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Embodying the Population: Five Decades of Immigrant/Integration Policy in Sweden

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Abstract: This article investigates the historical development and transformation of Swedish integration policy, including its predecessor immigrant policy, as a “biopolitics of the population”. “Biopolitics of the population” refers in this article to all governmental interventions targeting the population, or parts of it, with a view to producing a collective body of a particular quality and identity. Swedish integration policy is thus analyzed in order to answer questions such as: how has the population been embodied over time? How has the Swedish grammar of multiplicity and fragmentation changed? Which groups within the population have been considered to be in need of incorporation? Why has the attachment of these groups to the collective body been seen as precarious and/or questionable?

Keywords: Biopolitics, Sweden, Integration policy, Population management, Collective embodiment, Non-discrimination, Race, Ethnic origin

Immigrant integration policy, which has existed in Western Europe since the 1960s, could be described as the policy area carrying out the mission of incorporating certain segments of the population whose attachment to the collective body is deemed precarious and/or questionable. Those targeted by immigrant integration policies have mainly been the minority populations that have emerged as a result of what is considered to be “recent” non-Western immigration (“recent” being a rather flexible term in this context). Neither the substance nor the objectives of integration policy have been fixed and, across time, the integration policies of different states have exhibited different sensibilities and have included a range of components.¹

In the last two decades, immigrant integration policy has become an issue of high politics in many European states, with the topic of cultural incommensurability – in particular the incompatibility of the “culture of Islam” with the dominant culture of liberal democratic societies – at the center. Using the Netherlands as an example, but suggesting wider relevance, Willem Schinkel argues that the discourse on immigrant integration has shifted focus from structural inequalities pertaining to work and edu-

1 Cf. e.g. Favell, 1998.

cation to cultural differences.² In terms of concrete policies, a general trend has been observed across Western Europe since the late 1990s. Above all, this trend's emphasis has been on non-discrimination for settled immigrants and their descendants and on obligatory "civic integration" for newcomers.³ Civic integration promotes individual economic autonomy and common values by making the acquisition of residence permits or citizenship conditional on passing tests, and/or participating in programs, addressing employability, language proficiency, civic and cultural knowledge, etc.

Swedish integration policy has been depicted as an outlier in relation to the current policy trend in Europe.⁴ In Sweden, with more than 20 % of its population either born abroad or with a parent born abroad, integration policy had until recently also been less politicized compared to many close-by states. However, after the 2014 elections in which the Sweden Democrats [Sverigedemokraterna], a nationalist and anti-immigration far-right party, gained almost 13 % of the votes, integration policy has been in the spotlight in the political debate and has almost always been described as a failure.

Against this background, this article investigates the historical development and transformation of Swedish integration policy, including its predecessor "immigrant policy", as a "biopolitics of the population".⁵ "Biopolitics of the population" in this article does not refer to "the politics of the somatic" or "the application of biological science and expertise to the political".⁶ Following Claire Blencowe, biopolitics here denotes all governmental interventions targeting the population, or parts of it, with a view to producing a collective body of a particular quality and identity.⁷ Biopolitics in this sense is about envisioning a particular way of embodying the population, creating specific kinds of connections between individual subjects, and investing the subjects (in terms of affects, values, and capacities) in the collective embodiment.

Swedish integration policy, which has existed for almost five decades, will thus be analyzed in this article in order to answer questions such as: how has the population been embodied over time? How has the Swedish grammar of multiplicity and fragmentation changed? Which groups within the population have been considered to be in need of incorporation? Why has the attachment of these groups to the collective body been seen as precarious and/or questionable?⁸

2 Schinkel, 2013. Cf. also e.g. Bunzl, 2007; Mouritsen, 2006.

3 Joppke, 2007. Cf. also e.g. Goodman, 2010; Meer *et al.*, 2015.

4 Borevi, 2014; Wiesbrock, 2011.

5 Foucault, 1978. p. 139.

6 Blencowe, 2011. pp. 131, 138.

7 Ibid. in particular pp. 126-151.

8 The analysis here is based on official documents produced at the government level, such as Terms of reference to government-appointed commissions of inquiry (hereafter ToR), Swedish Government Official Reports (hereafter SGOR), Government bills (hereafter GB), Govern-

The 1960s and 1970s: The emergence of immigrant policy and the move to immigrant and minority policy

From the early 1950s until the late 1960s, settlement in Sweden was essentially free for those who found employment. In addition, labor was actively recruited abroad to head off the major labor shortage triggered by the post-war economic boom. Notably, during this time the presence of the incoming workers and their families did not elicit open questioning at the level of national politics about their compatibility in the collective body. To some extent, this might be explained by the fact that foreigners⁹ were not seen as new members of the collective body, but as temporary labor power that would disappear if the state of the labor market changed.¹⁰ Another factor might have been the expectation that those immigrants who would stay in the country would (and would want to) become assimilated and indistinguishable from the majority population.¹¹

Not coincidentally, the terms for the incorporation of immigrants and their descendants became an issue to be addressed by the government only in the mid-1960s, at a time when annual immigration increased substantially compared to the levels of the 1950s and the composition of the immigrants changed. Initially, the vast majority of labor immigrants had come from neighboring countries, above all Finland, but in the early 1960s workers from the former Yugoslavia, Greece, and Turkey began to arrive in considerable numbers.¹² The incorporation question surfaced on the scene of national debate and politics under the rubric of the “adjustment problems of immigrants” [Invandrarnas anpassningssvårigheter]. It included topics such as the practical and linguistic difficulties that new arrivals experienced, the socioeconomic marginalization of immigrant workers (in particular poor housing conditions), fears that immigrants would constitute insulated population groups, the negative attitudes of the indigenous population vis-à-vis immigrants, and, something less tangible, which was

ment communications (hereafter GC), and various reviews that have been commissioned by the Swedish government or parliament. In addition, secondary literature, which engages specific historical periods or aspects of immigrant/integration policy, is made use of.

