substantial help, and as shortly mentioned in *Authority Constraints and Enablers*, it was only the execution of the ‘free ticket’ that they suggested to improve, for instance by showing a different kind and more subtle form of identifier.

Connecting to authority constraints and enablers, the Ukrainian refugees came to Sweden under the protection of the EU Directive and not as conventional refugees. This altered their recognised identity from refugees to Directive refugees and changed the feeling of belonging and the creation of an identity. Various interlocutors mentioned the fact that they were temporary refugees and that when the Directive would end, they would no longer hold the title of refugees and would lose the benefits and recognition that followed. Thereby, the context of their life world would shift once again, and they would have to alter their identity accordingly. Artem (63), a participant in the group interview, reported the following:

*“We are not refugees. We are only receiving temporary protection. The keyword is temporary. Different people have different abilities and possibilities in this situation.”*

(Artem, 63)

This statement backs up the argument that the current recognised identities are temporary and only established and sustainable in the current context of time and space for the Ukrainian refugees. Therefore, while being recognised as refugees in this context, the Ukrainian refugees have a greater possibility to take part in society and social inclusion with their formed identity as a result of the free access to public transportation.

Lastly, the opportunity of the 'free ticket' provided to them by the Migration Agency, positioned them in a social hierarchy in various ways. The ticket placed them higher than conventional refugees in the social hierarchy and offered them benefits that were not provided to the ordinary Swede either. However, the 'free ticket' also placed them in a position where they felt like they had to be grateful, and thereby placing themselves in a lower hierarchy on a subordinate level. In the group interview, Artem (63), expressed from the beginning that he would speak his mind, and not be nice just because he assumed we were from Sweden. In some way, he felt the need to mention it before the interview yet concluded the interview by thanking us for taking the time, as many people do not see the issues surrounding their access to public transportation and the effects it has on their everyday life. It is possible to see the case as if the ticket is coming from the top of the social and legal hierarchy, passed down to the Ukrainian refugees, lifting them up through social participation, yet leaving a gratefulness that divides their social position.

### 6.2.2 Legal (In)Equality

The free access to public transportation for Ukrainian refugees offered, as analysed in the previous section, among other, a way to participate in society and increased social inclusion. It allowed Ukrainian refugees to meet and socialise with Swedish and Ukrainian society and offered access to cultural and leisure activities while promoting the subjective feeling of being included. Thus, it can be argued that the 'free ticket' offered recognition for Ukrainian refugees. This recognition was mainly given through the municipalities and regional public transportation operators that enabled free access for Ukrainian refugees. According to Honneth, this recognition must be, among other, based on legal equality for something to be believed as 'just' when equal. However, as the previous analysis showed, Ukrainian refugees enjoyed protection under the EU Directive that enabled and enforced different legal consequences for Ukrainian refugees, compared to refugees protected under the 1951 Refugee Convention. Furthermore, access to public transportation was only free for Ukrainian refugees. For refugees from other countries or other people in society the access to public transportation was not free, as illustrated in the table below.

Table 2: The (In)Equality of the free access for Ukrainians compared to different groups.

Recognition/ ‘free ticket’ of Ukrainian refugees in Skåne	Ukrainians in Stockholm	Ukrainians that are not refugees	Refugees that are not Ukrainian	Swedish citizens/ residents with person number
Yes	<i>Equality</i>	<i>Inequality</i>	<i>Inequality</i>	<i>Inequality</i>
No	<i>Inequality</i>	<i>Equality</i>	<i>Equality</i>	<i>Equality</i>

The 'free ticket' enforced an inequality between Ukrainian refugees and other people in society that used public transportation, as they were recognised to be in need of increased help. Therefore, the legal implications were different for Ukrainian refugees compared to the rest of society, placing them, as elaborated on in the previous section, in a different social position. This implied that although Ukrainian refugees received recognition through the free access and were able to enjoy agency and inclusion, this was not based on legal equality. Rather, the recognition of Ukrainian refugees was based on a legal inequality that benefited Ukrainian refugees, their everyday mobility, and thus, social inclusion. Therefore, with the end of the free access in most of Sweden, Ukrainian refugees gained legal equality with other actants in the society – in regards to the use of public transportation – but lost the recognition they received through the ‘free ticket’. This claim contradicts Honneth's theory that argues recognition is executed through legal equality. With the change in the accessibility of public transportation for Ukrainian refugees, the state of recognition has changed in the context of time and space. Although Honneth claims that the interrelation of recognition and legal equality enhances recognition, this analysis showed that a legal inequality that benefits a vulnerable group can also enhance recognition and social inclusion. The case of Ukrainian refugees that have enjoyed increased inclusion through the ticket proved that recognition in the form of free access to public transport can increase physical mobility. However, as was elaborated on in the previous section *Social Hierarchy*, it can inter alia limit mental inclusion.

Furthermore, the legal implications of the ticket itself were not always clear. During informal conversations with Ukrainians that lived in the Skåne region in Sweden, it was mentioned multiple times that although they were not refugees, they used the ‘free ticket’ and showed their passports to use public transportation for free. It was argued that since they were

financially supporting their families by buying food, accommodation, or similar, they would also be in need of support. Placing this in Honneth's theory, they were requesting or even using the recognition that was given to Ukrainian refugees as a way to create legal equality between Ukrainian refugees and those Ukrainians that were not protected by the EU Directive and were financially supporting Ukrainian refugees. However, this could be seen as unjustified as the benefit of a 'free ticket' is taken over by a different social group. Throughout the informal conversations, it was elaborated that this form of "using" the free ticket for Ukrainians, who were not refugees, was enabled through the only requirement being the Ukrainian passport that needed to be shown.

However, throughout the interviews, it became apparent that there was a change in the recognition. Viktoriya (26) and the participants of the group interview argued that the behaviour of some of the ticket inspectors, train conductors, and bus drivers had changed towards Ukrainian refugees and became harsher throughout time.

*"She was like a little bit impolite and almost something like irritated by something, so I just saw that during autumn are people who working in Skånetrafiken, they've been more, not rude towards Ukrainians, but different."* (Viktoriya, 26)

This change in attitude was mostly noted at a time closer to the end of the 'free ticket'. This change also entailed that some of the interlocutors had to show proof that they were Ukrainian refugees, who arrived in Sweden in 2022. This had the consequence that Ukrainians, who were not refugees, were excluded from the 'free ticket'. This enhanced the argument that the recognition in form of the free access to public transportation was a legal inequality between Ukrainian refugees and the rest of the population (Table 2). An additional issue with the free access and its application was mentioned by Bohdana (42), who lived in Stockholm. As mentioned before, after arriving in Sweden, she first lived in a town outside of Stockholm, Västerås. Knowing about the free access in Stockholm, she entered trains and buses in Västerås by only showing her passport. Only afterwards Bohdana learned that other Ukrainian refugees argued that the access was not for free in Västerås.

