Young Migrants
Exclusion and Belonging in Europe

Edited by
Katrine Fangen
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and
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Migration, Diasporas and Citizenship Series

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Young Migrants
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1

Presentation of an Analytical Framework

Katrine Fangen, Nils Hammarén and Thomas Johansson

Migration has increased significantly during the past few decades. This can be largely accredited to the fall of the Iron Curtain, the end of fascism in Southern Europe and the wars in Somalia, Iraq and Afghanistan. The growth of the European Union (EU) has also increased movement within Europe. The majority of those migrating are young people. Some are economic migrants, some are students and some are refugees. What they have in common is that they all hope for a better future. However, the financial crisis as well as growing anti-immigrant attitudes in Europe have significantly worsened the situation for these young people. In this book, we analyse how young migrants and descendants from a variety of different backgrounds cope with the barriers and opportunities they face within seven national contexts, namely Norway, Sweden, Estonia, France, the United Kingdom, Spain and Italy. The book is based on a three-year long qualitative, cross-national project, financed by the EU. Researchers from each of these countries have interviewed altogether 250 young migrants and descendants about their experiences of inclusion and exclusion in different arenas.

Social exclusion as the point of departure

Social exclusion manifests itself in a multitude of ways. At an extreme, social exclusion might reveal itself through state-induced policies, aiming to excommunicate or even deport certain categories from society, as was the case with Nazism and apartheid. At the other end of the scale, we find different forms of everyday exclusion, such as gestures or utterances that might not be meant to exclude, but that are felt as such by the individual. The feeling of being marked as different is an outcome originating from both sides of the scale.
There are many concepts that in some way or another are equivalent to social exclusion or inclusion. One concept is the aspect of feeling different; other cases are being denied access, excommunicated or ignored, expelled, belittled or name-called or beaten up (Fangen, 2006a). Some instances might not have substantial or immediate impact, whereas others might have serious consequences for the person experiencing them, characterizing his or her life. Inclusion and exclusion can vary along a time axis, from stable conditions to dynamic processes, changing over time. Thus, one can understand the differences between situational instances, social positions and conditions (Fangen et al., 2010a).

In the social sciences, the term social exclusion was introduced relatively recently, about 20 years ago. The intention was to extend the focus beyond poverty by focusing on the relation between the individual and society (Fangen, 2010: 134). One of the main initiators of this focus in social sciences at that time was Room (1995) known for his concept of multidimensional disadvantage, which included aspects such as material and physical surroundings. Much of the research on social exclusion since then has been policy oriented as it grew out of cooperation between the EU and a research group that developed a set of primary and secondary indicators to measure the phenomenon (Fangen, 2010: 134, Social Protection Committee, 2001). Despite these efforts, there are still controversies relating to how to define the concept as well as criticism from some researchers about the implicit moral meta-narrative that is built on the assumption that social inclusion or integration, as the opposite of social exclusion, is inherently good and desirable. As a result, efforts to tackle exclusion are often led by normative assumptions of how social life should be organized, ignoring the ways in which the terms of inclusion can be problematic, disempowering or inequitable (Fangen, 2010: 134, Hickey and du Toit, 2007).

During later years, it has been common to speak of a new social exclusion perspective, which is better fit to analyse a more heterogeneous, multicultural and complex society (Body-Gendrot, 2002, Fangen, 2010: 134). There have been few innovations in the research on social exclusion during the last couple of decades, except for a much stronger focus on ethnicity and/or migration status compared with the mid-1990s. One example of this is the interactionalist perspective with its stress that instead of limiting its focus on separate variables like education and income, it is more useful to focus instead on the intersection of variables such as ethnicity, gender and class background (Fangen, 2010: 1134, Modood, 2007). The relational and dynamical focus that Room
proposed has been further developed within qualitative research. For example, Weil et al. (2005) underline the need to concentrate on relationships and interactions among and between excluded and included groups and communities, and on the importance of including changes over time instead of static structural explanations (Fangen, 2010: 134). Another important contribution has been the transnational perspective of Wimmer and Schiller (2003), who criticize the national container focus of the social sciences (and social exclusion research falls into this category as well) (Fangen, 2010: 134).