9 It was only in the late 1960s that “immigrants”, rather than “foreigners”, became the official term of reference for the incoming labor force and their families (Hammar, 1985. pp. 20-21).

10 The work permits granted to incoming workers were valid for only three to six months, suggesting that the residence of foreign workers would be short-lived. The permits could be, and were normally, renewed, but the authorities kept the option to reject applications in case labor demand waned or if the migrant misbehaved (cf. SGOR 1967:18. p. 199; Frank, 2014). Citizens of Nordic countries were exempt from the general policy because the Nordic zone was turned into a free-movement area in 1954.

11 Cf. Hammar, 1985. p. 33.

12 Johansson, 2005.

framed as the problem of cultural difference.¹³ The governmental reports and bills, which discussed the adjustment issue, repeated that the problems had become ever more serious because immigrants were now largely arriving from countries “which are linguistically, culturally and religiously considerably different from our country”.¹⁴

The government responded to the issue in 1967-68. Firstly, in accordance with a pattern seen in other Western states,¹⁵ a turn to a clearer policy of permanent settlement was taken, together with a move to tighten immigration control.¹⁶ The immigration control measures introduced did not aim to stop immigration, but rather to give the labor market authorities and trade unions “increased power to plan, select and organize the immigration of foreign labour”.¹⁷ Secondly, the government established that immigrants already residing in Sweden should have the same socioeconomic rights as the rest of the population (which was already largely the case)¹⁸ and the opportunity to enjoy the same standard of living (which was to be achieved through universal welfare state policies and regulated immigration).¹⁹ Thirdly, and finally, a parliamentary inquiry was summoned to map the living conditions of all ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities, in order to better understand adjustment issues.²⁰ The government argued that since minority issues – apart from questions relating to the Sami people who were explicitly excluded from the field of inquiry – had only arisen with the immigration of the past few decades, it would not make sense to distinguish between new and established minorities in the Swedish context.²¹ The background to this approach was that during the 1960s, a number of minority groups, such as Jews and Estonians, had accused the government of implicitly pursuing assimilationist policies, and had demanded state support for their own cultural, religious, and educational institutions.²²

The overall aims of the immigrant and minority policy, which was subsequently adopted in 1975, were summarized under three headings: 1. *equality* (the same rights and living standard for the native population and immigrants alike), 2. *freedom of choice* (offering minorities a genuine choice between retaining and developing their original cultural identity and assuming a Swedish cultural identity), and 3. *partnership* (recipro-

13 Cf. e.g. SGOR 1974:69. pp. 447-452.

14 [som i språkligt, kulturellt och religiöst hänseende skiljer sig avsevärt från vårt land] SGOR 1967:18. p. 165. Cf. also SGOR 1974:69. pp. 69, 46-50, 448.

15 Cf. e.g. Solanke, 2009. pp. 21-22.

16 Frank, 2014.

17 Hammar, 1999. p. 173.

18 Cf. SGOR 1967:19. pp. 173-174.

19 GB 1968:142. p. 97.

20 SGOR 1974:69. pp. 447-452.

21 GB 1975:26. pp. 26, 59.

22 Borevi, 2012. p. 45; Schwartz, 1970.

cal solidarity and tolerance between the native population and immigrants).²³ In terms of concrete programs, the policy included free Swedish language courses for adult immigrants, pre-school and school instruction for “immigrant children” in their “home language” and in Swedish as a second language, provision of interpreter and translator services, multi-lingual information services about Swedish society, and financial support for immigrant and minority organizations and for cultural activities.

The new policy was adopted unanimously by the Swedish parliament. It has been pointed out that the policy area was considered neither important nor politically controversial at the time, and that its adoption was driven by a desire to fend off accusations of assimilationism from representatives of some minority communities and to project an image of Sweden on the international level in line with its internationalist and egalitarian foreign policy.²⁴ The policy was taken to be progressive by its authors, and all its objectives were articulated as a matter of promoting social, political, and cultural equality. The then deputy minister of Labor in charge of immigrant affairs presented the policy as part of an effort to “turn Sweden step by step into something of a pioneer country within the field of immigration policy”.²⁵

The 1975 policy embodied the population of Sweden in three parallel ways. Culturally, the collective embodiment projected was composed of a majority body of Swedish people with a number of deviant bodies harmoniously attached to it. Space and resources were to be available for deviant groups to cultivate their own identity in ways compatible with the interests of Swedish society as a whole.²⁶ The qualification meant, for example, that the state would not sponsor schools for minorities, but instead offer home language instruction to minority children.²⁷

For all its purported progressiveness, the way in which identities were ascribed to people within the framework of the policy came curiously close to the racial classifications of the pre-war era. Of course, biological imagery was avoided and minority groups were framed in terms of language, culture and ethnic identity.²⁸ The majority population – whose boundaries, composition, and cultural characteristics remained implicit – seemed to be the same group of people who in the pre-war era would have been called “the Swedish stock”. Despite the benevolent intentions of the policy to offer minorities assistance and choices, the consistent contrasting of Swedes to immigrants, and the ease with which “second” and even “third generation immigrants” were identified, conjured a fractured cultural body of those who truly and naturally *belonged* on the basis of descent, and those whose attachment to the collective cultural