*"[...] she showed the passport and she asked driver 'can I go' but she feel like the bus driver was just kind and say and allowed her to enter without pain because other people in Västerås, who were in Ukrainian community, there were telling to each other and they were like in Västerås there is no such a thing as a free transportation."* (Bohdana, 42)

After hearing that the access might not be free in Västerås, she refrained from using public transportation when it was not needed. Thus, in addition to legal inequality between Ukrainian refugees and other members of society, the free access that was not countrywide enhanced inequality between refugees depending on where they lived. While for Bohdana this inequality was felt when living in Västerås, refugees that lived in the southern or western regions of Sweden felt the inequality compared to Stockholm, where the access to public transportation was still free for Ukrainian refugees. Hence, based on the previous findings of this analysis it can be argued that inclusion into society was still promoted by legal inequality and recognition in Stockholm, while the recognition was abolished for other Ukrainian refugees, e.g., refugees in Skåne.

The wish of Ukrainian refugees in the Skåne region to again receive recognition as a way to participate in society was so significant that a petition was created by Swedish citizens. It was believed that it would be just to have the same possibility to use public transportation as Ukrainians in Stockholm. The petition, which aimed to bring back free transportation for Ukrainians in the Skåne region, as it was in Stockholm, has been put in motion and is currently under review by the responsible committee in Lund municipality (Lundaförslag, 2023). According to Honneth, this aim of equality for recognition is just as it is based on the belief that fairness between the Ukrainian refugees should be implemented to increase recognition and inclusion. The petition was promoted through Facebook groups supporting Ukrainian refugees and supported by Viktoriya (26). However, in this petition, the Ukrainian refugees had no agency to sign themselves, as it was necessary to have a Swedish person number and therefore, only Swedish citizens could sign. The previous chapter illustrated how Ukrainian refugees were not able to apply for a person number because of the legal structures surrounding the EU Directive. This resulted in another legal inequality in which Ukrainian refugees could not take agency and promote their aspirations with a legal petition.

Nonetheless, inequality between Ukrainian refugees was not always condemned. One interlocutor of the group interview argued:

*“[...] they should not be treated equal. [...] For those who wants to stay in Sweden to help them and push them to integrate better into Swedish society and for those people who want to flee from Sweden back to Ukraine, make another rules.” (Artem, 63)*

Artem argued that Ukrainians should be legally treated according to their own aspirations in the host country. This would imply that those that aim to stay in Sweden should receive increased means of recognition to help them become a part of society. This would increase legal inequality towards the different Ukrainian refugee groups – almost enforcing less opportunity for social participation for those who will leave anyways. This is further promoted by Mariya (33), who argued that the ‘free ticket’ gave Ukrainians a form of recognition that enhanced the value of being a refugee specifically in Sweden – regardless of the wish to remain or leave the country again. Further, Mariya claimed that some Ukrainians chose Sweden as a host state specifically because it offered free access to public transportation. As elaborated earlier in the analysis, free access helped Ukrainian refugees, especially in the beginning after arrival. Therefore, the recognition may have especially influenced the decision to be a refugee in Sweden. However, the interlocutors on which this thesis was based did not mention that the ticket was a reason to come in the first place. Rather, it was a reason to stay in Sweden.

In the legal equality section, it is argued how the ‘free ticket’ increased social inclusion yet was based on legal inequality, and that the abolition of the ‘free ticket’ hampered social inclusion, while increasing legal equality, challenging Honneth’s theory of recognition. Taking the idea a step further based on the previous analysis, the legal inequality, connected to the ‘free ticket’, placed the Ukrainian refugees in a position where they felt the need to reassure their gratefulness. This challenged or at least built upon the argument that legal inequality promotes complete and equal social inclusion revolving around the creation of a social hierarchy. Concluding on the analysis of social and legal recognition, this research argues that while the ‘free ticket’ improved mental health and physical social inclusion, combined with the EU Directive it limited mental inclusion and the creation of an autonomous social identity.

## 7. Discussion

In the analysis, findings such as financial restraints, individual capabilities regarding use of public transportation, mental and physical well-being, social inclusion, and isolation were investigated through various theoretical tools. The following section will extract some of the main findings for a discussion. The Discussion will commence by looking at the findings through the lens of (im)mobility justice, followed by a discussion of everyday mobility, finances, and isolation as a result of the ‘free ticket’.



## 7.1 (Im)mobility Justice

Mobility Justice is argued by scholars to move beyond the concept of Mobility and pivot how uneven availability and distribution can impact everyday mobility and social participation (Sheller, 2018; Cresswell, 2010). Furthermore, such uneven distribution is greatly impacted by social-, legal-, and cultural power structures (Cresswell, 2006; Sheller, 2018; Sheller & Urry, 2006; Stjernborg, 2017). Introducing Everyday Mobility, Time-Geography, and Recognition through the lens of Mobility Justice, one can get an understanding of how the external and internal power constraints and enablers impact the Ukrainian refugees' ability to move in a just way. With this in mind, it became clear in the interviews and in the analysis that the structures, which in the analysis were categorised as authority constraints and enablers, had the most significant impact on the experience of public transportation for the Ukrainian refugees and the following impact on their everyday life. Everyday mobility was severely restricted since the free access to transportation for Ukrainian refugees ended. The free access allowed them to visit different cities, participate in social events, meet and experience Swedish society, or meet up with friends and family. The only legal condition for obtaining the 'free ticket' was the show of a Ukrainian passport. With this act, one of the main constraints for obtaining the 'free ticket' relied on the citizenship of the refugees, illustrating only one of the various components when examining Mobility Justice. This requirement of citizenship through the passport enhanced the feeling of being recognised as refugee. It placed them into a social hierarchy, aside from the general public, when using public transportation. Though supported by Sheller (2018), Mobility Justice also entails justification of other components, such as gender, race, and religion. Thus, in this research only citizenship and the socio-historical background of these specific refugees, built upon the justice in free access to public transportation. Further, the various aforementioned social activities were restricted for the interlocutors since the access to free public transportation ended. Based on the findings it can be argued that everyday mobility and participation in social life were severely restricted for Ukrainian refugees since the abolition of the 'free ticket'. Especially their location and financial situation played a big role in this experience and the use of agency, which illustrated the Mobility Injustice generated towards Ukrainian refugees (Sheller, 2018). Being placed in the outskirts of or outside of cities with limited transportation options or said transportation having a higher cost than reasonable compared to financial means, can lead to a negative experience of the use of public

transportation, social exclusion, and a secluded everyday life. The interconnectedness between attributes such as limited transportation options, transportation costs, physical constraints, and proof of citizenship, highly impact the refugees' everyday mobility, thus moving beyond the basic concept of mobility and taking part in the concept of Mobility Justice. Further, Mobility Justice discusses the uneven distribution of resources (Sheller, 2018). Such uneven distribution could also be seen with the availability of the 'free ticket' that was solely provided for a small group within society. In this case, the uneven distribution benefited, once again, the Ukrainian refugees while strengthening mobility injustice in the society. Thus, the unequal distribution was, unlike Sheller (2018) suggests, a form that enhanced mobility through legal inequality. Furthermore, throughout the interviews, it could be noticed that some people received financial compensation, and some did not, based on proximity to the language school. However, especially those in smaller villages, for whom a ticket to the bigger cities would be beneficial for the inclusion process, were not receiving such compensation. For the participants of the focus group, the challenge of isolation was so drastic that they considered going back to Ukraine. Those that still get financial compensation for public transportation also had to change their everyday life. Not only was there a mobility injustice in the distribution of additional financial compensation by the Migration Agency, but there was also an unequal distribution of placement, i.e., being placed in villages with less transportation accessibility. Further, the unequal distribution continued as an interregional difference between Ukrainian refugees in Skåne and Ukrainian refugees in Stockholm, who still experienced the 'free ticket'. In addition, Lucas et al. (2016) mention financial circumstances as one of the core reasons for immobility, while Hagan (2020), Ray and Reed (2005), and Andersson (2012) see location and lack of interactions due to public transportation restrictions as additional reasons for social exclusion. Alongside Mobility Justice, the aforementioned researchers understand transportation accessibility and affordability, as a substantial component to social equity and social participation. Further, the results of Mobility Injustice established an inequality for Ukrainian refugees in Swedish society, not only in regards to transportation, yet to an extent where they could be denied as a valued and equal part of society. In addition to the Ukrainian refugees' financial situations, internal constraints such as lack of person number and physical ability had a significant impact on the Ukrainian refugees' experience with public transportation. This increased the isolation many interlocutors felt. Further, all interlocutors argued that access to public transportation enabled the process of inclusion into society, indicating the effect

