

Excluded from Democracy?

**On the political participation of immigrants
Summary and Discussion**

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- Del 1** *Om invandrares politiska delaktighet – Sammanfattning och diskussion*, Integrationsverkets rapportserie 2000:14
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- Del 3** *Resurser för politisk integration*, Integrationsverkets rapportserie 2000:16
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- Del 6** *Strategi för demokrati*, Integrationsverkets rapportserie 2000:19
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Om invandrares politiska delaktighet – Sammanfattning och diskussion

Integrationsverkets rapportserie 2000:14

© Integrationsverket, 2000

ISSN 1404-5370

Integrationsverket

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601 14 Norrköping

Tryck: Berlings Skogs AB, Trelleborg

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INTEGRATIONSVERKET

Contents

Foreword
Introduction
The assignment
Background to today's political participation
What does the research say about voter participation?
The questions studied, methods and definitions
Six sub-studies
Our presentation
The political rights of immigrants
Sweden – A forerunner
Immigrant rights in other countries
Significant cross-country differences
EU and the political rights of immigrants
The right to vote for EU nationals
Parliament's desire to extend the right to vote
Low voter participation by foreign nationals
Large differences between immigrant groups
Obstacles to participation
Sweden's traditionally high voter participation
Why the downtrend in voter participation?
What do our progress reports tell us?
Less involvement
Less resources
Children of immigrants more active
Why don't immigrants participate?
Immigrants more apt to be at society's margin
Who isn't voting?
Why don't people in disadvantaged areas vote?
The immigrant association – Political or marginal?
Political parties – Are they interested?
Efforts to increase participation in politics
Do personal elections hold new possibilities?
Is more information needed for uninformed immigrants?
Closing discussion
References

Foreword

The basis for the Swedish democratic framework of governance is universal suffrage and the active participation of society's citizens in politics and elections. When Sweden became a settlement country for immigrants, Parliament took a decision to extend voting rights to immigrants who are not Swedish nationals, thereby enabling them to participate in local and regional elections. Since the 1970s, however, voter participation has fallen, for both Swedish nationals in general and for foreign residents. The decline has been especially big for immigrants. In the municipal elections of 1998, participation in some of the so-called *disadvantaged* areas was extremely low.

The National Integration Office, an agency that works to promote the rights and equal opportunity of all members of Swedish society regardless of ethnic or cultural background, was assigned by Government to study the low voter participation of immigrants – in particular, in disadvantaged areas. Included in the assignment was also an examination of development trends since 1976 when foreign nationals were granted the right to vote.

The assignment was divided into six sub-studies that included quantitative processing of statistics as well as qualitative interview- and questionnaire surveys of voter participation and political involvement in a broader sense. The study was assisted by a number of established researchers and post-graduate students in political science and sociology from Swedish universities. A summary of these sub-studies is given in this English report.

Norrköping den 21 november 2000

Andreas Carlgren
Generaldirektör

Birgitta Ornbrant
Avdelningschef

Introduction

The Assignment

Following the election in the fall of 1998, a decision was made by Government to assign the Integration Office the task of investigating and analyzing the low voter participation of disadvantaged metropolitan areas in Sweden with a high density of immigrants. The assignment was formulated as following:

“Government assigns the National Integration Office to commence investigation of low voter participation by immigrants and patterns of development for the years since the reform of the municipal right to vote in local and regional elections in 1976. The National Integration Office should, in the first place, study the development of voter participation by residents of metropolitan areas displaying social and ethnic disadvantage, make comparisons between these and other municipalities, and analyze the reasons for the low participation levels of particular areas and the differences between municipalities and residential areas. Of special interest in this respect, is the study of municipalities that have received federal support for disadvantaged areas. The National Integration Office should further undertake to assess the extent to which any programs designed to increase voter participation have been successful.”

A final report was to be presented to Government by 1 December 2000 at the latest.

The National Integration Office was also to consult with the review council of the 1998 election (Rådet om utvärdering av 1999 års val) (Ju 1997:13) and with Demokratiutredningen (the Commission for Democracy) (SB 1997:01) also investigates the underlying reasons for the decline in voter participation as well as suggest possible steps to boost involvement in the democratic process.¹

1 Note: To facilitate reference to the documents cited in the report, the original Swedish abbreviations of official documents have been retained in the references. The abbreviations used are as follows (in order of first appearance in text): Ju = standing committee on justice; SB = cabinet office; SOU = official government reports; prop. = government bill; bet = official report; rskr = official written communication; DsA = department memorandum; SfU = standing committee on social insurance

Background to today's political participation

Participation in elections, since the universal right to vote took effect in the 1920s, increased steadily in Sweden for many years. It climbed, from below 80 per cent in the 1950s, to 85.9 per cent in the election of 1960, also the first election to be covered by the new media of that time – television. The level of participation continued to grow, reaching over 90 per cent in the 1970s. A decline was first seen in 1988, when voter participation dropped by almost 4 percentage points, and, in the 1998 election, by another 5 points to 81.4 per cent. The decline has been described by a number of researchers as a break in the trend. By this time, we had also had the 1995 EU parliamentary election, as well as that of 1999 with participation levels of under 42 per cent and 39 per cent, respectively. Reports also surfaced regarding a sharp decline in party membership numbers, as well as those of their youth organizations, and of poorly visited political meetings and dwindling interest in popular movements. The question of how participation in Swedish democracy is faring has therefor come to light.