23 GB 1975:26. pp. 1, 16.

24 Borevi, 2012. pp. 45-46; Dahlström, 2004. pp. 73-74, 94-95; Hammar, 1999. pp. 178-179.

25 Cited in Borevi, 2012. p. 42.

26 GB 1975:26. p. 60.

27 Ibid. pp. 71-73.

28 Cf. e.g. SGOR 1974:69. pp. 447-452.

body was not equally genuine.²⁹ The culture of minority groups was presented as rather monolithic, as was the majority culture. Although cultural exchange should take place, and individuals, in particular children, could assume a different cultural identity, the different cultures would remain separate.³⁰

The interactions between the majority body and the minority bodies were envisioned as characterized by solidarity and open-mindedness. To make this vision come true, majority Swedes had to change their hostile attitudes towards minorities. This was to be achieved by increasing the public's, and in particular school children's, understanding of and knowledge about immigrants.³¹ This problem was, however, not given much attention, which is reflective of a more general tendency during the 1960s and 1970s. During this period, when Sweden acted as the leading Western supporter of decolonization and anti-colonial, anti-segregation, and anti-apartheid movements internationally, the prevalence of ethnoracial subordination and discrimination at home was consistently denied or belittled.³² A narrow understanding of what could constitute racial prejudice or inequality ensured that such serious problems could be presented as negligible in the country. The difference of the absolute majority of immigrants (who were imagined to belong to the same race as the majority population) was taken to be related to their culture rather than to their physical attributes. Thus, hostility towards, and degradation of, them, was not framed in the language of racial prejudice and inequality.³³ The problems experienced by minorities, were instead described as rather natural and excusable conflicts on cultural, social or economic grounds.³⁴ The notion of "ethnic groups", which during the 1970s became the standard term for referring to different minority groups, enabled immigrant- and minority policy to label people on the basis of (perceived) decent and at the same time condemn all racism.³⁵

In the socioeconomic embodiment that was projected, immigrants and Swedes constituted one and the same collective body, producing and enjoying social services and social insurance. The productivity of immigrants entitled them to socioeconomic soli-

29 Cf. e.g. *ibid.* pp. 23, 279; GB 1975:26. p. 12.

30 Cf. e.g. SGOR 1974:69. p. 184.

31 *Ibid.* pp. 381-387; GB 1975:26. pp. 79-81.

32 Cf. e.g. SGOR 1968:68 regarding the ratification of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

33 In SGOR 1968:68 and in a government report discussing the adequacy of state support for international adoption (SGOR 1967:57) we can see that the notions of "race" and "race prejudice" were taken to be relevant in relation to people of African descent, the Romani, South Asians and Asians from the Far East, and the Jewish people, but not mentioned in relation to people from Finland, Southern Europe, or the Balkans, who constituted the absolute majority of the immigrants in the early 1970s.

34 Cf. e.g. SGOR 1974:69. p. 189.

35 About the life and times of the notion of ethnic groups more generally, see Rees 2007.

darity. Given that up until the 1970s the employment rates of the foreign-born was higher than those of the native-born, the economic contribution of the immigrants was taken for granted and continued immigration control was the means for making sure that things stayed that way.³⁶ The socioeconomic question on the agenda was instead how to safeguard that immigrants would get an equal share of the welfare produced and the answer given was that general welfare-policies, such as a general improvement of housing standards, would ensure that.³⁷ Concerns about the concentration of immigrants to less attractive kinds of work and workplaces were aired in the process leading to the adoption of the 1975 policy, but nothing concrete was suggested in this regard except the need to improve working environments in general.³⁸

Finally, the political embodiment of the population was based on temporal formalities, including basically all non-temporary residents in the country. Following the adoption of the 1975 policy, the time limit required for acquiring citizenship was lowered from seven to five years, and the criteria that the applicant should have the ability to support a family was abolished.³⁹ The ambition to increase the political influence of immigrants also meant that foreign residents gained the right to vote and to be elected in local and county elections after three years of residence.⁴⁰ The political embodiment of the population that was envisioned in 1975 would not be particularly debated or questioned until after the turn of the millennium.

The 1980s and early 1990s: The return to immigrant policy

In the early 1970s, the benefits of recruiting foreign labor appeared less clear-cut than originally imagined. The settlement of workers' family members entailed costs in terms of social infrastructure and services, and labor immigration was increasingly framed as a factor engendering socioeconomic stratification, postponing structural reforms in low income sectors, and impeding the labor market entry of native women, the elderly, and the disabled.⁴¹ In line with similar developments throughout Western Europe, Non-Nordic labor immigration to Sweden was stopped in 1972.⁴² This did, however, not end immigration, which instead changed character.

36 Cf. e.g. GB 1975:26. pp. 61-63; SGOR 1995:76. p. 13.

37 GB 1975:26. pp. 63-65.

38 Ibid. pp. 17, 61-63.

39 Swedish Code of Statutes 1976:469; GB 1975/76:136. p. 15.

40 GB 1975/76:23.

41 Cf. GB 1968:42. pp. 101-102; Johansson, 2005. pp. 211-225; Hammar, 2010. pp. 50-51.

42 Borevi, 2012. p. 39; Hahamovitch 2003.

The new immigrants were now joining family members and refugees. The arrival of immigrants who did not come to serve the interests of the Swedish economy, and many of whom came from the Third World, triggered racist and anti-immigration organization and activism on a level not seen in Sweden since the 1930s.⁴³ The organizations and their sympathizers engaged in hate propaganda, cross-burnings, vandalism, demonstrations, and attacks against ethnoracially marked targets and political opponents.⁴⁴ As the number of asylum seekers increased substantially throughout the 1980s, "immigrant issues" increasingly moved towards the center of the national political scene and appeared ever more frequently in mainstream media.⁴⁵ By the end of the 1980s and early 1990s, forms of anti-immigration and anti-immigrant rhetoric and mobilization, which avoided the racist expressions clearly unacceptable in the mainstream, flourished. The Social Democratic governments in power between 1982 and 1991 responded to the situation on the one hand by reassuring their anti-racist commitments and appointing a committee to investigate what to do,⁴⁶ and on the other hand by employing a more restrictive asylum policy with reference to the lack of welfare resources to offer "good asylum".⁴⁷

