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Exploring Inclusive Cities for Migrants in the UK and Sweden: A Scoping Review

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Abstract

In recent years, social work with migrants and ethnic minorities has developed as a field of research and practice. Further, it is recognised in the literature that the increased processes of human mobility in today's societies have driven a growing focus on inclusive cities, especially in larger urban areas where ethnic diversity and cultural heterogeneity can be found alongside newly arrived migrants seeking a better quality of life, safety, and sanctuary. There is a strong link between individuals' well-being and their relationship with spaces, institutions, and resources. Cities and their urban environment have been increasingly identified as key arenas where social, economic, and ecological societal challenges should be addressed. In the context of migration, municipalities have invested in dealing with both inclusive and sustainable policies. However, cities are not uniformly experienced by all. This scoping review seeks to answer how an inclusive city is conceptualised in the Swedish and the UK's social work literature concerning migration. Using social exclusion and inclusion as the theoretical points of view, we conduct analysis using Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) six-stage methodological framework. Despite social work playing a major role in the social inclusion of immigrant minorities in cities, through promoting participation, there is a lack of knowledge and research on social work engagement with social inclusion, both in the fields of social policy and practices. This article contributes to an enhanced understanding of what an inclusive city is, and the role of social work in defining and developing social policies and professional interventions for inclusive cities to support the integration of migrants with distinct needs. We offer a much-needed review of the similarities and differences between the two geographies by analysing the social work perspectives from Sweden and the UK.

Keywords

inclusive cities; migration; social work; Sweden; United Kingdom

Issue

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1. Introduction

The urban environment is pivotal in shaping immigrants' in/exclusion experiences. Most UK and Sweden immigrants live in urban/city areas (Holmqvist et al., 2022; Walsh & Sumpton, 2020), and their experiences depend on specific national and local contexts. National policies and local practices—including dispersal policies and organisational arrangements of service provi-

sions, types, and levels of welfare support—influence the local inclusion of migrants. Literature on social work and immigration emphasises how diversity and super-diversity in large cities with a strong immigration background puts pressure on social workers working with immigrant communities and challenges the structure of opportunity for migrants' local integration (for example, Boccagni et al., 2015). While the term "integration" has been interchangeably used to refer to social

inclusion—as discussed in the next section—since the so-called European “refugee crisis” in 2015–2016, scholars have emphasised the importance of local host societies (cities) concerning the specific case of immigrant integration (inclusion) (Phillimore, 2020). Therefore, this scoping review explores the existing social work literature regarding the conceptualisations and key characteristics of inclusive cities in migrant inclusion within the UK and Swedish contexts. How is an “inclusive city” conceptualised and characterised in the UK and the Swedish social work literature concerning migration? By answering this question, the authors aim to uncover the specificities of inclusive cities, stakeholders’ approaches and practices, the infrastructures involved, and the level of migrant involvement.

The UK and Sweden have unique political, social, economic, cultural, and spatial contexts. By the end of June 2021, six million people (9% of the total population) living in the UK had a different nationality. The majority of the migrant population lives in London, the capital city (35%). After London, the highest population of migrants lives respectively in the South East (13.4%), the West Midlands (13.9%), the East of England (12.9%), and the East Midlands (12.7%). Furthermore, there are 6.5% living in Wales, 7% in Northern Ireland, and 9.3% in Scotland. The majority of migrants are living in the poorest cities in the UK, such as Manchester, Birmingham, Nottingham, and Leicester (Office for National Statistics, 2021). Nevertheless, the arrival and settlement of immigrants have been primarily influenced by the UK government’s aim to reduce net migration, hostile immigration policies, and anti-immigrant rhetoric. The national immigration policies have been dictating who can become a legal resident, what types of services are provided, how migrants will be treated and where they can live (specifically for asylum seekers). While some types of immigrants (economic migrants and refugees) have opportunities to become citizens through the ordinary settlement process, some other migrants (asylum seekers and students) do not have those options. For instance, economic migrants and refugees can apply for “indefinite leave to remain” if they have been residents for five years. They can later apply for naturalisation (citizenship) in the UK once they have had indefinite leave to remain for a year. However, the UK government’s target to reduce net migration has contributed to stricter policy measures. For instance, minimum income requirements for those sponsoring family members, minimum salary offers for skilled migrants, and stricter requirements for universities sponsoring international students.

Furthermore, the Immigration Acts of 2014 and 2016 included measures to prevent people from accessing employment, healthcare, housing, education, banking, and other basic services. With the introduction of such hostile immigration policies, property owners, doctors, employers, and staff from various institutions became legally responsible for applying them. For instance, employers must assess an individual’s immigration sta-

tus before offering them work. While it is illegal to employ an individual without a valid immigration status, the Immigration Act 2016 introduced sanctions on employers who employ so-called “illegal” immigrants: employers are now open to prosecution, fines, and a prison term. Furthermore, private property owners can be imprisoned for up to five years and/or fined for knowingly renting accommodation to people without the correct immigration status. Banks must check an applicant’s immigration status before allowing them to open a bank account. Importantly, individuals without indefinite leave to remain cannot access public funds, which means they do not have access to social benefits in the UK. Indeed, numerous immigration policies that have emerged over the past three decades have succeeded in creating an unwelcoming atmosphere for migrants in the UK. This unwelcoming atmosphere, arising from negative discourses and the rise of anti-immigrant sentiment, is linked to multiple policies that seem to act against migrants and their ability to settle and integrate into the receiving society (Mulvey, 2015). For instance, restrictions and controls in accessing the labour market, local housing, social services, health, and engagement with social institutions are all factors recognised as posing challenges to inclusion and settlement in the UK (Mulvey, 2015).