Social exclusion is a complex phenomenon and, consequently, it is difficult to reach a joint agreement of how it should be defined (Fangen, 2010: 135). Nevertheless, the general trend is that social exclusion is defined primarily in relation to education and work. For example Raaum et al. (2009) define a young person as socially excluded at some moment in time if he or she is currently outside the structured arenas of school and work but also has a high probability of remaining outside in the near future. Atkinson (1998: 14 in Raaum et al., 2009) points out that ‘people are excluded not just because they are currently without a job or income, but because they have little prospects for the future’. In our book, however, we use a more multidimensional concept, which also includes arenas such as family, peer group, various other social settings, religious or ethnic communities, neighbourhoods or even the nation-state (Fangen, 2010: 136). Social exclusion is a two-sided process in the sense that it denotes both instances when a person is expelled from a community or a place and denial of access to ‘outsiders’.

In addition, we include more symbolic forms of exclusion, such as being marked as different (Vestel, 2004). These cases of ‘othering’ can vary from overt racism to institutionalized ways of treating someone as ‘different’, such as special classes or projects targeted to specific groups of people (even though such strategies are meant to help) (Fangen, 2010: 136). We can distinguish between the feeling of exclusion and the more observable exclusion of not being allowed access (this can be on a legitimate basis when the person does not fulfil requirements of access or illegitimate as in discrimination). In either circumstance, it is hard to think of a person being completely outside of society. Even the most marginalized, like for example homeless people, trafficking victims or so-called irregular immigrants, are connected to society in several different ways (ibid.).

In order to grasp the complexity of social exclusion, it is important to look for experiences of social inclusion among young people who appear to be marginalized (Fangen, 2010: 136). It is also important to look for
experiences of social exclusion among young people who according to conventional standards are integrated (who have a job, who take higher education, and who are included in social networks with people from the majority population). For example, some young Muslim women (even those in well-paid, high-status jobs) feel excluded if they are not allowed to pray during the workday or if they are not allowed to wear a hijab (ibid.).

Exclusion and inclusion are often presented as dichotomous variables, with marginalization as the unstable intermediary (Raaum et al., 2009). According to this view, the marginalized person stands at the entrance to a doorway: either he or she exits towards exclusion or enters towards inclusion. However, a more dynamic perspective that includes different arenas might allow for the possibility that exclusion from one arena at the same time is followed by inclusion in another arena (Fangen, 2010: 137). In general, however, marginalization is more severe if a person loses his or her foothold in several different arenas at the same time (Room, 1995). In order to reveal the complexity of social exclusion, it is important to consciously search for a variety of backgrounds (Fangen, 2010: 137). It is also important to look for transitions between inclusion and exclusion in an individual’s life, and analyse what it is that contributes to such transitions. By viewing social exclusion as a process, we do not limit it to an either/or situation. With a lifespan focus we can consider the efforts of young immigrants to combat social exclusion, or we can see how in periods they accept social exclusion and also willingly contribute to it (ibid.).

Exclusion and inclusion in different arenas

We will analyse social exclusion and inclusion in different arenas, thus outlining the multidimensional aspect of social exclusion (Room, 1995). The underlying questions are: ‘What is it that contributes to social exclusion of young adult immigrants in different social settings?’ and ‘How do young adult immigrants with different backgrounds experience social exclusion in different social arenas and how do they react towards it?’ We will distinguish between educational exclusion, socio-economic exclusion, socio-political exclusion, relational exclusion, and, finally, spatial exclusion (Fangen, 2010: 135). Other forms of exclusion related to arenas such as border control, civil society and the sense of belonging are also important, and will be discussed in the later chapters of this book. Quantitative research gives us some of the answers about why some young immigrants are excluded from education (ibid.: 138).
In this context, *educational exclusion* is operationalized as dropout rates, low grades and quitting education early. Descendants of immigrants in some of our selected countries occasionally perform on the same level or even better than the majority population in some countries (Olsen, 2009). The same holds for certain ethnic minority groups such as the Indians and Chinese in the UK (Fangen et al. 2010, Fry et al., 2008). In many of our selected countries, young people with immigrant backgrounds more often choose vocational and professional secondary education, while non-immigrants choose academic tracks (Alzetta et al., 2010: 123, Kallas and Kaldur, 2010: 96).

Research from some of our selected countries shows that social background is the main reason why young immigrants and descendants have a lower educational performance than young people from the majority population (Brekke and Fekjær, forthcoming, Fry et al., 2008: 13). In some countries it has been proven that social background is more important than length of residence on differences in grades or dropout rates (Støren, 2005). Pupils with non-Western background have parents who more often have lower education, lower income and more often are unemployed than parents from Western countries (Ambrosini, 2005, Støre, 2005). If we compare young immigrants and descendants with young people from the majority population with the same socio-economic background, we see that the differences in grades are small, and within each social stratum there are more young people with immigrant background than those without immigrant background who continue with higher education, at least in Norway (Storen, 2005: 82, 93).