Mobility Justice could have on social participation and correspondingly, heavily influenced their well-being. In conclusion, it can be argued that Mobility Justice through equally distributed accessibility and, to some extent, availability of public transportation, among others via the 'free ticket', allowed Ukrainian refugees' inclusion and participation in Swedish society. With the end of free access, everyday mobility became restricted, enhancing Mobility Injustice among the Ukrainian refugees, which resulted in less social participation and less access to Swedish society.

## 7.2 Bus or Bike? Other Modes of Transportation

The access to free public transportation has, as elaborated in the analysis, enhanced the possibility of Ukrainian refugees to participate in social events, increased everyday mobility, and thus, allowed social participation in Swedish society. With the abolition of the 'free ticket', the interlocutors argued that mobility was decreased and possibilities to inclusion were limited. After the abolition of the 'free ticket', one could look at other modes of transportation for Ukrainian refugees to use to enhance their everyday mobility, such as cars, or taxis. Some interlocutors mentioned during the interviews the benefit in their everyday life of having access to cars. However, when looking at their financial situation, which was one of the reasons why the abolition had significant consequences, one would argue that such alternative modes are unavailable due to their financial expenses. This is further supported in academic literature, where it is argued that cars are rather unlikely to be used by refugees (Geis, 2019). However, it must also be considered that some of the interlocutors had access to bikes. Although it must be acknowledged that the acquisition cost of a bike consists of a financial burden it could be argued that from a long term-perspective, a one-time payment for a bike may be cheaper than buying tickets for public transportation. Thus, there could be an alternative mode of transportation to take part in social participation which would not have the same cost effect as public transportation. By using bikes, not only is it possible that the social participation increases, but also that it would free up a portion of their expenses, broadening the financial leeway. Nonetheless, it can be argued that even those that had access did not use it to the extent that other people in society use it. As mentioned earlier this can be based on a cultural difference in the attitude towards biking. Nonetheless, it should be considered that a bike is a form of mobility that enhances everyday mobility, especially after the abolition of the ticket. Here, one can ask how much adaptation can be expected from refugees in a new society.

### 7.3 Public Transportation Promotes Inclusion

In the findings of this thesis, one of the biggest challenges for the Ukrainian interlocutors, regarding the use of public transportation, was financial circumstances. The financial discrepancy between the monthly allowance Ukrainian refugees received from the Migration Agency, the cost of living and the prices of tickets for public transportation were a significant concern for the interlocutors. It was brought up several times as one of the main root causes for their troubles and experiences with the use of public transportation. Further, it appeared as if a great part of their life and everyday mobility unfolded around the financial situation and was mentioned as a major reason for why the 'free ticket' should be available for Ukrainian refugees all over Sweden. However, one could question if the implications of the financial burden are as significant as implied and whether there are other ways for the Ukrainian refugees to lessen the financial hold that the monthly allowance and the ticket prices had on their social inclusion.

In addition, three Ukrainians announced during the interviews that they had acquired a job in Sweden which helped pay for their cost of living and their use of public transportation. While other interlocutors mentioned it was too difficult to get a job or even go to job interviews after the abolition of the 'free ticket', spending the required money to attain a job could be a necessary sacrifice that would conceivably liberate the Ukrainian refugees from the financial grasp of the monthly allowance. As examined in the analysis, it was apparent that the ticket prices for public transportation took up a significant portion of the daily and monthly allowance, affecting the experience of the use of public transportation for Ukrainian refugees, especially for those who were placed outside of cities. As elaborated earlier, other modes of transportation often offered no affordable and comparable replacement for public transportation or were used less due to cultural differences. Thus, one cannot get around that the 'free ticket' had a significant influence on the refugees' lives because of the financial security it provided. Adding on, due to the EU Directive, the Ukrainian refugees were able to enter the job market and thereby earn a salary far quicker than conventional refugees. As already mentioned, entering the job market would be a sure way of increasing one's financial independence, which could in the end be one of the goals of the Ukrainian refugees, in order to have more agency over their lives. Surely, the findings illustrated how there was a discrepancy in how much financial assistance the various Ukrainian refugees received, such as the additional financial aid for language classes. Though, it is the criteria for *who*, *how* and

*when* someone is deemed eligible that would need to be amended and not necessarily any additional financial aid that needs to be provided.

Furthermore, in providing Ukrainian refugees with permanent extended free access to transportation to lessen the financial burden, one would overlook other social groups who would be in need of the same financial assistance when using public transportation, such as other refugees or Swedes with a lower financial status. For comparison with other refugees in Sweden, according to the Migration Agency both Ukrainian and conventional refugees received the same amount in the monthly allowance providing them with the same financial starting point. Therefore, one could argue that the Ukrainian refugees were in a financial position that was deemed worthy for all refugees in Sweden. While this paper has not done research on other refugees' financial stability in relation to inclusion, it places Ukrainian refugees in a financial equality, which they currently only themselves can change through income.

The financial situation and its effect on the use of public transportation and social inclusion, was an important concern regarding Ukrainian refugees' settlement in Sweden, however there are also aspects where one could argue that the Ukrainian interlocutors could not expect a greater financial leeway without personal action. Bringing back the 'free ticket' for Ukrainian refugees all over Sweden raises both economic and moral questions. The findings of this research do show the struggles of Ukrainian refugees and how it affected the use of public transportation and their social inclusion. However, as it focused on subjective experiences of the interlocutors, the circumstances surrounding the finances are illustrated in the interlocutor's point of view.

#### 7.4 The Free Ticket - A Means to Segregation?

Another consequence of the lack of access to public transportation was identified in the findings of the analysis and data collection as the connection between public transportation and isolation. Feeling isolated and not being able to take part in Swedish society was a great issue for the Ukrainian refugees, while they saw the 'free ticket' as a significant factor in their social inclusion. Further, it was mentioned during the interviews how the prospect of free access to public transportation was a pull factor for Ukrainian refugees to come to Sweden. However, one could question whether the 'free ticket' also enhanced the current feeling of being isolated.