By the end of 2022, Sweden hosted more than two million foreign-born residents, representing 20.4% of the total population (Statistics Sweden, 2022). The population distribution is very uneven in Sweden, with 87.9% living in the largest urban areas such as Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmö, Uppsala, Linköping, Västerås, Örebro, Helsingborg, and Norrköping. Immigrants, too, are concentrated in the top four largest municipalities: Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmö, and Uppsala (Dutto & Lei, 2020). The largest cities in Sweden were recently geographically identified as “vulnerable areas” (Police Authority, n.d.), characterised by the low socioeconomic status of their inhabitants and where criminals have an increased impact on the local communities. Of those vulnerable areas, cities such as Stockholm, Norrköping, Örebro, Malmö, Linköping, and Uppsala were all mentioned (Police Authority, n.d.). Looking at low socioeconomic status as one of the indicators of immigrant integration, the unemployment rate was found to be significantly higher among foreign-born individuals: 16.2% (18.4% among immigrant women and 14.2% among immigrant men) compared to native Swedes (European Union, 2023). This data is confirmed by the employment gaps of over 10% between natives and foreign-born, one of the highest among OECD countries (Bevelander & Hollifield, 2022).

Sweden is deemed to have effective policies for social inclusion that positively impact migrants’ overall well-being (Scarpa, 2016). As one of the Northern European Countries, Sweden historically seems to have had a more generous welfare state than countries such as the UK regarding the integration of migrants

(Kesler, 2015). Further, the Swedish welfare state initially based the notion of integration on humanitarian assistance, which meant that receiving and assisting migrants was a function of welfare programs during the 1970s (Schmauch & Nygen, 2020). In 1998, however, policies regarding the integration of migrants into society were predominantly linked to assimilation into the labour market, and there was, therefore, an obligation for migrants, asylum seekers and refugees to master the Swedish language and internalise Swedish values, norms, and ways of life (Dahlstedt, 2009; Schmauch & Nygen, 2020). Given the new policy orientation, immigrants started to experience a profound social exclusion because of the ideological shift from privileged humanitarian and family-oriented assistance to assimilation policies, which did not privilege low-skilled workers in urban labour markets (Scarpa, 2016). Changes in the legislation also accompanied changes in public opinion, opening up a new scenario in which conditions for integration were constrained by the limited availability of employment and housing opportunities, combined with a xenophobic political context (Schmauch & Nygen, 2020). In 2016, the Swedish government approved the Settlement Act (Holmqvist et al., 2022) in response to the so-called refugee crisis of 2015, intending to increase the fair redistribution of migrant asylum seekers within the national border. The current regulations established the reception system of newly arrived asylum seekers based on quotas to redistribute them among the 290 Swedish municipalities. On the other hand, authorities at the municipal level had the full political responsibility to host the asylum seekers, contributing to implementing visa regulations through the ordinary settlement process and assessing immigrant status for access to healthcare, housing, education, and other general services. In 2021, the Swedish Parliament (2021) approved the modification of the Aliens Act to enforce stricter rules on migration policies. Refugee status is granted for a shorter period and must be followed by a new assessment. Stricter rules also apply to long-term and permanent residency, which facilitates high-income skilled migration. Overall, the enforcement of stricter rules for long-term migrant settlements, coupled with the devolution of state responsibility to local governance for migrant integration, generated significant territorial variations of inclusive urban policies (Holmqvist et al., 2022). This meant that the social inclusion of immigrants was dependent on local policies linked to the spatial context (urban vs rural), the social context (types of immigrants, public opinion/acceptance, previous familiarity with migrant integration), the economic context (housing policies and the job market), and the political context (political parties' orientation).

2. Social Exclusion and Social Inclusion

The social exclusion of migrants remains an unresolved and key issue in the host countries. Social inclusion is

often reported to be the opposite of social exclusion; however, social exclusion and social inclusion are multidimensional, dynamic, and complex. Social exclusion refers to an individual's inability to participate fully in their society (Millar, 2007). The World Health Organization states that unequal power relationships have been the core cause of social exclusion (Popay et al., 2008). Such power impartiality affects individuals, households, groups, and communities' economic, social, cultural, and political aspects. Fangen (2010, p. 136) refers to social exclusion as a "two-sided process in the sense that it denotes both the instances when a person is expelled from a community or a place *and* denial of access to 'outsiders.'" The impact of social exclusion can clearly be seen in migration contexts, especially in the Global North. Migrants, particularly asylum seekers and refugees, are in precarious situations or denied access in terms of social aspects (a lack of social connections, feelings of isolation, and a lack of belongingness), material resources (food, clothes, and household items), accessing mainstream services (health, education, and housing), and civic participation. Asylum seekers and refugees have been especially denied access to dignified and adequate services; for example, they are forced to live in sub-standard and inadequate spaces, lack healthcare support, and are restricted or denied employment. As outsiders, they are also suffering from an inability to share their voices and gain recognition as minorities in their host communities.

