

Lund University
Film and Media Production
Final Project Production Summary

“An immigrant in Sweden”

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A 30 minute film was produced as a part of this masters thesis. These are the production notes. The film can be found at <http://vimeo.com/42755775>

When I was trying to decide what to do for my final project, I was weighing several options. Between a paper or a short film. I decided, considering our program and what I hope to accomplish, it would make more sense to attempt to make a short film. A film can be posted, discussed and hopefully seen by more than just a few people, unlike a traditional paper. Although my own experience in filmmaking was limited and my resources were limited as well, I decided it would be worth the effort.

As far as the topic of my short documentary was concerned, I was also debating over several topics. One of which was immigration in Sweden. When I first came to Sweden for school last year, I was surprised at the diversity of southern Sweden, especially Malmo. I was unaware of Sweden's immigration policies. I was also naive to the fact that the rest of the world has immigration issues as well, not just the United States. What also surprised me was how divided people were on the issue of immigration in Sweden. This seemed to be more of an issue in Malmo, than in other cities across Sweden. Living in Malmo for two years I experienced some of, and saw many of the issues that make immigration such a talked about topic in Sweden. My girlfriend was working on her masters for immigration, and many of her facts about different migration patterns across the world, inspired me as well. I thought a topic that had so many strong opinions would be an interesting choice for my film.

Since the cast of my movie was going to be the people of Malmo, and I was the only interviewer, there was very little pre production involved. Basically just go out and start filming people. My initial plan was to go around and interview as many people as

possible with a specific set of ten questions in mind. The idea was to ask the same questions to people from different backgrounds and different political views, and gauge their answers. The plan was to see if a particular group tended to have similar views on immigration. I wanted to see the issue from both sides, and set up interviews with people who were for, and against immigration in Sweden. This proved to be more difficult than I had originally thought. It was hard to find people who were willing to be interviewed on camera, and the ones I could find, seemed very reluctant to say how they felt. My overall impression was that people felt it is politically incorrect to have a negative stance towards immigration. Even people I know who were not in favor of immigrants or Sweden's immigration policies, refused to say so on camera. I had people who openly objected to Sweden's immigration policies. But would not be interviewed. People I found were often hesitant to express their real feelings when they had a camera pointed at them. I realized that presenting both sides of the issue was going to be extremely difficult.

Once I realized I would not be able to present both sides of the immigration issue the way I had originally wanted to, I decided to change the focus of the documentary. I decided to focus mostly on people who were immigrants to Sweden, and try to get information about living in Sweden from their perspective. My Swedish language skills not being very good, I ended up interviewing a lot of westerners and English was the language of choice. This turned out to be very interesting as well, and worked pretty well for me, and the subject being interviewed. In general people were more responsive and more willing to share their experiences in Sweden.

Once I had all the interviews I wanted, I was faced with another challenging task, make a film about immigration that people would actually find interesting. As I was

reviewing the hours of interviews, I needed to decide what to put in the film. Many of the interviewees gave one-word answers, or would not offer much in the way of discussion. While there were many interviews and many good points, I decided once again to narrow the focus of my film. Instead of having many different people offer their views throughout the film, I decided to only focus on the experiences and opinions of a few people, so you could better get a sense of who these people were throughout the film. I think this idea works quite well. I also believe the majority of the viewers who are immigrants to Sweden themselves can relate to many of the views in the film.

Many of the technical aspects of the film were a challenge as well. It may have been a little over ambitious of me to attempt this film by myself, with no help from a partner. With no budget and no real access to professional equipment, I had to make do with what I had. I shot the whole film with a Kodak play-sport HD camera, and a borrowed tripod. (thanks Jesper) I got the feeling occasionally that I was not being taken seriously because of my equipment. Which may have been a reason for many declined interviews as well. I indented the film to documentary style, but many of the issues of a documentary did not become apparent until I started editing the film. The natural lighting in each interview was different, and without proper lighting, it was difficult to get consistent lighting throughout the film. I found I had a similar issue with sound. Many of the interviews were in public places, or outdoors, without proper microphones, I found background noise to be a problem in many of the interviews as well. I tried to balance all of the sound in post, but due to the many different locations, there were still some fluctuations. I designed the film to be more about dialogue than the visual aspect of the documentary, and I believe I achieved that. Then, there was also the issue of getting

people, (other than off the streets) to agree to interviews. I attempted interviews in clubs, bars, schools, and any other place I thought I could meet some interesting people. I tried setting up interviews with all of the immigration and ethnic relations professors at Malmo Hogskola, and they all declined. Luckily one public official did agree to be interviewed on camera. While I wanted to feature mostly immigrants in my film, I did use many clips from Andreas Svenson, the deputy mayor of Malmo. (the actual mayor declined as well) I used this interview for the facts regarding many questions, as well as to get a Swedish perspective from a native Swede with some authority.

As I did the majority of my shooting in February and March, the weather also became an issue for my outdoor shots. Trying to get a steady shot in the wind of Malmo was challenging at times. Many of these problems I tried to fix in post, but a few still remained. I did all of my editing myself on Final Cut Pro X. It is a fairly new upgrade to Final Cut, and the program took some getting used to. It was however, a valuable tool to have. I decided to bookend the film with two songs, mainly for attention getting in the beginning, and leaving the viewer entertained in the end. I thought the music worked well with the film.

I wanted to make a film that would be informative, interesting, and humorous and possibly start some discussion among viewers. The basic premise behind the project was to get the views and insights of people who were not native to Sweden, and their experiences of living in Sweden. So the film is a series of interviews with the same questions presented to a handful of people. To make it more interesting and flow better, I limited the time to less than thirty minutes (I figured this is probably about the maximum amount of time people will hold interest listening to other people talk about immigration)

and I tried to limit the person's answer on the topic to less than 2 minutes. I also wanted to make the film specifically about Malmö, so I used a lot of the city scenes of Malmö that I shot in the film's transitions. I also think this will help people from the area relate to the film.

Overall I think the whole production of this film was a great learning experience. It really helped me understand what is involved and what it takes to make a short film. While this was a challenge and writing a paper probably would have been easier, the courses we have taken over the last 2 years helped inspire me to try projects like this. The film evolved with each step of the process and while the final product was not what I had originally intended to do, I still believe it is worth watching, and attempting more of these projects in the future.

The film and media production program, at Lund helped me understand what is really involved in making a film. I only experienced a fraction of that on this shoot. The program taught me what to expect and how to prepare for many of the obstacles involved in even a short production as this one. In the future I would like to work with some people who have more filmmaking experience, to possibly generate more ideas other than just my own. It was a fun and challenging project, and I am glad I undertook it.