In having access to free public transportation from the outset, the consequences of losing the free access and what it entailed might have been felt more severely than if there had been no ‘free ticket’ from the beginning. On that occasion, not having free access would have been the norm and most likely Ukrainian refugees would have found a way to cope and take part in social inclusion without – in the same way that other refugees or immigrants do. Additionally, the recognition that followed with the ‘free ticket’ was analysed to be beneficial for physical well-being, yet not necessarily mental inclusion, illustrating how a different kind of isolation could occur through the ticket. Nevertheless, all interlocutors described how the ‘free ticket’ had been an outstanding help for their settlement and that they were immensely grateful. Though, it likely left a sense of entitlement, where interlocutors felt like they should be given free access to public transportation to take part in Swedish society. Even so, as argued, this “entitlement” stems from being given a ‘free ticket’ from the beginning and then experiencing the change in everyday mobility after the abolition, possibly heightening the feeling of isolation and segregation. Therefore, one could argue that not having access to a ‘free ticket’ probably would have hardened their financial situation, however, it might have altered the immense feeling of isolation. Not because they no longer would be isolated where they lived in regard to social participation, but because they would not have experienced any difference. Surely, there would still be a sense of isolation, as research illustrates, as it is the case with conventional refugees (Geis, 2019; Ozkazanc, 2021; Smith et al., 2022), yet Ukrainian refugees would not have experienced a different everyday life in Sweden. Therefore, it is to ask whether the ‘free ticket’ and the following abolition did more good than bad in regards to feeling isolated. Nonetheless, social inclusion is not only a matter of individual well-being of the refugees but further a path to integration and becoming a member of society, something that the state from a long-term perspective is interested in (Hajduković, 2021). Thus, it can be argued that the positive influence the ticket had overshadows the possibility of not knowing it any differently.

Furthermore, the analysis concludes that the ‘free ticket’ provided the Ukrainian refugees with a quality of mental and physical life with access to social activities, cultural experiences, and general everyday mobility. Thus, the abolition of the ‘free ticket’ changed this quality of life and, according to the findings, left the interlocutors in a version of a *bare life* situation (Fassin, 2007). Though, while the Ukrainian refugees still had individualised legal and political status and protection, their current everyday life consisted of limited interactions

and activities, leaving only basic necessities such as shopping for food, taking a walk, or going to language class – which segregated them from Swedish society. Further, it stripped them of life quality in social inclusion, allocating them in an isolated status. However, as they were still allowed to be part of Swedish society, one could argue that *bare life* was not complete, though, it was based on the interlocutor's own ability to rise from their everyday situation. Thus, to get back the quality of life they were given through the 'free ticket' and taken away in the abolition, Ukrainian refugees would have to sort out their financial situation and overcome their isolation. The interlocutors' isolation was highly based on not having the financial means and/or lack of transportation availability for social participation, showing a distinct interconnectedness between the use of transportation, financial circumstances, and isolation.

## 8. Reflection

The methods and approaches applied in this thesis have provided us with the data that was needed to conclude the analysis and discussion. However, reflecting back, questions such as, whether there are other methods that would have assisted our research further and if so, what would the possible result be, can be asked. In addition, the chosen theories and concepts are deeply connected to the analysis, as by choosing a different theory the analysis could have had a different outcome. Thus, in the following, the choices of method, theory, and the analysis will be reflected upon. Further, other methods and theories that could have been used for this research will be elaborated on.

### 8.1 Reflection on Methods and Approaches

Since the research question is based on a phenomenological approach and the individual Ukrainian refugee's personal perception of the experience with free public transportation, interviews were used as the main source of data. With these interviews and the interlocutor pool participating in the interviews, several factors can be reflected on.

The interlocutor pool that was used consisted of 21 Ukrainian refugees between the ages of 26 to 68, with the majority living in the Skåne region with the only exception being Bohdana (42), who lived in Stockholm. Our only requirements were that the interlocutors should be above 18 years old and have fled to Sweden in 2022. The reason for this fairly broad limitation was the worry of not obtaining enough interlocutors in the amount of time we had

available. In retrospect, some of the interlocutors possessed characteristics that others did not, so the question is what effect this difference had for our research? Applying Bohdana as an example, as the only interlocutor, she was living outside of the Skåne region, in a city that still provided free public transportation for Ukrainian refugees. Since our research looks at the difference in social inclusion and everyday mobility before and after the abolition of the ‘free ticket’, it is to question if she fits the sampling group, since she did not experience the consequences after the abolition. Surely, in the short period she was placed in Västerås, as mentioned in the analysis, she experienced the nervousness of not having free access. However, the majority of her answers to questions about her mobility in the case of a possible abolition of the ‘free ticket’ and how she would react if she was ever in the same situation the other interlocutors currently are in, were hypothetical. Her answers on whether free access promoted inclusion and her experiences with the passport, were highly useful for the research, though one could question what kind of a difference it would have made for our data if all interlocutors were from the same region. Further, would it have made a difference if we had others from Stockholm to back up Bohdana’s experiences and strengthen the visual difference in everyday mobility between Ukrainians in Skåne and Stockholm and the following legal inequality?

Continuing with differences in the interlocutor pool, during the interviews we realised that a number of the interlocutors received a form of financial compensation for the use of public transportation, as long as they attended a Swedish language class, and thereby continued to have a form of free ticket. Nonetheless, these Ukrainians still had a lot of worries about social inclusion, everyday mobility, and financial circumstances, as for some the compensation only provided them with free transportation a certain amount of days per month. However, it still caused a difference in their everyday mobility compared to refugees who did not receive this additional form for compensation. During the interviews, the financially compensated group’s answers and worries were very similar to the answers of the group that were not compensated. This left the question of whether it would have made a difference for the data if we solely had interlocutors without compensation or if the compensation was so limited that it did not make a difference for the Ukrainians in the grand scheme of their experience with public transportation and social inclusion.

Furthermore, reflecting on the execution of the interviews themselves, both language barriers and the posed questions could be challenged. As mentioned in the section of



*'Methodology'*, the majority of the interlocutors did not speak a sufficient amount of English, with the only exception being Mariya (33) and Viktoriya (26). Thus, since we did not speak Ukrainian or Russian, our interviews were completely reliant on the translator's rendition. This can mean that certain aspects might have gotten lost in translation, key sentences that the translator might not find important would be missed, or the meaning of a sentence could have been changed (Eaton, 2020). Therefore, the language barrier posed a limitation to this study that may cause deviations in the results and analysis. Furthermore, the translators that were used in the interviews were not professional translators, due to financial limitations for this research, yet Ukrainian acquaintances, fluent in both Russian, Ukrainian, and English. In retrospect, not having professional translators can have affected the outcome of the translations and thereby the data for the analysis. If a professional translator had been available, it is possible that there would have been a difference in the slight nuances of the Ukrainians' answers, which would have provided additional information and points to our research, which we missed out on. When conducting interviews in a foreign language, one must always be aware of mistranslations or lost data. However, since we were unable to understand what was said while the interlocutors were speaking, we had more time to observe their body language, mimic, and reactions; for instance, did they have tears in their eyes or play with their hands when saying something? Or did they smirk when talking about experiences or similar? Were these reactions similar to the reactions of other interlocutors, and did the same questions spark a heated discussion? Being able to connect their reactions to their answers, we got the chance to understand the importance of different answers from a more emic perspective, and thereby enhanced the credibility of our research from their perspective.