Similar to social exclusion, social inclusion is also a multidimensional, dynamic, and complex process. Social inclusion can refer to an individual's right to full participation in society and a decrease in exclusion from social institutions and communities (Carnemolla et al., 2021). Social inclusion is aimed at removing structural and individual barriers in economic, social, cultural, and political dimensions to facilitate migrants' feelings of acceptance and foster individual and collective agency (Hall et al., 2019; van Bergen et al., 2019). In the migration context, social inclusion is primarily seen as an individual's participation in social institutions, such as education, health, employment, housing, civic participation, and political involvement (Bauloz et al., 2019; Svoen et al., 2021). Dobson et al. (2021, p. 4) view social inclusion as "the process of improving the terms of participation in society, particularly for refugees who are disadvantaged, through enhancing opportunities, access to resources, authentic experiences of belonging and wellbeing and voicing respect for human rights." Social inclusion, in another regard, is often used interchangeably with integration. Referring to Ager and Strang's (2008) indicators of integration, social inclusion can be referred to access to means (employment, housing, education, and health), social connections (social bonds, social bridges, and social links), facilitators (language and cultural knowledge, safety and stability), and foundation (rights and citizenship).

Although the existing literature on immigrant integration does not often explicitly use the concept of an

“inclusive city,” the role of cities has been pointed out. For instance, from immigrant integration and the point of view of local political participation, de Graauw and Vermeulen (2016) highlight three critical factors that shape a city’s role in immigrant integration, comparing Berlin, Amsterdam, New York City, and San Francisco. One is the political ideologies of the local government; de Graauw and Vermeulen (2016) found that left-leaning governments in cities effectively promote immigrant integration. Another factor is the concentration of the immigration population in cities and their participation in the local decision-making process. In this case, de Graauw and Vermeulen (2016) highlight the need for immigrants to be part of the local government bodies rather than outsiders. The number and composition of immigrants in cities have also shaped cities’ approaches to integration (de Graauw & Vermeulen, 2016). On the one hand, some cities have an individualist approach to integration, aimed at individuals’ well-being rather than designated groups. On the other hand, some cities have also concentrated on a narrow, group-based integration approach; in Berlin, for example, city officials focused more on Muslim communities. A third factor involves the role of community-based organisations, which are key infrastructure as they represent immigrants in local politics and the policy-making process. While acknowledging the importance of urban contextual factors, de Graauw and Vermeulen (2016) have further emphasised the need to examine the specificities of the urban context concerning local institutions and migrant groups.

As mentioned, migrants’ social inclusion or exclusion is shaped by their intersectional social positioning and the socio-urban context in which they live. Migrants arriving in any city are subject to different experiences and encounters based on the intersection of class, race, gender, and ability (Raco, 2018; Scuzzarello & Moroşanu, 2023). Studies have shown that migrants—specifically Muslims, black, and brown individuals—have been racially profiled and portrayed as not belonging in the arrival cities (for example, Kofman, 2023), which affects their integration or inclusion. Even among them, migrants have been looked at differently due to their class and social status. For example, asylum seekers and lower-skilled workers have been less preferred in many Western societies compared to high-skilled migrants and international students (Scuzzarello & Moroşanu, 2023). Raco (2018, p. 156), referring to the “newcomers from Eastern Europe,” highlights that they have been widely seen as “problem communities’ who fail to conform to the existing orderliness and social conventions of the places in which they now live.” Such portrayal of migrants reflects a complex intersection that contributes to a decline in public services, and in particular, perceived reductions in the availability, affordability, and quality of housing and employment. Therefore, the authors consider social inclusion as migrants’ access to resources, opportunities and participation in social institutions, civic participation, empower-

ment, and development of a sense of belonging, security, and improved wellbeing.

3. Method

The comparative analysis between UK and Sweden attempts to address attention to a new social work paradigm, looking at the particular case of “inclusive cities,” while moving between global and local lines of empirical and theoretical developments. Therefore, Sweden and UK represent the two case studies from which this scoping review originates, and have been chosen based on convenience because the authors of this study work respectively in Sweden and the UK. The idea for the study originated from the authors’ willingness to know more about each other’s contexts, given the lack of knowledge and literature on social work and migrant inclusion in urban cities. The authors are aware of the geographical and institutional differences that might occur while looking at “inclusive cities,” especially with service provisions and measures of inclusions mediated by professionals (social workers) in the two different welfare regimes. However, the comparison between the UK and Sweden might help further the discussion about, on the one hand, the role of social work for/with migrant minorities and, on the other hand, how this specific field of policy practice can contribute to developing welfare arrangements within cities, navigating similarities and differences to find a way to move forward.