Sweden has gone from being a country where one third of its population emigrated, during the latter half of the 1800s and beginning of the 1900s, to a post-WWII resettlement country. Immigrants to Sweden who have become citizens have had the formal right of participating in Swedish politics, voting in all elections as well as themselves running for public office. We find, however, large groups of immigrants who have chosen not to seek Swedish citizenship. Among these people, are also represented refugee groups who, for various reasons, have had difficulty attaining Swedish citizenship. There are various reasons for this, including refusal of the country of origin to accept renunciation of their citizenship in that country, which is a requirement under Swedish immigration policy. War and civil conflicts can have led to the collapse of a state, which in turn has led to it being virtually impossible to produce the formal documentation required for application for Swedish citizenship etc. In Sweden, as

in other resettlement countries of Western Europe, relatively large groups have for varying reasons not become citizens in the new country and thereby not had the formal right to partake in political elections.

Swedish policy vis-à-vis these new residents, where possible, sought to effect equal conditions for these people in relation to Swedish nationals. The decision was therefore taken by Swedish Parliament in 1975 to grant foreign nationals who had resided in Sweden for a specified time period, the right to vote. This voting right was limited to municipal- and county council elections. The right to vote in federal parliamentary elections was still reserved for Swedish nationals.

The first occasion for foreign nationals to vote was thereby in municipal elections of 1976, i.e., at a time when participation in elections was, in general, very high. This first year, the voting rate of foreign nationals in municipal elections was 60 per cent. Compared to the over 90 per cent participation of the Swedish national population, this was seen as surprisingly low and somewhat of a disappointment.

The development indicated, however, that participation in politics was not synonymous with the formal right to vote. It was neither that clear nor that simple – especially for people whose origins lay in other countries, languages, cultures and political systems. The participation rates then seen as low, proceeded to drop even further, to approx. 35 per cent in the 1998 elections. For some areas, the rates were even lower. Voter participation in the rest of the population had also fallen, but while the curve for Swedish nationals points slowly downward, that of foreign nationals drops off sharply. The question is, where do we turn to find explanations to the decline in participation? What, if any, explanations are common to both voter categories? And what, if any, explanations may be specifically attributed to immigrants who continue to hold foreign citizenship?

What has happened in the past 25 years, since the right to vote was extended to include immigrants, is that immigration itself has changed in character – from being comprised mainly of guest workers, many of whom were coming to pre-arranged jobs, to more refugee-oriented migrations, where people have not specifically chosen to come to Sweden. For both groups, in some cases, there can have been considerable doubt as to how long one would stay in Sweden.

Many immigrants who came as guest workers did so with the intention of staying a few years, saving money, and later returning to the home country. Many refugees, on the other hand, have been waiting impatiently for an opportunity to

return from exile to their homeland. The fact that the time spent in Sweden, for both groups, often far exceeded that initially intended, and perhaps became permanent, was unforeseen. The incentive to become a Swedish citizen and participate fully in civic life can therefore have been limited, a point we come back to in the analysis. This can be said of both an individual's motivation to participate or to not participate. The question here, however, is whether or not the individual has even had the opportunity to participate in elections, or whether there have been obstacles that have prevented his/her participation and, if so, what these obstacles have been.

What does the research say about voter participation?

What election researchers have found is that women are slightly more likely to vote than men, that middle-aged people vote more than youth, and that married people vote more than their unmarried counterparts. A strong statistical relation has also been demonstrated between income and voter participation – the higher a person's income, the greater the level of participation. Members of society with lower education and lower income, or perhaps unemployed, vote less. People who are settled, residentially speaking, vote more than those who have made a recent move. Ethnogeographers have shown that foreign nationals in Sweden's large urban regions move more frequently than Swedish nationals.

A number of factors indicate that immigrants in socially and economically disadvantaged areas vote less than others. In many cases, people in these areas also have less education, lower incomes, a higher rate of unemployment, and are more transient, etc.