Reflecting on the interview approach and the questions posed, we noticed that there was an overlap between the semi-structured and structured interview forms. Due to the language barrier, it was perceived to be more difficult to have a fluent, completely semi-structured interview with all of the interlocutors, as it was difficult to grab onto small keynotes when their answers were compactly translated, – therefore, heightened the need for additional structured questions to steer the conversation. Further, after completing the research and the analysis of the data, if having to do it again it would possibly be beneficial to contemplate the interview guide. While during the interview process, we altered some of the questions in accordance with the experiences of the previous interviews, in retrospect we would have excluded the hypothetical questions from the beginning, as they provided us with too abstract

answers. Instead, we would have included more questions on alternative modes of transportation and everyday mobility. Participant observations could also be an additional research method in order to take part in the experiences the Ukrainian interlocutors had with the use of public transportation. However, if this was incorporated, as the ‘free ticket’ had been abolished, we would only get an insight into their experiences with public transportation and everyday mobility in the current context. We were not able to take part in the experiences when they had access to the ‘free ticket’, giving an unbalanced aspect to the result of the participant observation.

As illustrated in the research design, we decided to take an inductive approach on the research (Bernard, 2017). Free access to public transportation is a new phenomenon, leaving to what extent it impacts social inclusion as an unknown territory for refugee mobility research. If we had chosen to take a deductive approach, the validity and credibility of the research would have been affected, as the deductive approach is rather based on proving or applying an existing theory and hypothesis and thereafter, collecting the data. This is opposite to the inductive approach that bases the research on the observation of a phenomenon, collecting the data and from there, identifying theories and conclusions (Bernard, 2017). In addition, because of the uniqueness of this research in combining refugee-, and mobility studies, it would have been difficult and “forced”, to make the choice of theories before collecting the data. Further, the use of phenomenology as a scientific framework limited this research as it solely focused on the interlocutor’s subjective impressions. Thus, using a different sampling pool could have coloured our data differently. This specific approach was chosen since the research focused on the individual’s *Life World* in regards to the free access to public transportation.

In continuation of the reflections done on the methods and approaches that resulted in the collected data, one could also reflect on how well the data works together with the concepts chosen. In accordance with the inductive approach, the theories and concepts were chosen to assist the collected data and not the other way around. Therefore, the majority of our data and coding fitted into the concepts of mobility, especially when focussed on power structures. However, there were aspects where our data did not fit into the time-geography theory, such as the coupling constraints. Though, since this research had an inductive approach, we formed the theories after the data and focussed on what the data found most important. This was also

visible in the connection between the data and the use of Recognition theory, which will be elaborated on in the following '*Reflection on the Theories, Concepts and Analysis*'.

## 8.2 Reflection on Theory, Concepts, and Analysis

The first concept that will be discussed in this section is the concept of everyday mobility. In the analysis, the concept was used to serve as an introductory tool that elaborated on the deep interconnectedness of mobility and participation in society. By asking the interlocutors about their everyday life activities, we quickly learned that the majority of interlocutors used public transportation for necessary daily activities, such as grocery shopping (Anna, 64), participation in school (Ionna, 41), or to reach the workplace (Viktoriya, 26; Mariya, 33). By examining the concept of everyday mobility regarding inclusion into society, we were able to examine how free access to public transportation became a crucial tool to exercise everyday mobility. To elaborate on different constraints and enablers that influenced or stem from free access to public transportation, we combined the analysis with Time-Geography. However, the Time-Geography approach was limited by this research as it solely took into account the subjective experiences of the interlocutors. Thus, this research illustrated a one-sided narrative of the constraints and enablers. The chosen approach and concepts that discussed mobility were therefore successful as it allowed us to answer the research question and analyse the data according to the focus of this research. Nonetheless, the approach of mobility justice that was discussed, was used restrictively. Mimi Sheller (2018) argues that mobility justice goes beyond the sole concept of unjust accessibility, rather it includes a multitude of research fields and aspects that combined create and influence the immobility of some people while benefiting others. In this research, it was solely focused on (Ukrainian) citizenship that enabled or restricted mobility. By including e.g., a gender perspective, the analysis would have gained an additional focus that could have been combined with feminist theories. Nonetheless, in this analysis we refrained from doing such, which limited the analysis of Ukrainian refugees' mobility in regards to justice, as Sheller argues for.

Honneth's (2004) theory of recognition was further used to identify the legal and social structures surrounding the free access to public transportation that further influenced the everyday mobility of Ukrainian refugees. As the initiative to enable the 'free ticket' for Ukrainian refugees was a sign of recognizing the specific needs of Ukrainian refugees, the theory was deemed fitting. However, the analysis quickly challenged Honneth's approach to

legal equality. As elaborated on in the analysis, the access to free public transportation, which is solely applicable to Ukrainian refugees, was a legal inequality in regards to other refugees, other Ukrainians in Sweden, or Swedish citizens. Thus, in the analysis, the theory was altered to fit the collected data. Therefore, being able to adjust the theory to the data is a way of upholding inductive reasoning. After assessing and analysing the data, we came to the conclusion that, in contrast to Honneth, recognition can also be a tool for social participation and the creation of a social identity, even if the recognition in itself is based on a legal inequality. Nonetheless, it is to question what legal equality would have meant in the case of free public access for Ukrainian refugees. Here, three possible solutions can be mentioned. 1) Legal equality in the case in question could mean free access for everyone with a residence in Sweden, including Swedes and other refugees. However, this implies a great financial burden for the state, the municipalities, and the transport agencies. Thus, this form of legal equality is rather unlikely to be executed in a state the size of Sweden. 2) Legal equality could also mean that no one receives free access to public transportation. This would, however, once again contradict Honneth's theory. As elaborated on in the analysis, the free access to public transportation was crucial for the participation and inclusion of Ukrainian refugees, something that was severely hindered since access was not free anymore. Thus, not having free access for anyone implies the lack of recognition for Ukrainian refugees. 3) Honneth argues legal equality enables recognition. This could imply free access to public transportation for all refugees, regardless of their country of origin or legal residence status. Such would insinuate inequality towards the majority of Swedish citizens and residents but could be justified as such other people may have better financial means to buy a ticket. Nonetheless, this could imply an unjust inequality towards other people in Sweden that live in poverty. Here, one could argue that public transportation should be free for all people that have limited financial possibilities and are dependent on state compensation of any form, something that can be further discussed in future research.

Nonetheless, the free access for Ukrainians allowed inclusion and recognition. By altering the theory, this research showed that recognition can also be based on legal inequality. This influenced the outcome of this research as it strengthened the claim for accessible public transportation, especially for refugees who are more prone to social exclusion, even if such is based on legal inequality.

The original theory of recognition would have limited the analysis therefore, alterations were made to fit the specific research aim. In doing so, the lengths of the two analytical parts that the analysis section consists of became unequal, with the ‘*Mobility*’ section being almost twice as long as the ‘*Recognition*’ section. This is based on the different classification that the approaches in questions had for the research question. As the concept of mobility and everyday mobility were crucial to answer the research question and understand the impact that the ‘free ticket’ had on Ukrainian refugees, the concept served as a guiding approach for the analysis. The use of the recognition theory was rather used as a secondary component to elaborate on the social and legal implications that came from enhanced mobility and the implications this had on social inclusion. Both frameworks served its purpose in the analysis, however, to adjust and realign the length of the two sections could have negatively influenced the analysis by shifting the focus and thus, altering the research question.