This scoping review was conducted using Arksey and O’Malley’s (2005) methodological framework. This scoping review method was chosen because of its potential to develop a clear approach to analysing and reporting our findings. The strategy to collect and include/exclude the data supports good quality research principles, retaining the clarity of the reporting strategy from the potential subjective decisions regarding the data selection. This scoping review has selected original peer-reviewed empirical studies from Sweden and the UK, including qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods research studies. The following online databases were used for this review: ProQuest, Scopus, ScienceDirect, SocINDEX, and Google Scholar. In addition, specific journals, such as the *British Journal of Social Work*, the *Nordic Journal of Social Work Research*, *Academic Search Complete*, and *SwePub* have been included for more specific publications. In some databases, the number of keywords has been reduced due to keyword limitations. The search strategy broadly focused on cities, inclusion, and social work (Table 1). The authors conducted the search in October and November 2022, with an additional search conducted in January 2023 to include any relevant and recent publications.

All the documents were screened against a set of pre-defined inclusion and exclusion criteria (see Supplementary File). The key inclusion criteria were the migration context, empirical studies published since 2015, publications focusing on Sweden and the UK,

Table 1. Search terms.

Broad topic	Keywords used or search terms
Cities	Cities OR City OR Urban OR Urban Environment OR Metropol* OR Municipalities OR Community
Inclusion	Inclusive OR Inclus* OR Sustainable OR Inclusion OR Integration
Social work	Social Work OR Social Intervention OR Social Assistance
Countries	Sweden/UK

and social work. The authors searched for publications only from 2015, considering the so-called European “refugee/migrant crisis.” This scoping review excluded publications that were neither empirical nor peer-reviewed and were not published in English. The authors conducted the selection process as shown in Table 2. The initial process involved title and abstract screening, and later, authors screened the full text of eligible publications. During the screening process, the screening was stopped if the search failed to identify relevant articles.

The authors chose the themes identified for the analysis following a deductive, top-down approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The reason for choosing a theoretically driven thematic analysis was based on the consideration that this scoping review collects documents from the UK and Swedish context; thus, the researchers’ great variability of data could have compromised the comparability of the results. The authors were all theoretically and epistemologically committed to the following research question: How is an “inclusive city” conceptualised and characterised in the UK and Swedish social work literature concerning migration? The coding process was oriented to answer the research question, providing a more detailed analysis of some aspects of the data. In this regard, the authors followed a six-step process for the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which encompassed: familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, gathering all relevant codes under predefined themes, reviewing the themes, and, finally, producing the results.

Table 2. Search process.

Identification	Records identified
	Sweden 6,327
	UK 96,285
Screening	Title review 2,700
	Abstract review 33
Eligibility	Full-text analysis 13
Inclusion	Studies included in this scoping review/in data analysis 10

4. Results

4.1. The UK Context

In the UK context, the concept of inclusive cities and its connection with social work practice has yet to be clearly defined or discussed. Most of the articles focus broadly on integration, settlement, and voluntary sector social work (provided by non-government third-sector organisations). However, referring to relevant articles aimed at integrating migrants in various host communities in the UK, this scoping review has identified four intersecting key characteristics or factors that shape the role of cities in migrant social inclusion. These characteristics can be collated into four broader themes: the role of stakeholders, migrants’ experiences, socio-cultural contexts, and spatial context of inclusion.

4.1.1. The Role of Stakeholders

Several studies have emphasised the importance of various stakeholders involved in facilitating the social inclusion of migrants in their cities. Broadhead (2020) and Humphris (2019) pointed out that local authorities should be dedicated to generating policy space and creating strategic capacity. Broadhead’s (2020) case study of six local authorities in the UK has reported that such dedicated leadership must create conditions for welcoming newcomers in their cities by developing strategic plans for inclusion, for example: “We Are Bristol,” “Our Liverpool,” and “People Make Glasgow.” This study also

emphasised that local authorities' role in creating conditions for welcoming builds new narratives for inclusion by focusing on social contact, participation, and equality by including newcomers and hosts, receiving communities, and longer-standing communities in the cities.

In addition, several studies have specified the importance of stakeholders in inclusive city models. The shared responsibility of various stakeholders has been key to inclusive cities. Phillimore et al.'s (2021) study found that the local-level actors taking responsibility for promoting integration in their cities have been beneficial in promoting refugees' integration. Referring to shared responsibility, Broadhead (2020) argues that various stakeholders with networked governance could facilitate the development of a shared vision and narrative for inclusive cities, for example, the City Office and City Plan of Bristol. The capacity and infrastructure of the organisations within a city have also been identified by several studies as key characteristics of moving towards inclusive practices (Berg, 2019; Platts-Fowler & Robinson, 2015). Humphris (2019), referring to Luton City Council, highlighted that a city's economic positioning affects the inclusion of migrants in cities, which raises questions about the capacity of city authorities to provide services and to fund other organisations that can provide services. Berg (2019), analysing Latin Americans' experiences in London, found that service providers require time and resources to assess and understand the service users' needs, to facilitate their access to service and inclusion. Cools et al. (2018), referring to Roma migrants in Manchester, emphasise that migrants' heterogeneity should be accepted, and each group should be involved in defining their needs and discussions about their community. Cools et al. (2018) further emphasised that the culture of Roma migrants, and the distinct needs arising from their culture, should be considered when planning for their inclusion in cities.