So, foreign nationals have been shown to vote less than Swedish nationals. Immigrants who have become naturalized Swedish citizens demonstrate higher voting rates than those who have retained foreign citizenship, though lower participation than Swedish citizens with a native Swedish background.

Tomas Hammar, a political scientist who has studied this development from the first "immigrant election" (that of 1976) through to the 1990s, claims that a number of the factors that can be identified in immigrants are characteristic of factors earlier research has shown to be associated with low political activity.

In the immigrant population, there is an overrepresenta-

tion of people with individual characteristics that normally accompany low voter participation, such as non-activity in clubs and associations, youth, unmarried, lower education and recently moved to a new area. Many of these people probably also have limited knowledge of Swedish society and the Swedish political system. Linguistic difficulties can also make it hard to enter the political structures of the new country, as well as to understand and follow the political debate. Many people may also be starting their life in the new country under conditions characterized by material scarcity and thereby find themselves in a political backwater, as Hammar wrote in the mid-1980s. The uncertainty of not knowing whether one will stay also curbs interest in the new country's society and politics. Even for those who have decided to stay, Swedish politics need not spark any particular interest in them.

Why a person has migrated may also play a role in participation, says Hammar. If fleeing the political regime of one's home country was the goal, it is perhaps unrealistic to assume that the person will show political interest in the new country. If one was forced to leave for being politically active, it is more reasonable to expect that he/she might become active in the politics of the new country as well. However, this does not mean that finding a political party that corresponds to the one he/she belonged to in the old country will be easy, and there may be conflicting differences in the fundamental values and conditions of the old country and the new. Here, immigrants may find themselves in social contexts in which they lack knowledge of the group norms that govern political activity. Non-participation can also be a silent protest against the limitations of one's political rights, i.e., the lack of the right to vote in federal elections (Hammar 1979, 1984).

Political scientists Henry Bäck and Maritta Soininen agree with this last conclusion of Hammar's, as the federal parliamentary election is viewed as more important and receives most of the attention in the media. If one lacks the right to vote here, one's interest in participating may also be lacking. In addition, in Sweden, immigrant issues have long been a point on which political parties do not differ. In cases where these issues have been the object of attention, in the media or in politics, it has often been in negative contexts. Immigrants have been identified as a problem for society, something that, in Bäck and Soininen's opinion, hardly motivates participation.

One of their investigations takes the form of an interview survey (1991–1994) of legal voters of Malmö, born in Fin-

land, Chile, Iran and Yugoslavia. The low voter participation and differences found in these groups appeared to be related to the degree of integration and cultural orientation (measured on the basis of the interviewees' perception of society and social life). Bäck and Soinen concluded that proximity to the Swedish political system played a relatively insignificant role, when comparing Finnish and Danish voters with Chilean or Iranian voting groups. Neither did the time the groups had been in Sweden or type of migration (laborer or refugee) constitute a factor that unambiguously appeared to influence voting behavior.

There did, however, appear to be a relation between country of origin and the inclination to vote.

Another reason why some areas demonstrate particularly low voter participation may be the internal composition and mobility of the voting groups in these areas, in particular as concerns the foreign nationals. The immigrants who are most active have an easier time settling in, are thereby also most inclined to vote, perhaps move to other areas with higher status, or become Swedish citizens. Those who move in, in their place, may be newly arrived immigrants just starting out in Swedish society.

A number of smaller studies in Västerås and Haninge have looked at the significance of permanent settlement. The lowest rates of voter participation were seen, as expected, in the groups who moved the most. Bäck and Soinen studied the relation of social class and voter participation and state that while the effects of social class appeared small, the effects of the experience of immigrating itself, immigrantship, were significant. Though exceptions did exist, in that there were examples where both class and immigrantship were less significant, such as in cases of less traditional political participation, as well as participation in parties or trade unions. However, it was doubtful whether participation in ethnic organizations led to participation in other types of organizations as well. Immigrant associations can have a confining effect on immigrants with low status, while for members of the middle class, they may act as a stepping stone to other involvement. Bäck prefers, however, to view this such that while participation in immigrant associations can lead to other things, those who do move on to other organizations in Swedish society, leave the ethnic association behind when they do so.

Foreign nationals have been found to be fairly well represented in trade unions, consumer organizations and athletic associations. Membership in these organizations has been readily accessible. There is a marked underrepresentation,

however, in Swedish political parties (Bäck & Soininen 1996).

Obs de två olika
översättningarna
av Demokratirå-
det

Investigation by Maktutredningen (the Commission for Power in Democracy) based on a 1987 citizenship survey showed that immigrants had become increasingly active, although most of this involvement was in forms other than that of party membership. The 1998 report of Demokratirådet (the Democracy Council), however, indicated that this development has stagnated over the past decade. None of the areas investigated showed an increase in active involvement. Particularly obvious was the lack of participation in volunteer organizations and political parties. Participation in party activities had hit such a low that it must be described as alarming, claimed those conducting the survey (Petersson, Westholm, Blomberg 1989).