There are vast differences in grades, dropout rates and length of education between immigrants with different countries of origin. Some perform better than the majority population, whereas others perform worse (Fangen, 2010: 138). The main reason for these differences seems to be the fact that these immigrant groups have different pre-migration class origins and educational profiles (Modood, 2007). In this way, class and ethnicity (here in the sense of country of origin, which in reality does not always refer to ethnicity) *interact* in producing distinct patterns of inclusion and exclusion (Fangen, 2010: 138). All in all, lower class background seems to be the major factor in explaining the higher dropout rate and lower grades of immigrants compared with non-immigrants. This may be related both to the importance of role models and to the degree of parental support and motivation (ibid.: 141).

When assessing what factors contribute to *socio-economic exclusion* and hinder access to the labour market, there is often an emphasis of what
the individual lacks, in regards to experience, networks, qualifications, proficiency in the majority language, knowledge of how the ‘system’ works and self-confidence (Fangen, 2010: 141). These factors create barriers for young people in general, but for young immigrants, an additional barrier in some cases is employers’ reluctance to employ persons with visible minority background (Rogstad, 2000).

Statistical research has shown that education reduces the risk of falling outside the labour market and it also diminishes the income gap between people with or without immigrant background (Fangen, 2010: 142). Nevertheless, there exists a gap between the immigrant and the non-immigrant population in reference both to income and to the risk of being positioned on the margins of the labour market (Evensen, 2008). Evidence suggests that reluctance to employ young people with visible minority background is more prevalent in some parts of the labour market than in others, illustrating that certain vocations imply positions in a hierarchy (Fangen, 2010: 142). It seems that discrimination is worse in high-status vocations in the private sector, but an additional factor is that there is a greater scarcity of workforce in health and social service vocations than in the economic sector. More than in other spheres, discrimination is a major barrier to young immigrants’ active participation in the labour market. However, there will always be a problem in documenting how large this problem is, since it is difficult to adequately control for the effect of all other variables, such as lack of qualifications (ibid.: 144).

Structural or political factors such as restrictive immigration policies, organization of the welfare system and integration policies are all relevant in the search for factors that might lead to socio-political exclusion (Fangen, 2010: 150). Fangen (2006b) discusses how encounters between Somali immigrants and different public offices are often experienced as humiliating by the Somali immigrants. They feel that they are met with lack of empathy and respect in these institutions and interpret the advice received as ‘you must adopt our way of doing things, which again is better than your way of doing things’.

The acquisition (or denial) of citizenship is also a factor that feeds feelings of inclusion or exclusion (Fangen, 2010: 151). The nation-state in itself is built on the distinction between us who are inside and them who are outside. The distinction between the included and the excluded is an issue of political controversy and debate (Heidar and Semb, 2007). Citizenship is not only a juridical phenomenon, with enormous consequences for immigrants searching for a new start in life, but also a sociological and political phenomenon expressing an ever more
complex relationship between the individual and the state (Fangen, 2010: 150).

However, the acquisition of citizenship does not always equal identification with the country of residence (Fangen, 2010: 151). The young people we have interviewed have expressed differing perceptions of the European country they have settled in. Some experience the country as exclusionary and encounter frequent supervision and searches by the police and other authorities. This holds particularly for the irregular immigrants working in the informal sector. Except for difficult access to good jobs and for some also to higher education it is generally more direct face-to-face contact that feeds feelings of relational exclusion (ibid.: 148). In the Northern European countries, as a result of social democratic policies, few people are excluded on economic grounds. However, non-material exclusion is still an important factor, which might lead to stigmatized otherness as well as lack of participation in mainstream society (ibid.: 151).

Experiencing the more symbolic forms of exclusion, such as subtle ways of watching, talking or in other ways relating or not relating to others can be as hurtful as more direct forms of discrimination (Fangen, 2010: 148). According to Charles Taylor (1994), our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, and so a person can suffer if society mirrors back a confining or demeaning picture. Non-recognition or misrecognition can inflict harm; can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted and reduced form of being.

What sometimes happens is that people from categories that are subordinate in the hierarchy of society adopt this depreciatory image of themselves (Fangen, 2010: 148). They internalize an image of their own inferiority, so that even if some of the obstacles to their advancement reduce, they may still be incapable of taking advantage of their own opportunities (Taylor, 1994). Such processes are sometimes seen among ethnic minorities, whereby they adopt the stigma to which their ethnicity is viewed by the majority (Eidheim, 1987; Lewin, 1948).