The cultural embodiment of the population envisioned within the policy area was displaced in a number of ways during the 1980s and early 1990s. With the arrival of large groups of non-Western immigrants, the objective of cultural freedom of choice came under attack because it was suggested to license undesirable cultural expressions and values such as gender inequality and neglect of children's rights.⁴⁸ The government responded to the criticism in 1986 by stressing that the fundamental norms and interests of Swedish society limited the freedom of choice.⁴⁹ The government also argued that the concept of minorities ought to be reserved for those groups who have lived in the country for a very long time or always.⁵⁰ The purpose of immigrant policy, different from minority policy, was not to support collective entities but to meet the specific needs of single individuals.⁵¹ In the face of a rising tide of anti-immigrant opinion, the government sent a message to the majority population: the way of life in Sweden is not going to change as a consequence of the presence of the non-Westerners.

43 For similar developments in other Western European countries around the same time see e.g. Evrigenis 1985.

44 Jämte, 2013. pp. 54, 203.

45 Hammar, 1999. p. 179; Borevi, 2012. p. 59.

46 SGOR 1989:13.

47 Borevi, 2012. p. 49.

48 Cf. e.g. ToR 1983:39; Dahlström, 2004. pp. 96-104.

49 GB 1985/86:98. pp. 18-20.

50 Borevi, 2012. pp. 55-56.

51 It was, however, only in 1999 that a specific minority policy was adopted in Sweden.

Although immigrant policy documents produced during the period often contrasted being Swedish to being an immigrant in general, the specific instances of cultural difference receiving attention were now differences that in the public imagination were attributed to non-Westerners such as authoritarian personality traits and deviant attitudes to gender equality, family life, and sexuality.⁵² The collective majority body imagined seemed to include Western immigrants and their descendants, while the other cultural bodies seemed to collapse into a single deviant body. The relationship between the two bodies was described as tense and in need of management. Throughout the period, it was also repeatedly pointed out that tensions between different ethnic groups must not be confused with “racism in the true sense of the word”.⁵³

During the 1980s and early 1990s, the socioeconomic body was also fractured into two: the non-Western immigrants and the others. Attention had refocused from the question of how to bring about an equal distribution of welfare to how to ensure the economic contribution of (some) immigrants. As the difference between the unemployment rates of the foreign-born and the native-born kept growing wider, labor market related programs became an ever more important part of immigrant policy.⁵⁴

A number of programs, ranging from public works, practice jobs, job training, and co-financing of wages to specially tailored projects within the employment agencies were initiated in the early 1980s, targeting either immigrants in general, or a particular ethnic group.⁵⁵ These programs were largely geared at enhancing the immigrant and increasing her capabilities for economic productivity, because the reasons for her unemployment was taken to be an insufficient command of the Swedish language, a lack of education or labor market experiences relevant to the Swedish labor market, a lack of cultural competence and social networks, etc. However, in retrospect, the system of refugee reception – which allocated refugees to municipalities all over the country where housing, but not necessarily job opportunities, was available – has been identified as a factor that exacerbated the unemployment rates of the foreign-born.⁵⁶ The system had been put in place to solve housing problems but also to counteract the concentration of minorities to certain suburbs of the large cities.⁵⁷

A number of factors converged in the 1980s to put ethnoracial discrimination in the labor market on the immigrant policy agenda: the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination suggested that Sweden was obliged to introduce legislation against such discrimination, a ban on gender discrimination in working life had been adopted in 1980, and the differences between the employment levels of the native-

52 Cf. e.g. GB 1985/86:98. pp. 18-20; GB 1994/94:101. p. 56.

53 [rasism i egentlig mening] GB 1989/90:86. p. 9.

54 Dahlström, 2004. pp. 143-144.

55 Cf. *ibid.* pp. 98-100, 135-141; SGOR 1984:58. pp. 107-124.

56 SGOR 2004: 19, Appendix 4. p. 83. Cf. also Borevi, 2012. pp. 50-52.

57 *Ibid.*

born and the foreign-born kept widening.⁵⁸ However, until the mid-1990s, the problem, and its extent, was consistently belittled.⁵⁹ A legal ban on ethnic discrimination was introduced in 1986, but no sanctions were attached to it. Instead the office of a Discrimination Ombudsman was established to convince employers to voluntarily abide by the law.⁶⁰

The mid-1990s until the mid-2000s: The transition to integration policy

In 1990, Sweden fell into a deep economic crisis. Open unemployment rose to levels not seen since the 1930s, and unemployment among those born in Asia and Africa grew significantly and disproportionately.⁶¹ During the first half of the 1990s, the analysis that informed governmental responses to the rampant racist rhetoric, activity, and violence raging in the country⁶² suggested that ethnic relations had deteriorated due to the catastrophic rates of unemployment among immigrants and the expenses that their existence in the country took on public finances and the economy more generally.⁶³ Both the center-right coalition governing from 1991 to 1994 and the Social Democratic government replacing them in 1994, made a priority of curbing immigration (by preventing asylum seekers getting into the country and by restricting the refugee and family reunification policy)⁶⁴ and intensifying efforts to make the non-Westerners already present economically productive.