4.1.2. The Migrants' Experiences

Migrant experiences in cities can also be key to inclusive cities. Chan et al. (2016), studying Chinese migrants in the UK, reported that opportunities available to migrants shaped a city's capacity to include newcomers. Their study found that perceived opportunities for social interaction with friends and community groups, and satisfactory opportunities in finding suitable housing significantly influenced inclusion. In addition, the level of inclusion can also be determined by migrants' perceived opportunities for suitable work, increasing income and education. Ramachandran and Vathi's (2022) study shows that volunteering, although not paid work, is recognised as part of including asylum seekers and refugees in Glasgow, and it has created a positive experience for asylum seekers and refugees. Furthermore, studying Iraqi refugees in Hull and Sheffield, Platts-Fowler and Robinson (2015) claimed that migrants' opportunities to secure services from spe-

cialist refugee agencies and other generic services determine the role of a city in integrating them. Hack-Polay and Igwe (2019), analysing the role of small voluntary organisations in integrating refugees into their communities, found that voluntary social work (organisations) creates a positive atmosphere and establishes mixed embeddedness. Social embeddedness helps refugees feel welcomed and nurtured to participate in citizenship activities in their local areas, such as volunteering in this case.

4.1.3. Socio-Cultural Context

The migrants' experiences can also be linked to the socio-cultural context in each city. Several studies pointed out the importance of situated diversity in cities. Ganji and Rishbeth (2020), exploring the use of outdoor spaces and social connections in Bradford, UK, stated that diversity is integral to the character of a locality, and the symbolic value of situated diversity or multicultural community in a city can promote integration. Platts-Fowler and Robinson (2015) reported that the composition and community of a city could determine integration. Refugees studied as part of their research perceived a local neighbourhood as a place to live because of the acceptance of diversity and difference. Living in urban areas with ethnic diversity plays a key role in facilitating co-ethnic social connections. While it is important to have social connections with the host community, Phillimore et al. (2021) indicate that co-ethnic connections within a city provide emotional support resources, opportunities to socialise in ways refugees are familiar with, and co-ethnic solidarity. Women refugee participants in their research reported feeling a sense of safety and security as the diversity within the city made them feel like a part of the community.

4.1.4. The Spatial Context of Inclusion

While there are variations and differences in a socio-cultural context, spatial context also matters for migrants' social inclusion. Ganji and Rishbeth (2020) highlighted that social inclusion can be achieved through designed urban public spaces because they are places for engagement, conviviality (leisure time and socialising with friends and family), and a space for developing a shared sense of belonging. Platts-Fowler and Robinson (2015) indicate that migrants' inclusion can be facilitated by physical aspects of their life, such as parks, open spaces, libraries, and shopping facilities. Interestingly, the same researchers also identified that the availability of culturally sensitive amenities and services facilitates refugees' integration.

4.2. The Swedish Context

In Sweden, the concept of "inclusive cities" linked to social work as a professional-oriented discipline

and its practices has not yet been fully addressed and explored. Thus, the chosen documents have been selected and analysed here because they identify the social work relationship with the development of inclusive cities, particularly for working with and for the inclusion of migrant communities in marginalised urban environments. The analysis followed a deductive, top-down approach, meaning that the results present four pre-selected broader themes: the role of stakeholders, migrant-specific experiences, socio-cultural context, and spatial context of inclusion.

In Sweden, two main outstanding characteristics can be found while reviewing the definition of inclusive cities given in the material analysed and the role of social work in it. First, in all the selected documents, social work plays a minor and marginal role in the development of urban planning and the redistribution of eco-social resources within the community. Secondly, the inclusive cities, implicitly or explicitly, are associated with marginalised suburban areas in major Swedish cities (Stockholm, Gothenburg, Umeå, Uppsala), with particular social and economic living conditions, including a higher immigrant population. Thus, within this specific geographical urban context, we investigate the specificities of how *inclusive cities* are defined, and the role played by social work(ers) in them.