Misrecognition of immigrants might take the form of racism. For many of the young immigrants we have interviewed racialization and racism are important aspects of their experiences of social exclusion (Fangen, 2010: 149). Several of the young immigrants we have interviewed have adopted strategies to better face racism (Fangen, 2008). One common strategy is to think in isolated terms; that this person is conducting an instance of racism on this particular day, but this does not mean that everyone in the host country is racist (Fangen, 2010).
An alternative is to view racist comments as being misunderstood and instead being related to the young person’s own lack of language fluency. Yet another strategy is to misidentify subordination by distancing oneself from other immigrants.

Finally, the last process of exclusion we want to highlight in this section is spatial exclusion (Fangen, 2010: 145). One concern of Room’s (1995) theory of multiple disadvantages is to widen the focus, by not only focusing on the resources of the individual or the household, but to also include a focus on local communities. He argues that deprivation is caused not only by lack of personal resources but also by insufficient and unsatisfactory community facilities, such as dilapidated schools, remote shops, poor public transport networks and so on. Such an environment tends to reinforce and perpetuate household poverty. Neighbourhoods and local communities can thus produce distinct forms of social exclusion (Fangen, 2010: 145).

Our study focuses on young migrants and descendants living in seven cities in seven European countries. In all these cities, most migrants and descendants tend to live in such neighbourhoods, where schools are of poorer quality and where there is a concentration of people in a disadvantaged life situation. Living in such a suburb, young people of immigrant background either identify themselves with the suburb and build up their lives there or use the opportunity to choose schools outside the suburb as soon as they are able to (Fangen, 2009, Johansson and Hammarén, 2011). There is a relation between young migrants’ and descendants’ unwillingness to participate in elections or in politics in general, and their experience of not being productive members of the majority society (Fangen, 2010: 145, Sernhede, 2002). Many young migrants narrate the feeling of not being wanted, that institutions are not intended for them, of not fitting in, of not having a place – and to the frustration of ‘not knowing what I should do with my life’ (ibid.).

Given their feelings of non-belonging both in the host country and in their parents’ homeland, many of the young migrants consider the identity offered by immigrant status to be their primary identity. They neither define themselves as Swedish, British or Italian, nor Chilean or Somali, but instead use labels such as ‘immigrants’, ‘foreigners’ or they even define themselves according to previously racist labels such as ‘Blackies’ or ‘Black skulls’ (Fangen, 2010: 145, Sernhede, 2002). Such words with negative connotations can be used in order to fight back and strengthen their identity (Hammarén, 2008, Jonsson, 2007). Among our interviewees, there are many who narrate experiences with non-immigrants who mirror back a demeaning image of the
category to which they are ascribed (Fangen, 2010: 148). Sometimes they are ascribed racial categories such as ‘nigger’, on other occasions they are ascribed a distinct kind of mentality related to their country of origin such as ‘Turk-mentality’. But often, the young migrants and descendants simply have the experience that people from the majority population in general are cold, rude or reserved towards immigrants, and consequently, that they do not to see them or greet them in daily life (ibid.).

In our interviews with young adults with immigrant background who live in suburbs characterized by social disadvantage, we have also seen other versions of identity solutions ranging from transnational or cosmopolitan identities, pan-ethnic identities, ethnic identities, assimilationist identities and so forth (Fangen, 2007b). It is common for several of the young immigrants (especially those who have high ambitions in regards to education) to not identify themselves with the suburbs because of their connotation of no future and of criminality and drug use (Fangen, 2010: 146). In other words, we see a symbolic distinction between neighbourhoods dominated by people with immigrant background and neighbourhoods populated by those of majority background as symbolizing opportunities and status.

In constructions of individual biographies, some differences between people are marked and some may be obscured. For example, the assertion of national identities may omit class, gender or local differences and vice versa. Critical perspectives are raised against the sometimes one-dimensional description of young people's identities. Theories of the intersections between class, ethnicity, nationality and gender are used to elaborate critical perspectives on these issues (Collins, 1998, Fangen, 2008, Mohanty, 1998). According to this view, young people's identities need to be connected to a plurality of categories, including exclusive and inclusive ones as well as local, national and global influences. Accordingly, the one-dimensionality of studies focusing on either gender or ethnicity is not sufficient enough to grasp young people's biographies and identity processes.