The right-of-center parties, which were highly critical of previous welfare state arrangements, initiated a general turn to workfare-policies and introduced reforms to make sure that everyone had strong incentives to re-enter the labor market instead of using social benefits.⁶⁵ At the same time, the refugee reception system was changed to “activate” new arrivals. Asylum-seekers were encouraged to find accommodation and ways of supporting themselves.⁶⁶ Those unable to do so had the right to a daily allowance in exchange for performing daily chores at the refugee centers or for studying Swedish.⁶⁷ The municipalities receiving those Asylum seekers that had been granted

58 Cf. ToR 1978:78; SGOR 1983:18.

59 See e.g. GB 1993/94:101. pp. 33-36.

60 GB 1985/86:98. pp. 66-68.

61 See e.g. SGOR 2004:19, Appendix 4. pp. 52-53. Cf. also *ibid.* pp. 59-61.

62 Cf. e.g. Bunar 2007.

63 Cf. e.g. ToR 1994:129; GB 1996/97:25. p. 54.

64 Cf. e.g. Borevi, 2012. pp. 61-65.

65 Junestav, 2004.

66 GB 1993/94:94. pp. 36-42.

67 *Ibid.* pp. 25-27, 37-39, 47-50.

residence permits were encouraged to conclude “introduction agreements” with them, which made the payment of an “introduction allowance” conditional upon taking part in activities aimed at facilitating labor market entry.⁶⁸ The government suggested that these measures would not only prevent newcomers from becoming dependent on welfare in the future, but would also make the majority population less hostile to them.⁶⁹ However, to also address this hostility, the government introduced a penalty enhancement for racially motivated crimes and a legally enforceable ban on intentional and clear-cut ethnic discrimination, which was immediately offensive to the public’s sense of justice.⁷⁰

In 1994, with the Social Democrats back in government, a review of immigrant policy in its entirety was initiated.⁷¹ The proposition presented three years later, however, partly foregrounded problems other than those that had initially prompted the review.⁷² Instead of focusing on the consequences of immigrant unproductivity on public finances and ethnic relations, the government worried that a new underclass was emerging along ethnic lines.⁷³ The fact that the numbers of those seeking and being granted asylum had receded dramatically compared to just a few years earlier was probably part of the explanation.⁷⁴ However, the government was also clearly influenced by lines of criticism that had gained momentum in the previous few years, which suggested that immigrant policy exacerbated, rather than solved, problems that minorities experienced.⁷⁵ Immigrant policy, the government now argued, had been complicit in making many immigrants and their children feel like outsiders in Swedish society by cementing the division of the population into “us” and “them”.⁷⁶

A new “integration policy” was proposed, which instead of focusing on cultural and ethnic differences would promote equal rights and responsibilities and diversity and mutual respect within the boundaries of a democratic society.⁷⁷ The government established that immigrants should not be treated as a homogeneous group, and public measures should not target immigrants in general, but instead focus on the specific and actual needs of individuals and groups.⁷⁸ The public authorities were advised to avoid using the term “immigrant” in reference to people actually born in the coun-

68 GB 1991/92:172. pp. 14-15.

69 Cf. *ibid.* pp. 10-11; GB 1993/94: 94. p. 26.

70 GB 1993/94:101. pp. 37, 45, 52, 63.

71 ToR 1994:130.

72 GB 1997/98:16.

73 *Ibid.* pp. 13, 24.

74 Cf. Statistics Sweden 2004. p. 27.

75 See e.g. Dahlström, 2004. pp. 106-110.

76 GB 1997/98:16. pp. 17-18.

77 *Ibid.* p. 23.

78 *Ibid.* pp. 19-21.

try.⁷⁹ In cases, in which people's origin was relevant, the authorities should speak of "newcomers" (if they had resided in Sweden for less than two years) or "persons of foreign background" (a category consisting of those either born abroad or with a parent born abroad).⁸⁰

The programs that were run within the policy area did not radically change with the shift to integration policy. Adult education, which had been included in the immigrant policy arsenal since the 1960s, was made a priority.⁸¹ Special support for poor urban areas housing a majority with foreign background, which had become an increasingly important part of immigrant policy in the early 1990s, was expanded. The extra financial assistance given to the municipalities in which the areas in question were located, were mostly used to improve the language proficiency and other skills and capabilities of the inhabitants of the area.⁸² Other programs went on without any major changes. In 2005, when the Swedish National Audit evaluated integration measures taken between 1998 and 2003, it concluded that the 1997 policy change came close to a mere name change.⁸³ "Foreign background" continued to feature as an autonomous reason for action and an evaluative parameter, and "immigrantness" [invandrarskap] rather than individual needs and circumstances were still put in the foreground.

There was one area of emphasis within the new policy, which in time would strongly influence the way in which the responsibility of the state for equality and social justice would be understood more generally: non-discrimination. As mentioned before, the Social Democratic government feared that the country was heading towards "a new type of class society in which the ethnic background is becoming increasingly significant".⁸⁴ For a brief moment, the government indicated that the factors generating ethnoracial inequality were deeply embedded in the make-up and mindset of Swedish society, and therefore required a structural response.⁸⁵ The structural approach was, however, soon dismissed after having been heavily criticized from many quarters for treating Sweden as a racist country and for pitting groups within the population against each other.⁸⁶ With this approach buried, the juridical non-discrimination framework – pushed towards the center of the integration policy agen-

79 Ibid. pp. 26-27; Ministry Publication Series 1999:48 and 2000:43.

80 Ibid. In 2002, Statistics Sweden recommended that those with only one parent born abroad be included in the "persons of Swedish background" category (Statistics Sweden 2002).