### 8.2.1 Supplementary Theory

As mentioned in the beginning of the previous section, the analysis is interrelated with the chosen theories or concepts. In the following, a theory that could have been used to analyse this work will be exemplified.

A plausible option to use for this analysis was the Structuration Theory by Giddens (1979). This theory allows the analysis of the interrelation between the individual agency and structures that restrict and enable such (Giddens, 1979). Here, one could have analysed how the access to free public transportation enabled the possibility for Ukrainian refugees to take agency, and in turn, how this would have re-established the power of the given structure, in this case, the enablement of the ‘free ticket’ initiatives. Further, this could have been compared to the abolition and it could have been analysed what this change in power structure meant for Ukrainian refugees and their everyday mobility. Nonetheless, if this theory was to be applied it would have altered the focus of this research, as it would have been necessary to shape the data after the theory – and not the theory after the data. Further, an increased focus would have been on the reinforcement of power structures that socially exclude Ukrainian refugees, who do not have access to free public transportation.

Nonetheless, Giddens’ theory was not used as we believe that the chosen theories and concepts allowed the best possible analysis to fulfil the aim of this research and answer the research question.

### 8.3 Additional Data to Further Our Research

In retrospect, a few things could have been changed throughout this research that could have benefited the analysis. One crucial point that restricted the comprehensive and broad research on this topic was the limited time frame and the limited financial means that were available to conduct this project. If such factors were not a limiting factor, this research could have used a broader and more comprehensive data collection with a bigger sampling group. Ideally, the data collection would have reached across the country and included Ukrainian refugees that lived in various locations in Sweden, including refugees that lived in rather less inhabited regions such as Norrbotten, the Gothenburg region, and an increased number of interlocutors from the Stockholm region, as mentioned in the *'Reflection on Methods'*. Including refugees from these regions would have allowed enhanced data collection. This would further have increased the applicability of the findings of this research to an extended group of Ukrainian refugees. Furthermore, with a bigger data collection, it would have been possible to analyse differences within the interlocutors. For example, Sheller's concept of mobility justice could also have been analysed under the aspect of gender with the different implications the 'free ticket' had depending on the specific gender. Further, age differences could have been analysed, or an even more extensive analysis of differences between Ukrainian refugees living in rural areas compared to those that live in bigger cities, such as Gothenburg or Stockholm. In addition, we noticed differences, when travelling around the countryside of Skåne to visit interlocutors, in time schedules for public transportation compared to Malmö or Lund. With extended time and financial capacities, such observation could have been conducted throughout different regions, which could have benefitted the data and thus, the analysis. As the data collection was limited in this research, the data was not extensive enough to do such comparisons. Thus, such can be used as a starting point in future research.

### 8.4 Trustworthiness and Position

An additional reflection on credibility would be in the expectations that existed surrounding our research and interviews. To enhance the trustworthiness of this research, international political developments that could have influenced the results of the research were considered. As supported by the experiences of Mariya (33) and Viktoriya (26), they explained how the participation of social events decreased after the abolition of the 'free ticket'. One must consider if such could possibly be a result of a change of the political climate in Ukraine, and

Ukrainian refugees returning to Ukraine. However, additional research has shown that such was very unlikely at the time of the abolition of the ‘free ticket’ in November 2022, as it can be argued that the conflict in Ukraine intensified in the winter of 2022/2023.

Further, as mentioned in the *‘Ethical Considerations’*, because of the help the interlocutors had previously received from the gatekeepers, they could possibly have felt a requirement for participating. For instance, before conducting an interview with Mariya (33) she argued that she would do anything the gatekeeper asked her to do. As it was important that the interviews were conducted voluntarily and without any kind of pressure, we made sure Mariya understood that she would not have to participate and that it was completely open to her to abort the interview. Furthermore, we experienced expectations towards us. We noticed during some of the interviews how the interlocutors, after having complained or said something negative about Sweden, would say “*but I’m not complaining. It is so nice YOU have helped us*”, placing us in a box, where we are the ones, they are grateful for. This could indicate that the interlocutors might possibly perceive us as more empowered than them, which then could have affected the data. If interlocutors were in the belief that we would take any negative opinion personally, or would get offended, it could taint their responses. This effect is also known as deference effect and implies the change of answers during an interview in order to not “offend” the interviewer. Such can be based on social gender role perceptions or perceived social status. Although the deference effect cannot be eliminated it is crucial to be aware of it and ensure the interlocutor that he/she/they are free in their answers (Egholm, 2014).

Reflecting on these two instances, we would have had to be more clear on the voluntariness of participation and our own position in the research field. This dilemma of position also came into play in the interviews when dealing with their answers’ credibility and freedom of speech. We assured them that we wanted to hear all experiences, good and bad and that we will not take any offence, regardless of what will be said. All interlocutors ensured us that they understood this. In our perception afterwards, the interviews reflected their personal opinions, including criticism and without “fear” of saying something that could be misunderstood. Nonetheless, there is never a guarantee that all interlocutors spoke completely freely and there is always a risk that some information was held back. This reflection on trustworthiness opens up for the understanding of *‘Validity and Credibility’* in the following section.

## 9. Validity and Credibility

As this research was based on a phenomenological approach, the credibility of the data is especially of importance to ensure the trustworthiness and validity of the results. The inductive approach enhanced the phenomenological analysis approach that was used. The semi-structured interviews allowed the interlocutors to guide the interview to topics that they deemed relevant. This caused the data to be subjective and based on their impression and interpretations, as required by a phenomenological approach. Despite the subjectivity of the data, the analysis was conducted as objectively as possible. Nonetheless, we are aware of our own personal position and possible biases that may have influenced this research. Furthermore, the language barrier created a challenge that was solved by using translators that spoke the interlocutors' languages. However, the specific phrasing, meaning, or emphasis of an interlocutor's expression may have been changed throughout the translating process and relevant information may have been lost. By close observation of the body language of the interlocutors and note-taking, we aimed to limit this possible loss. Further, the conversations were recorded in case of uncertainty during the analysis, and questions for clarification were asked if deemed necessary. The interlocutors' own credibility can be measured in the personal experiences and encounters they shared during the interview. Further, in favour of the reliability of this research is the coding process that was conducted by two researchers and the "4-eyes principle", which enhanced the trustworthiness of the coding process. Furthermore, this promoted the analysis to be as true to the data as possible. However, we acknowledge that the number of interlocutors is rather small compared to the number of Ukrainians that fled to Sweden in 2022. In addition, as mentioned before, this research was based on a phenomenological approach, which limited the application of the results of this research to the specific situation of the interlocutors and challenged the application to the whole population of Ukrainian refugees in Sweden or any other refugee groups. This research is valid as it intended to understand the experiences of Ukrainian refugees in regards to free public transportation from their own point of view. The data collection consisting of interviews strengthened this validity as it served the intended purpose.