In this light, the concept of intersectionality is crucial to our understanding (Fangen, 2010). Individuals belong to a plurality of categories. We must consider the intersection of variables such as gender, class, generation and ethnicity. These variables influence the individual and at the same time constitute flexible and often complex processes of belonging and experience of inclusion and exclusion. For example, being male, middle class and of the majority ethnic population can be considered the hegemonic position, in contrast to being a female, working-class
immigrant (Fangen, 2008, 2010). At the same time, in some arenas, men might be more excluded than women. For example, young men are more criminally active than young women. Furthermore, young ethnic minority men are more exposed to stigmatization than young men being of the majority ethnic population (Øia and Vestel, 2007). Consequently, the process of inclusion and exclusion is complex and multidimensional.

Experiences of social inclusion and exclusion might have consequences for the construction of identities (and vice versa) among young people with ethnic minority background when they feel that they are not considered legitimate members of society (Fangen, 2008; Raaum et al., 2009). New identities and biographies are influenced by experiences of segregation and stigmatization and are sometimes constructed as means of coping with being an outsider. Counter-identities emerge as means of coping with segregation and feelings of being an outsider (Hammarén, 2008). Studies show how young people with ethnic minority backgrounds often identify themselves with a kind of ‘either or’, ‘both and’ or ‘neither nor’ position and consequently challenge the rigidity of ethnic dualism. Thus, they can identify with either ‘the host society’ or ‘the origin’, ‘the host society’ and ‘the origin’ or neither ‘the host society’ nor ‘the origin’ (Fangen, 2007b, Hammarén, 2008). The ‘origin’ is also sometimes synonymous with feelings of being excluded or ‘an immigrant’. The different positions can be occupied by the same individual in different contextual settings depending on feelings of inclusion and exclusion (Hammarén, 2008, Wikström, 2007).

Young people with immigrant background are in the process of discovering their position in society and they are continuously constructing their identities. The many encounters with young people from other cultures, with the host society and today’s multifaceted, global and media-based youth culture imply that new hybrid (local, national and global) and inconsequential points of departure are being created for identification processes, which are by necessity embedded in work on adolescent identity (Hall and du Gay, 1996, Mulinari and Räthzel, 2006, Sernhede, 2002).

**A theoretical model of exclusion and inclusion**

Ethnic segregation in housing and differentiated access to higher education and well paid, high-status jobs in the labour market as well as misrecognition or racism can all lead to social exclusion. Consequently, social exclusion happens when individuals suffer from a number of
social problems, measured in indicators such as unemployment, low life expectancy, at risk of poverty, early school leavers, living in jobless households, unmet need for medical care, etc. (Fangen, 2010). However, there are complex interconnections between these indicators and the degree to which exclusion according to one indicator is related or unrelated to exclusion according to another indicator varies between countries. If we take for example whether or not unemployment leads to socio-economic exclusion, we see that because of the social benefits in the Nordic countries, this interrelationship is not as distinct as in the Southern European countries such as Spain or Italy (Fangen et al., 2010b).

There is clearly a need for theoretical discussions on how to understand the twin concepts of social exclusion and inclusion in different European contexts and at different analytical levels. How can we determine different types of exclusion (educational, socio-economic, spatial, relational and socio-political) in relation to varying national contexts? How do migration policies, welfare state models and different social processes in each country influence processes of inclusion and exclusion for young people with immigrant background? In this section we will propose a theoretical model distinguishing between three analytical levels when analysing different national contexts: a structural, a positional and an individual level of analysis.

On a **structural level** we can use statistics in order to study differences between economic redistribution, different European welfare systems (such as liberal, conservative and social democratic systems) and their consequences for social exclusion measured by indicators that are measurable in surveys and in register data. In this sense, we can study degrees of exclusion and inclusion on an aggregated level, as we have done in an earlier book (Fangen et al., 2010b). These structural processes have an impact on the next level, the **positional level**, where the question of identity politics and recognition is focused (Fraser, 1989, Fraser and Honneth, 2003). In order to understand and analyse, for example identity, gender equality and questions on inclusion and exclusion we need to focus on recognition and different national migration policies. On this level we focus on how different European countries handle migration issues and construct different models of policies, such as multiculturalism, assimilation and segregation. However, to implement the concept of recognition, we also need to elaborate a dynamic model for embodying these processes (see Figure 1.1). Finally, we have the **individual level of analysis**, including self-identities and personal narratives. Do people identify themselves with their country of birth, the local context or global influences? When analysing individual biographies we