81 See e.g. SGOR 2004:19, Appendix 4. p. 15.

82 Dahlström, 2004. pp. 145-147.

83 The Swedish National Audit, 2005. pp. 7-8.

84 [en ny typ av klassamhälle där den etniska bakgrunden får allt större betydelse] GB 1997/98:177. p. 16.

85 ToR 2003:118; ToR 2004:54.

86 Cf. Jämte, 2013. pp. 59-61.

da by the growing influence of the human rights discourse⁸⁷ and the adoption of new non-discrimination directives in the EU – remained as the unrivalled mechanism for securing ethnoracial justice.

In 1999, a new act prohibiting ethnic discrimination in working life was introduced, replacing the 1994 act that had stipulated an extremely narrow understanding of what might constitute ethnoracial discrimination.⁸⁸ The new act prohibited both direct and indirect discrimination and did not require a display of ethnoracial aversion or prejudice in order to recognize discrimination. However, unlike the act prohibiting gender discrimination, the possibility of affirmative action was precluded without much discussion.⁸⁹ Within the next few years, prohibitions of discrimination due to sexual orientation and disability were introduced in Swedish law, and protection against discrimination, on all illicit grounds, was extended to most areas of organized social life. In the process, non-discrimination was rearticulated in the language of protecting the human rights of *all* individuals.

Although, Swedish non-discrimination provisions had also previously been neutrally drafted (e.g. protecting women as well as men),⁹⁰ they had hitherto almost exclusively been presented as instruments for alleviating existing patterns of group subordination. With the re-inscription in an individualist and universalistic language, non-discrimination discourse protected all bearers of some morally irrelevant quality (e.g. ethnic background) regardless of whether a particular inflection of that quality (e.g. ethnic Swedishness) was linked to a pattern of injustice or disadvantage.

The displacement of the non-discrimination discourse reflected a broad shift in the notions of equality and justice, but developments within EU law also played a direct role. All of the EU directives prohibiting discrimination explicitly allow decisions that consider morally irrelevant qualities if the aim is to compensate for patterns of disadvantage related to these qualities. However, in a series of judgments from 1995 onwards, the Court of Justice of the EU subjected such decisions to a number of additional requirements, which had a “chilling effect” on the use of positive action and opened up wide possibilities for challenging their legality in court.⁹¹

The integration policy of this period, taken as a whole, culturally embodied the population in incongruous ways. The division of the population into those of Western (or perhaps European) origin or others continued to be present, but was strongly refuted in principle. On paper, the new integration policy envisioned the population as an aggregation of non-prejudiced and open-minded individuals who recognize each

87 Cf. e.g. GC 2001/02:83.

88 Swedish Code of Statutes 1999:130.

89 GB 1997/78:177. p. 27.

90 The exception being a provision in the Instrument of Government, introduced in 1976, which prohibits public authorities from discriminating ethnoracial minorities.

91 O’Cinneide, 2006. p. 351.

other's equal rights and celebrate diversity. The cultural others, in this scheme, would be those unable to embrace core liberal values. In 2002, the government accentuated that the fundamental values of society – such as human rights and gender equality – imposed limits on respect for diversity.⁹² The year after, at the intersection of gender equality and integration policies, measures were taken to counteract “honor related violence”.⁹³

The way in which individuals were to relate to each other's ethnic background was fraught with ambiguity. Ethnicity was, on the one hand, irrelevant and therefore should not be taken into account. On the other hand, ethnic origin marked certain bodies as carriers of diversity, and the presence of these bodies in different spaces of organized life was seen as indicators of achieving diversity.⁹⁴ In a move that conflated the cultural and the economic, integration policy also presented the bodies representing diversity as a particular kind of human resource, which could add a competitive advantage in a globalized economy and engender creativity in the workplace.⁹⁵ Yet at the same time those deemed to be culturally distant to Sweden were to acquire Swedish forms of social and cultural capital supposedly required in the new economy.⁹⁶

In the beginning of the 1990s, the socioeconomic embodiment of the population within immigrant policy sharply divided the native-born and the others (who were lumped together as threats to the welfare state). The division of the two groups remained but was downplayed in the new integration policy, which emphasized the differentiation in economic productivity and capability between the different groups of foreign background. In order to unburden the welfare state, different approaches were suggested to increase the economic productivity of those of non-European origin in particular. Those who were judged to lack capabilities that were suitable for the labor market would preferably participate in the general capability building measures offered to all non-productive inhabitants of the country. However, depending on individual circumstances, special measures related to a person's foreignness could also be set in.⁹⁷ The economic productivity of those of foreign backgrounds who possessed capabilities that could be valuable on the labor market would be guaranteed by increasing their social and cultural skills, by promoting the benefits of diversity and by fighting prejudice and discrimination.⁹⁸

92 GB 2002/03:1, Expenditure Area 8. p. 14.

93 Carbin, 2010. p. 119.

94 Compare e.g. the sections on non-discrimination in GB 1997/98:177 with those on diversity.

95 See e.g. GB 1997/98:16. pp. 45-46; GB 1997/98:177. p. 44.

96 See e.g. SGOR 1995:76. pp. 23-24; GB 1997/98:16. pp. 51-52; SGOR 2004:19, Appendix 4. pp. 117-119.

97 Cf. e.g. GB 1997/98:16. pp. 45-54; SGOR 2004:19, Appendix 4. pp. 78-123

98 Ibid.

From the mid-1990s to mid-2000s, in general, socioeconomic solidarity became more strongly related to the efforts and performance of each individual, and immigrant/integration policy was no exception. Compared with the 1975 immigrant policy it is also clear that the responsibility of the state for socioeconomic equality had shifted from securing an equal standard of living for the different groups that made up the population to securing the conditions of equal competition for everyone.