## 10. Conclusion

This thesis was conducted around the research question of:

*How and to what extent do Ukrainian refugees in Sweden from 2022 experience the phenomenon of free public transportation and what influence has it on everyday mobility and social inclusion for Ukrainian refugees in Swedish society?*

As an answer to the research question, this research identified free access to public transportation as a crucial part of the inclusion of Ukrainian refugees. Hence, it can be said that the everyday mobility of Ukrainians was extensively increased through the availability of the 'free ticket'. Furthermore, it enabled a simplified settling process that created the impression that Ukrainian refugees were welcomed by Swedish society.

Everyday mobility was for the majority of interlocutors interviewed a tool to reach language schools, work, or handle daily chores, such as grocery shopping. While access to public transportation was free, Ukrainian refugees used everyday mobility increasingly to participate in social events and discover the surrounding cities or regions. Furthermore, it was elaborated that the ticket was used to take part in and get to know Swedish culture through museums, theatres, concerts, or monument visits. This in turn allowed the interlocutors to create an identity that was not purely based on the legal determination of being a refugee. Nonetheless, this study further analysed how authority constraints and enablers influenced power structures and thus, limited or enabled the everyday mobility and inclusion of Ukrainian refugees.

Following Hägerstrand's approach to power structures in the context of time and space, multiple authority constraints can be detected in addition to the 'free ticket' that in itself presents an authority enabler. Although it was to a majority perceived as a helpful tool for Ukrainian refugees, some interlocutors expressed negative implications that were connected to the ticket. For example, through the execution of the 'free ticket' that required showing the passport, which created visual segregation between Ukrainian refugees and other passengers. Further, personnel in public transportation were described to challenge the legitimation of making use of the 'free ticket'.

With the abolition of the ticket, further authority constraints limited the previously achieved social participation and enhanced isolation of Ukrainian refugees. Placement through the Migration Agency often resulted in Ukrainian refugees living in outskirts or rural areas that created accessibility poverty and social exclusion, increased by the financial burden that the use of public transportation included. With ticket prices as high as the daily allowance, trips for leisure activities were severely restricted. Although some interlocutors received additional financial compensation to cover ticket expenses, the majority of the interlocutors made extensive changes to their social life and described a form of isolation and mobility stuckness after the abolition of the 'free ticket'.

Additional capability constraints influenced the individual's access to everyday mobility. The interlocutors unanimously argued that their everyday mobility was extensively restricted from November 2022 and onwards, resulting in limited social participation, fewer social contacts, and additional expenses through the lack of choices that allowed them to choose a cheaper option. Furthermore, the refugees' agency was severely restricted as it became more challenging to search for jobs or decide which language school to participate in. This was increased through the lack of a person number or physical health restrictions that limited the easy mobility of the interlocutors.

Honneth's understanding of recognition was challenged as it can be argued that the legal inequality that resulted from access to free public transportation enabled identity building and social participation within Swedish society. Nonetheless, social hierarchies simultaneously restricted such and challenged the use of public transportation "without shame". Thus, the inequality resulting from the free ticket enabled physical mobility and inclusion, however, limited the mental ability to do so without feeling placed in a category different from the general society.

Mobility justice can especially be seen in the context of citizenship that enabled and restricted the mobility of Ukrainian refugees. Further, the 'free ticket' created equally distributed accessibility as the resources were directed towards those prone to be more vulnerable within society – Ukrainian refugees. However, regulations such as EBO and financial limitations that negatively influenced social inclusion were increased through the abolition of the ticket, which in turn resulted in mobility injustice and hampering public participation. Further, additional modes of transportation were suggested to enhance mobility

however, because of the financial and cultural circumstances such were less attainable. It could be argued that attaining a job would limit financial challenges and broaden the financial leeway, however, the limited access to public transportation decreased the possibility to obtain such. Moreover, one could also argue that while the 'free ticket' had significant benefits, its existence could possibly have enhanced the feeling of isolation after the abolition, leaving them with a form of *bare life*.

Concluding, the analysis showed that the free ticket allowed Ukrainians' participation in society, benefited individual well-being, and enhanced other aspects that were beneficial for inclusion into society. However, the mentioned benefits were heavily restricted once access to public transportation was not free anymore. A notable difference could be analysed after the abolition of the ticket, which resulted in a restricted everyday mobility and increased isolation. The additional financial burden limited the ability to take agency. Therefore, it is to conclude that the phenomenon of free access to public transportation enhanced everyday mobility and inclusion. It was experienced as a huge benefit, and although negative occurrences happened, such did not influence the overall well-being and positive influence of the free access to public transportation. Hence, one can argue that free access to public transportation was crucial for the inclusion of Ukrainian refugees.

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# Appendix

## A1) Page of Consent

Dear participant,

Firstly, thank you for choosing to participate in this fieldwork study. As a requirement for our master thesis, we are doing an ethnographic research about how free access to public transport in Sweden has impacted the life of Ukrainians that fled in 2022 compared to Ukrainian refugees that have fled to Sweden in 2014. Sweden has welcomed 50,530 Ukrainian refugees since February 2022. Regional and national transport departments in Sweden have enabled Ukrainians to take buses and trains for free by showing their Ukrainian passport. We want to study the interrelation between accessibility and integration.

**By signing this paper, you agree to the following statements:**

# I confirm that I have read and understood the details for the study. I have had an opportunity to consider the information and what will be expected of me. I have also had the opportunity to ask questions which have been answered to my satisfaction.

# I consent to participate in the study. I understand that my personal information will be used for the purposes explained to me. I understand that according to data protection legislation, 'public task' will be the lawful basis for processing.

# By participating in this interview, I approve the use of my truthful statements and opinions in this Master's thesis.

# I understand that all personal information will remain confidential and that all efforts will be made to ensure I cannot be identified. I will be given the option to be anonymous throughout the project and receive a pseudonym in the paper.

# I understand that participation is completely voluntary, and I will not get paid in any form. Also, I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

# I consent to the interview being audio recorded and understand that the recordings will be destroyed a month after ended exam. In the meantime, the recordings will be stored anonymously using password protected software.

# I acknowledge that this thesis will be published in the academic sphere.

# I wish to be anonymous in the research: Yes  No

*You, the participant, are welcome to contact us at any stage for further questions or concerns.*

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Best regards

Marcella Holz and Julie Kirpekar

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## A2) Interview Guide – Individual

### Background Questions

- Name (Can be a pseudonym if you want to remain anonymous):
- Age:
- Gender:
- Occupation in Ukraine:
- Occupation now:
- City of residence:
- Did you move since you are in Sweden?    Yes:                    No:  
If yes: From where to where?
  - How did you choose your current location?
- Did you use public transport in Ukraine?
  - Yes, multiple times a week
  - Yes, occasionally
  - Barely
  - No
  - No, was not available where I lived.

### Inclusion

1. How was your experience arriving in Sweden?
  1. How did you experience social relations in Sweden?
  2. Do you participate in activities with the Swedish community?
  3. Has the free access to transportation influenced your daily life in Sweden?
2. Describe a typical day in your life (which community etc.) → was there a difference when you had the ticket?

### Public Transport

1. In your experience, how has access to free transportation affected the feeling of being a part of Swedish society?
  - a. *How do the (likely) social and **spatial exclusion** of Ukrainian refugees affect their transportation experiences?*
2. In terms of feeling included, what are the advantages and disadvantages of public transportation? (for us: does it change when it's **free**?)