4.2.1. The Role of Stakeholders

Three of the selected documents (Barthel et al., 2022; Sjöberg & Kings, 2022; Westin et al., 2021) pointed out an essential historical shift regarding the role of the public welfare sector in general and the social work practices in particular, which during the 1960s and 70s were more focused on preventive community work, but which nowadays are more oriented towards individual and family services (Sjöberg & Kings, 2022; Westin et al., 2021). In this regard, two of the documents selected (Barthel et al., 2022; Sjöberg & Kings, 2022) discussed the concept of inclusive cities while referring to the “urban common” as opposed to the institutionalised social work practices carried out by the public sector. Urban common means the management and redistribution of human, economic, social, and natural resources to increase the well-being of residents (Sjöberg & Kings, 2022). Several examples of community management were given, such as community gardens, sports fields, and pocket parks as urban spaces in which the role of civil society associations is the primary characteristic for the rights of ownership and management of the common good. In this regard, it is acknowledged by Sjöberg and Kings (2022) that nowadays in Sweden, civil society organisations—and no longer the Swedish universal welfare state—have the role of reducing social exclusion by creating dialogue through organised activities, building collaborative networks among different (public-private) actors and activists in marginalised suburban neighbourhoods, referring to the latter not as spatial places but as a

lived spaces for sharing identities and mobilising collective power. In particular, the authors referred to the experiences of Megafonen in Stockholm and Pantrarna in Gothenburg, developed by social movements originated by young people with migratory backgrounds living in marginalised local communities and supported by activists working in community-based organisations. The activities were developed to stand up against the privatisation of urban public spaces through awareness raising about social inequalities, racialisation, and marginalisation lived in cities’ segregated neighbourhoods while supporting democratic dialogue and deliberation.

Along the same lines, Barthel et al. (2022) stress the link between social sustainability and the natural environment with regard to community work. In this sense, the authors point out how social work nowadays neglects its community vocational role, which requires collective actions. Opposed to the latter, mainstream community work (Barthel et al., 2022; Sjöberg & Kings, 2022) developed in Sweden refers to the so-called social planning, which concerns an expert-led initiative that aims to include the local community in urban planning processes incorporating social aspects. In other words, social work, as currently practised, does not focus on the collective empowerment process of the marginalised migrant community, green commons, or the natural environment. In the best-case scenario, social work refers to social planning. This is confirmed by another document included in the scoping review (Westin et al., 2021), which highlighted using social planning as an expert-initiated process, consisting of local community dialogue oriented towards accepting contested political decisions. The focus is on the critical role of “municipal administrators” or “dialogue experts” to facilitate the coordination of urban construction projects in segregated neighbourhoods. Here, social planning involves dialogue as a tool used by public-private governance to facilitate conflict management in areas with a high level of exclusion and segregation of residents, most of whom have an immigrant background (Westin et al., 2021).

4.2.2. The Migrants’ Experiences

Although the experiences of migrants stand as an independent element within the literature identified in the scoping review, it is recognised as of great importance for increasing the migrants’ sense of well-being, as well as for the real-life opportunities of socio-economic integration. In this regard, Eklund Karlsson et al. (2019) discussed an alternative way to approach the inclusion of migrants while emphasising the participatory processes concerning racialised and discriminated individuals and groups. Roma people living in West Sweden were invited to participate in participatory action research by scholars working within social work and health disciplines. The project aimed to increase Roma people’s access to education, employment, health, and their overall sense of well-being while allowing their voices to be

heard, “acknowledging and taking responsibility for the abuses and violations committed by the Swedish state against Roma during the past years” (Eklund Karlsson et al., 2019, p. 551). However, an important consideration made by the authors was that while the project’s goal was to develop the capacity for Roma people to organise themselves and develop strategies for advocacy, the community at large was also involved as partners, being civil servants and local municipalities identified as the focal points for real community engagement. Nevertheless, these external partnerships were problematic for the project’s positive outcomes in the sense that Roma people were not fully considered equal partners in the PAR by the aforementioned external partners, negatively impacting Roma opportunities to influence their choices and well-being in targeted municipalities (Eklund Karlsson et al., 2019).

4.2.3. Socio-Cultural Context

Besides the role of stakeholders and migrants’ experiences of inclusion, the literature identified the promotion of social networks combined with social and cultural activities as a practical way to promote social, inclusive, safe, and resilient communities (Santosa et al., 2020). Ekholm and Dahlstedt (2017) and Höglund and Bruhn (2022) discussed social inclusion and social sustainability concerning sports activities, particularly football. However, the mentioned literature used two oppositional perspectives while describing the promotion of “healthy neighbourhoods” and “social solidarity” to ensure the social inclusion of migrant residents in segregated suburban areas. Ekholm and Dahlstedt (2017) highlighted the assimilationist discursive practices underlying sports-based social interventions to improve pupils’ social and language skills while fostering them towards becoming good Swedish adult citizens. In tension with the critics of assimilationist goals, Höglund and Bruhn (2022, p. 2) defined sport intervention as a tool for social inclusion, personal development, and crime prevention for youth living under problematic conditions.