2006-2014: Targeted and business friendly integration policy

In its first budget proposition, the coalition of right-of-center parties – who won the 2005 election (the Alliance) – declared that its forthcoming integration policy would treat immigrants as individuals.⁹⁹ In its 2008 integration policy statement, the government presented the achievement of equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for everyone, irrespective of ethnic and cultural background, as the only overarching objective of the integration policy.¹⁰⁰ The strategic focus of this policy area would be on making sure that the potentials of the foreign-born labor-power is made use of and that “social exclusion” [utanförskap] is reduced.¹⁰¹ This would be achieved by improving the business climate generally, by reducing taxes, by deregulating and making it easy and attractive to employ, by giving special support for foreign-born entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs-to-be, by devising efficient and tailor-made introduction programs for newcomers, by counteracting discrimination effectively, and by offering special economic support to municipalities with poor urban areas which are predominantly inhabited by people with foreign backgrounds. In general, the 2008 policy statement is careful to stress the large differences between groups with foreign background, and it manages rather well to avoid any generalizing statements about cultures and ethnic groups. The need for targeted action and tailored approaches is also strongly emphasized throughout the statement.

During the Alliance’s eight years in government, the policy vis-à-vis newcomers was, on the whole, geared at putting people on the path of self-sustenance via financial incentives and disincentives. The responsibility for placing newcomers on introduction programs was transferred from the municipalities to the Swedish Public Employment Service, in order to unify and better control these programs.¹⁰² The gov-

99 GB 2006/07:01, Expenditure Area 13. p. 34.

100 GC 2008/09:24.

101 Ibid. p. 43.

102 Swedish Code of Statutes 2010:197; GB 2009/10:60. The act applies to adults granted residence permits due to protection needs and their adult family members.

ernment stressed that the “establishment plans” set up between the Employment Service and the newcomers would be custom-made and would also promote gender equality, because both partners in a family would have incentives to be active.¹⁰³

The objectives of the integration policy were also furthered through immigration control. From 2010, family reunification applications were to be granted only if the sponsor could show that she could economically support the family member and had access to adequate accommodation. No *actual* obligation to provide for incoming family members was, however, imposed on the sponsor. Rather, the rationale behind the rule was to create incentives for new arrivals to become self-supporting quickly by, for example, settling in municipalities where there are opportunities to find housing and employment.¹⁰⁴ Wide categories of people were, however, exempt from this family reunification rule due to obligations imposed by international law and EU law, but also due to opposition from within the government coalition. The government also tried to speed up the newcomers’ learning of their new country’s language by offering a performance-based economic bonus to those who managed to learn Swedish quickly.¹⁰⁵ The bonus system was abolished a few years later because its effects proved to be negligible.¹⁰⁶ The Alliance also considered rewarding those who learnt Swedish fast with the possibility of becoming Swedish citizens sooner, but eventually dropped the idea.¹⁰⁷

The introduction of an umbrella non-discrimination act in 2009 constituted the chief effort of the Alliance to counteract discrimination. The bill proposing the act emphasized that protection against discrimination is a human right and that the purpose of the act is to safeguard the right of all individuals to equal treatment.¹⁰⁸ Formal equal treatment, the government underlined, should not be lightly abandoned in favor of statistical or collective justice, which promotes the opportunities of some by compromising that of others.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, the act made an exception for measures supporting women and persons of foreign background intending to set up, or already conducting, a business.¹¹⁰ The exception was justified with reference to these groups being a partially untapped potential in the endeavor to create more businesses.¹¹¹ In

103 GB 2009/10:60. p. 103.

104 GB 2009/10:77.

105 Swedish Code of Statutes 2010:538.

106 Swedish Code of Statutes 2014:953.

107 GB 2013/14:143.

108 GB 2007/2008:95. p. 79

109 Ibid. p. 170.

110 Ibid. pp. 228-229.

111 Ibid.

this specific area, formal equal treatment was not enough and actual equal opportunities would be brought about.¹¹²

The cultural embodiment of the population projected during the period was an aggregation of non-prejudiced individuals sharing a set of core values: respect for human rights, democratic government, and gender equality. Compared to the embodiment envisioned in the 1998 integration policy bill, the celebration of diversity is downplayed and the emphasis is on the values tying individuals together. Ethnoracial diversity, along with different life styles, cultural expressions, and consumption patterns, is presented as a fact of social life rather than a normative ideal requiring government action.¹¹³

During the Alliance's time in power, individuals with foreign backgrounds who failed to endorse core liberal values were nonetheless increasingly presented as (problematic) parts of the collective Swedish body. In its very first budget, the Alliance allocated funding for counteracting honor related violence as part of its integration policy, which implied that certain forms of violence against women were un-Swedish and signs of non-integration.¹¹⁴ Although honor related violence, including forced marriages, remained a focus area for the Alliance throughout the period, the government increasingly presented it as a gender equality problem rather than an integration problem, signaling that the people targeted were not disqualified from Swedishness.¹¹⁵ Similarly, when persons prone to joining terrorist organizations in the Middle East appeared on the agenda of the government at the very end of this period, it was handled within the Justice Department and the potential travelers were spoken of as Swedes.¹¹⁶

In the socioeconomic embodiment of the population projected during this period, the native-born constituted the already integrated center. The native population included those born in Sweden with foreign backgrounds with the exception of the "excluded youth" [unga utanför] usually living in poor urban areas, who were singled out as in need of further integration.¹¹⁷ The groups born in various regions of the world were placed at a particular distance from the already integrated center, depending on their level of overrepresentation of economic unproductivity and social exclusion. The Alliance argued that since the rate of employment (both employed and self-employed) among the native-born was very high, both in international and historical perspec-

112 The already existing possibility to make exceptions from formal equal treatment in order to promote gender equality within the (tight) limits set by EU law was also kept (GB 2007/2008:95. p. 170).