### Free access to public transport

1. How would you describe your experience with the free ticket?
  1. Did the free ticket influence administrative work? (registration/asylum appointments etc.)
  2. Did you use the free public transport to reach urban facilities and services?
    1. → what mode of transport would you have chosen if public transport would not have been free?
  3. How has your social life been with the free ticket?
  4. Have you experienced barriers to using public transport?
2. How did you experience other passengers and the driver's behaviour towards you?
  1. Have you noticed differences in the travel experience for you as a Ukrainian traveling with public transportation and other people/passengers?
  2. Have you had any experiences with non-Ukrainian refugees?
3. Does your current economic situation allow you to use public transportation?
  1. Do you experience a difference between which or how many activities you participate in now versus when you have had free access to transportation?
4. In your experience, what were challenges and possibilities with the free ticket?

## A3) Interview Guide – Focus group

### Background Questions (individual answered)

- Name (Can be a pseudonym if you want to remain anonymous):
- Age:
- Gender:
- Occupation in Ukraine:
- Occupation now:
- Did you use public transport in Ukraine?
  - Yes, multiple times a week
  - Yes, occasionally
  - Barely
  - No
  - No, was not available where I lived.

### Inclusion

1. How do you experience life in Sweden?
2. How do you experience inclusion into Swedish society?

### Public Transport

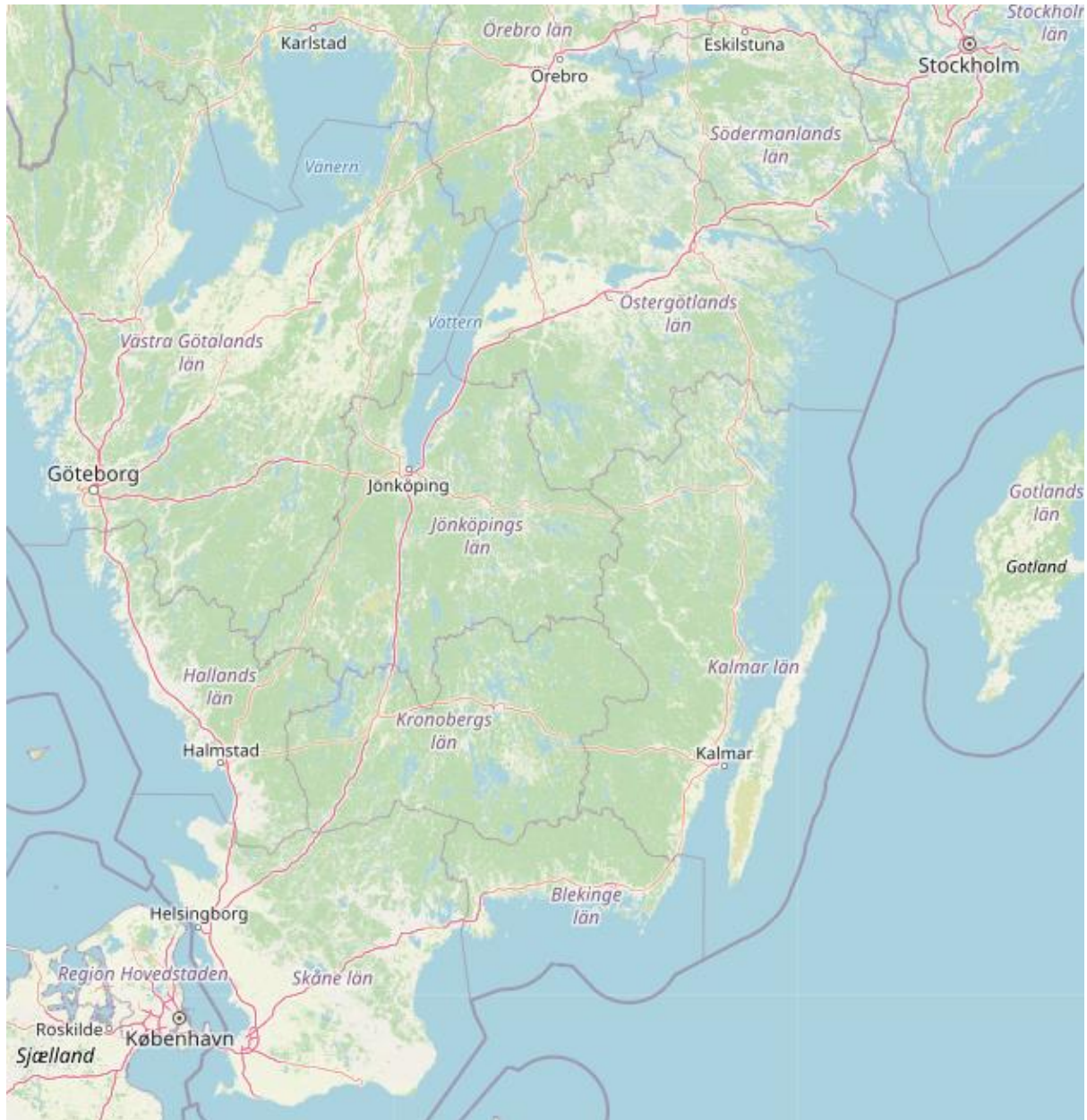
1. In what way has free access to public transportation affected your daily life in Sweden?
2. Have you experienced barriers to the access to free transport?
3. Do you feel a difference in your daily life now where transportation is not free anymore?
4. Do you think not having the free ticket when you came to Sweden would have changed your experience?
5. In your experience, what were challenges and possibilities with the free ticket?

## A4) Overview over Participants

Name	Age	Gender	Occupation in Ukraine	Occupation in Sweden	City of Residence
Denys	68	Male	Retired	Retired	Malmö
Anna	64	Female	Retired	Retired	Malmö
Bohdana	42	Female	Kinderschool teacher	Kinderschool teacher	Stockholm
Ihor	32	Female	Nurse	Unemployed	Furulund
Kalya	27	Female	Beauty Salon Administrator	Unemployed	Furulund
Ionna	41	Female	Business Analyst	Unemployed	Malmö
Kateryna	68	Female	Retired	Retired	Malmö
Mariya	33	Female	Yoga teacher	Yoga teacher	Malmö
Myroslava	37	Female	Bank Officer	Unemployed	Furulund
Viktoriya	26	Female	Student	SoMe	Malmö
Maryska	53	Female	Restaurant Manager	Unemployed	Furulund
Anichka	40	Female	-	-	Lomma
Ivanna	n.d.	Female	-	-	Lomma
Lavra	42	Female	-	-	Malmö
Ivan	40	Male	-	-	Malmö
Anastasia	42	Female	-	-	Malmö
Galyna	35	Female	-	-	Malmö
Fedir	63	Male	-	-	Bjärred
Artem	63	Male	-	-	Malmö
Veronika	61	Female	-	-	Malmö
Hadeon	65	Male	-	-	Malmö

## A5) Map of Research Field

Map of Stockholm and Skåne Region. (1:4742482) © *OpenStreetMap*



## A6) Coding of Data

Etic:

Authority constraints

Capability constraints

Coupling constraints

Social Hierarchy

Other

Everyday life

Emic:

Results of free access

Economy

Distances/location

Passport

Isolation

Inclusion (social activities)

Interaction with others