In this regard, another contested element of the sports activity reported in the documents analysed (Ekholm & Dahlstedt, 2017; Höglund & Bruhn, 2022) is the goal to promote the health literacy of children with a migrant background, activating them during their leisure time, while creating bonds and friendships between young people from different cultures. On the one hand, Ekholm and Dahlstedt (2017) state that an assimilationist language is hidden within the sport-based social intervention, suggesting that the problem of “inclusion” is formulated by identifying youth migrant residents living in the most socio-economically vulnerable neighbourhoods. The inclusion of migrant youth, then, implies the socialisation into proper conduct to learn, so-called Swedish-ness, as if Swedish society represents specific ideals and norms of the “included.” Therefore, migrant youth should increase their involvement in Swedish-ness,

but not the other way around. In this way, the authors suggest that sports-based interventions, by fostering a specific ideal of proper citizen, reproduce the social order that creates the ex/inclusion dichotomy in the first place. On the other hand, Höglund and Bruhn (2022) highlighted the potential of social network development for increasing the social capital in vulnerable areas of the city, seen as an essential element for young individuals’ social inclusion and integration. For Höglund and Bruhn (2022), sports clubs and well-prepared coaches are vital in motivating youth involvement in sports. Further, sports clubs have ties with regional and national actors and represent themselves as essential civil society actors who collaborate locally with children and their parents (Höglund & Bruhn, 2022). Besides the involvement of the subjects mentioned above, the literature focusing on sports-related interventions identified the need for more civil society engagement or social work(ers) actively involved in those types of community work.

The same tensions apply to the cultural-based interventions concerning the so-called *Bookstart Göteborg*, discussed by Lindström Sol and Ekholm (2021). The authors highlighted, on the one hand, the element of the bio-political rationality of control and discipline. On the other hand, the cultural-based intervention, in the form of home visits, is targeted at families of newly born children (0–3 years) living in socio-economically vulnerable areas and having a migrant background. Thus, the programme, organised by municipality administrators and childcare centres, aims to promote early child language inclusion, which facilitates school integration in the long term.

4.2.4. The Spatial Context of Inclusion

The focus on the spatial context refers to the eradication of urban poverty by addressing the issue of access to housing and local liveability. Scheller and Thörn (2018) described social sustainability as communities that are sustainable on their own, which means characterised by a social mix of residents with a targeted concern toward “under-represented” and “under-served” populations, accessing local services, street life, tolerance, and liveability. In this sense, social sustainability bears the promise of economic, social, and ecological urban sustainability all at once. Nevertheless, according to the author’s analysis of the co-housing projects in Sweden, an advanced liberal urban governance is hidden behind the development of self-build co-housing groups. This element diverged from the promise of alternative communities while contributing to the urban renovation of segregated socio-economic areas, producing gentrification and raising property values. On a related theme, Macarow et al. (2021) pointed out that in Sweden, between 1965 and 1975, the government created an affordable housing scheme, the so-called Million Program, to build a million homes to eradicate homelessness and housing rights. Thus, while the authors

acknowledged the liberal turn in urban governance, they advocate for the revival of the Housing First model, alongside a productive collaboration between political activists and urban designers in Sweden. The 2012 Homefulness Manifesto for Full Housing (Macarow et al., 2021) is an initiative that included public conversations, publication, and various public art events to establish a platform for inclusive discussions around the issue of resilient communities, social housing for all, and social support facing current risks, such as health pandemics, war and refugees, environmental pollution and climate change (Macarow et al., 2021, pp. 160–161).

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The notion of “inclusive cities” seems to be of promising relevance for social work with migrant communities. Therefore, promoting the social inclusion of migrants is a key goal for many societies in the Global North. However, research regarding social inclusion, inclusive cities and social work practice in the UK and Sweden has been overlooked and underdeveloped. Despite the relatively under-debated topic of “inclusive cities,” the literature selected in the scoping review manifested a nuanced appreciation of the complex issues of social inclusion of migrant communities within the urban socio-economic environment. Cities have been engaging in actions to promote social inclusion to curtail structural, behavioural, and attitudinal impacts of social exclusion. The four major themes analysed—the role of stakeholders; the socio-cultural context; the spatial context; migrant experience of inclusion—are used to make sense of the different layers defining the inclusion and integration of people with diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.

As per the scoping review, the social inclusion of migrants in cities has been promoted through key stakeholders’ participation and the inclusion of migrants in policy and practice-level discussions. In the UK context, this includes promoting positive migrant experiences within the cities, fostering and respecting diversity within communities, providing a positive welcome, and establishing spatial urban spaces for positive conversations. Interestingly, as de Graauw and Vermeulen (2016) highlighted, the political elite as key city stakeholders could positively affect social inclusion. The cities that have incorporated or considered social inclusion have left-leaning political parties in power. For example, the Mayor of the Manchester Metropolitan Area in the UK is from the Labour Party and the Manchester City Council has been run by the Labour Party since 1974. The role of this political background can further be linked to the urban context where migrants live. In Sweden, instead, social inclusion of migrants through political mobilisation has been promoted through social grassroots movements, which evolved into community work organisations within vulnerable urban spaces. In line with the above, scholars support reorienting

social work practices from their traditional public and managerial functions to an enhanced role of social-community coordination (Barthel et al., 2022; Sjöberg & Kings, 2022). This involves facilitating migrant residents’ involvement in the decision-making process within the urban space, increasing the co-creations of urban planning and its implementation, and improving social sustainability and integration.