113 Cf. e.g. GC 2008/09:24. p. 31.

114 GB 2006/07:01, Expenditure Area 13. pp. 36-37.

115 Cf. e.g. GC 2008/09:24. pp. 60-61; GB 2013/14:1, Expenditure Area 13.

116 Cf. Svenska Dagbladet. September 1, 2014.

117 Cf. GC 2008/09:24. pp. 26-27.

tives, it was only by socially including those groups located far away from the center that further economic growth could be achieved.¹¹⁸ Social inclusion, however, is not about broadly equivalent outcomes, but about offering everyone a minimum welfare within a system in which even minimum welfare is conditional upon individual economic productivity.¹¹⁹ Concern about unequal standards of living, which was one of the factors triggering the emergence of the policy area in the 1960s, was no longer an issue within it.

The political embodiment of the population resurfaced as an issue in the public and political debate in the early 2000s, after having remained marginal for a long time. During the government of the Alliance, the use of citizenship as an incentive for integration was discussed several times, but only resulted in the introduction of citizenship ceremonies to celebrate the naturalization of new citizens.¹²⁰

Concluding remarks

In Sweden, immigration/integration policy emerged from a combination of a strong egalitarian impetus and anxieties over ethnoracial difference. Over time, the preoccupation with cultural difference has decreased within the policy area, even if it has not disappeared. Cultural variations, which are not construed as illiberal and/or undemocratic, are mostly left out of the purview of government policy, and the counteracting of what might be labeled as illiberal/undemocratic tendencies has, in part, been pushed into other policy areas, to send the message that those targeted are still genuine Swedes. Immigrant/integration policy has also in general moved towards a more inclusive idea of Swedishness. In the 1960s and 1970s, "the Swedish stock" (and possibly also those being culturally and physically indistinguishable from it) constituted the population body proper. Today, only newcomers and those of non-Western origin who fail to become economically productive and embrace liberal core values are presented as in need of integration and, by implication, as not properly Swedish.

Ever since the 1997 policy (name) change, commitment to anti-racism has increasingly grown stronger within integration policy. David Theo Goldberg describes anti-racism as the ambition to do away with ethnoracial categories and categorizing, with generalizing assumptions about groups, and with the very concepts of race or ethnicity.¹²¹ There is undeniably a value in fighting racialism, but this fight is not the same as the fight against socioeconomic inequality along ethnoracial lines.¹²² The

118 GC 2008/09:24. pp. 26-27.

119 Collins, 2003. p. 22.

120 Swedish Code of Statutes 2014:481.

121 Goldberg, 2009. pp. 10, 19

122 Ibid. pp. 19-22

anti-racist project has in Sweden been going on side-to-side with general policies that have been increasing wage differentiation, widening the gap in educational opportunities between high and low income areas, restricting access to welfare benefits, and so on. Even though Sweden started out at a low level compared to countries like the United Kingdom or the United States, since the mid-1990s Sweden has been the OECD member state with the fastest growing index of inequality.¹²³ During this time, the original egalitarian drive behind immigrant policy has also waned as social inclusion has replaced equality as an ideal. The result is a country in which being poor, lacking employment or occupying unskilled and low paying jobs, and living in rundown and de facto segregated areas, strongly correlates to originating from outside the West.

Swedish integration policy is in many ways in line with the general Western European trend. Non-discrimination has occupied a prominent position within the policy area since the late 1990s and liberal core values such as economic autonomy and respect for individualism, liberal democracy and gender equality have been very pronounced at least since the early 1990s. However, even if the ethos of Swedish integration policy is not far from that of the West European policy trend, Sweden could still be described as an outlier in relation to this trend because access to long term residence permits, citizenship and family reunification has only marginally been conditioned by integration achievements. Instead economic incentives and disincentives and disciplinary techniques have been used to further the integration agenda. Compared to the policies of a number of other states, the Swedish agenda has also had a rather limited focus: to unburden the welfare state and achieve economic growth by making the foreign-born part of the population, in particular those whose migration has been related to protection needs, economically productive.

At this moment, it is not easy to predict in which direction Swedish integration policy will develop. The Sweden Democrats, who entered the parliament in 2010 and substantially increased their votes in the 2014 election, call for the cultural assimilation of residents with foreign backgrounds and very restrictive migration policies, which keeps out those who are deemed to be difficult to assimilate. So far, the Sweden Democrats have neither had much influence on the other established parties, nor on the integration policy conducted. In response to their recent election success, however, three out of the four right-of-center parties now in opposition have launched new integration policy platforms. These platforms propose fluency in Swedish as a requirement for citizenship, more restrictive family reunification regulation and temporary residence permits for protection seekers which are only renewed if the newcomer is able to become self-sustaining within three years. Meanwhile, when the new prime minister, heading the minority government of the Social Democrats and the Green

123 OECD 2011.

Party, presented his government in October 2014, for the first time since the 1960s there was no minister responsible for integration/immigrant policy, suggesting that there is no need for a separate policy area focusing on those who are cast as ethnoracial others.

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