However, there is a lack of a clear link between social work and inclusive cities for immigrants. In the UK context, various not-for-profit third-sector organisations have provided direct, indirect, and citizen-based social work, including local charities, counselling and legal centres, faith-based organisations, migrant-specific organisations/refugee community organisations, local neighbourhood groups, self-help groups, and so on. In the UK, third-sector social workers provide most of the integration support for migrants for two key reasons. Firstly, the UK government’s role and responsibility for creating and implementing welcoming social inclusion policies and practices have diminished due to anti-immigrant sentiments and political backlashes, and the burden has been shifted to the voluntary sector. The UK government has also recognised third-sector social work as the key support provider for migrants. Secondly, local authorities and other state institutions are in a tenuous position to support immigrants in their inclusion due to public and local government spending cuts based on austerity measures implemented since the 2008 economic crisis (Darling, 2016). Therefore, local councils and the state have been expecting the third sector to play a pivotal role in immigrants’ inclusion. They have been carrying the shifted burden by providing immigrants with material support (food and clothes banks) and non-material support (emotional support and fostering social connections and language classes). Hence, the term “social work” is not included much in the literature. However, considering the role of stakeholders and migrants’ experiences, the reviewed articles have touched upon the country’s key social work actors’ functions; for instance, the local councils facilitate social work support and third-sector organisations as key stakeholders who provide social work support in the UK.

In each theme explored, we also noticed oppositional forces that shape different projects related to “what an inclusive city should look like” and if/how social work(ers)’ interventions can shape this process. Within the sub-themes concerning the role of stakeholders, with particular attention to the Swedish context, we have seen how social planning fosters inclusion where experts (not identified as social workers in Sweden’s case) aimed to stimulate community dialogue around the urban renovation. In the UK context, the key responsibility for building an inclusive city has fallen onto voluntary social work organisations. The national and local statutory agencies/organisations, the public, and migrants expect voluntary organisations to facilitate migrant inclusion in any city. Nevertheless, there is growing attention in Sweden

and the UK regarding civil society actors and social movements (voluntary social work sector) as the key actors identified in leading the community-based initiative for inclusive cities and neighbourhoods. At the same time, this focus promotes migrants' participation in decision-making, leading organisations in decision-making facilitate migrants' feelings of acceptance and foster individual and collective agency (Hall et al., 2019; van Bergen et al., 2019).

There are clear connections between the themes of socio-cultural context, migrant experiences and spatial contexts. The literature promotes culturally diverse and healthy neighbourhoods (Ekholm & Dahlstedt, 2017; Höglund & Bruhn, 2022; Lindström Sol & Ekholm, 2021). Simultaneously, Swedish and UK literature also highlights that social and cultural initiatives, including sport-related activities, can ensure social and personal development for youth and families living in segregated and isolated suburban areas (Höglund & Bruhn, 2022; Lindström Sol & Ekholm, 2021). Nevertheless, we have noticed tension in assessing the social inclusion outcomes of those socio-cultural contexts. The Swedish literature seems to lean towards the inclusiveness of sport-related initiatives linked to assimilationist discourses of being integrated into the Swedish ways of living. The literature in the UK, instead, explored the use of outdoor spaces and social connections (Ganji & Rishbeth, 2020) linked to multicultural discourses, where the notion of diversity is used to promote inclusive communities.

The social science literature also confirms the tension between social reproduction and social inclusion (McDonald et al., 2019; Spaaij, 2012). Indeed, several studies (McDonald et al., 2019; Spaaij, 2012) suggest that recreational sports activities in public spaces involving migrant youth and host community networks positively impact social cohesion, creating solidarity. Yet, the production of social and cultural capital through sports activities cannot be generalised or taken for granted as the high-status positions and opportunities are unequally distributed and do not, after all, directly lead to better employment, education, and quality of life (McDonald et al., 2019). The spatial context pointed out the different directions in inclusion. In Sweden, co-housing projects promise to create inclusive and sustainable communities for all, while running the risk of advancing a hidden liberal urban governance. In the UK, the focus has been on urban public spaces where migrants' positive experiences promote social inclusion. Importantly, as previously mentioned, regardless of socio-cultural and spatial contexts, social inclusion has been shaped by the perceived reductions in the availability, affordability, and quality of housing and employment (Raco, 2018). Therefore, migrants' satisfaction and perceived opportunities are key to inclusion. While there are clear distinctions in the UK and Swedish contexts, social inclusion can be achieved when all the relevant stakeholders have been included, heterogenous socio-cultural and spatial contexts have been considered, and attention has been

given to migrants' experiences of perceived opportunities and satisfaction.

From a specific social work point of view, the most promising element identified in the UK research on the concept of "inclusive cities" is the role of social workers in bridging opportunities for multi-level collaborations between different actors, and increasing social and human capital by ensuring positive interactions. The most promising element in Swedish research seems to indicate organised sport-led initiatives as a way to assimilate faster within Swedish society, reinforcing the individual and family social capital of migrants (to the detriment of convivial urban planning). In the context of migration, social work is still an emerging discipline when assessing the conceptualisation of inclusive cities, with an inadequate theoretical framework and with practical orientations to be further refined to provide a much clearer way for inclusion ahead.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article is available online in the format provided by the author (unedited).

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