In an interview study conducted by Demokratirådet (the Commission for Democracy) in 1997, 10 per cent of the people surveyed stated having immigrated to Sweden. In comparison with respondents born in Sweden, these people were consistently found to be alienated from society's various decision-making forums. They perceived their ability to appeal decisions as worse, their ability to influence their situation worse, and they took fewer initiatives aimed at influencing their situation in different social contexts. Their participation in political party activities was less, they initiated fewer contacts to influence civic issues, and were less active in different forms of manifestations. Their level of participation in municipal elections was also lower. In the eyes of those investigating, the change that had occurred over time was discouraging, and the gap between the area's immigrant residents and the rest of the population had either grown or remained the same (Petersson, Hermansson, et al. 1998).

The questions studied, methods and definitions

The assignment is specifically a study of voter participation and seeks to find whether voter participation has any relation to ethnicity and social disadvantage in Sweden's large urban regions, and whether participation in elections differs between municipalities and regions. The assignment also mentions "immigrants". How we are to delimit this diffuse category is something we will come back to. We start here by defining the questions to be studied in order then to concentrate on where we might look to find the answers.

Where should we look to explain the falling voter partici-

pation of foreign nationals? Is this lack of participation tied to the decline in participation in the population in general? Are we dealing with disadvantages shared by members of the majority as well – with unemployment, dependence on public assistance and marginalization? Or does the answer lie in the migration itself? Are we dealing with the new immigrant who has recently joined our society and has not yet mastered the language or become fully acquainted with society and its political actors? Or the background of the individual – societal systems with no traditions in democracy, where one does best by staying out of politics altogether? Or should we seek our explanations in Swedish society, in how new immigrants are received, and whether they are permitted entry to the political arena? Is the specific environment, where one settles in Sweden, a factor? Does the non-participant belong to one of the many new refugee groups who arrived in Sweden during the 1980s and 1990s, and who ended up in areas already characterized by unemployment and an overrepresentation of socially disadvantaged individuals?

In Sweden, election research has been highly characterized by quantitative methods, based in analysis of statistics. Some research is based on lists comprising a number of individual variables; some uses questionnaire surveys and interviews with fixed questions. Answers are sought in the form of relations between variables. Finding the right answers is of course ultimately dependent on asking the right questions, on defining the key factors in the first place. At the same time, relationships between variables can also serve to obscure explanations in that in-between factors may be difficult to access failing more indepth qualitative interview studies.

In order to find out why voter participation is so low, in some areas in particular, we need to find these relations. We need both the overview offered by quantitative studies, to point us in the right direction for further study, and more indepth qualitative investigation.

That is, research has produced some general knowledge on how certain individuals with certain characteristics behave in a certain way, as well as limited specific knowledge on the category of “immigrants” and a small number of other groups of citizens. Depending on the assumptions one makes about what influences participation in the political process, we need to break down “immigrants” into smaller classifications. If we assume that the experience of migration itself is decisive, then the classification of immigrant is entirely in order. If we assume, on the other hand, that experience of

other political systems, cultures, etc., is of importance, these questions need to be referred to the citizen groups etc. All of this must then be put in relation to one's local environment, i.e., a breakdown of the population into different housing areas.

The time factor in this assignment has meant that our investigators must rely on previously existing material from earlier election studies, material whose selection criteria are largely based on the population as a whole. When studying the significance of background and housing area, the sample of individuals surveyed is too small to apply the results at the citizen group level with any statistical certainty. In order to do this, would require a sample base of 400-500 persons per area studied and specific interviews conducted in immediate conjunction with the election being studied. This is a topic we recommend for future study.

The concept of "immigrant"

Another difficulty with the methods is that associated with the concept of "immigrant".

The wording of the government assignment instructs us to investigate the low voter participation of immigrants. Everyone who immigrated? Including those who have become Swedish citizens? Not the children of immigrants who were born here but who grow up in Swedish-sparse environments and who inherit their parents' nationality? One of the difficulties here is that it is immigrants in the sense of "foreign national" that are most easily identifiable on the voters lists.

In statistics contexts, the most widely used definition of *immigrant* is someone born in another country or holding foreign citizenship (nationality). A study based on people born in other countries, however, can differ considerably from one based on foreign nationality. The former group includes also naturalized citizens, the latter children to foreign nationals, who have themselves not immigrated to Sweden but were born here. In the foreign-born group, are also included a number of persons born to Swedish nationals (native Swedes) abroad. The number of persons falling into this group, estimated by the Commission on Immigration Policy, is in the tens of thousands (1995). In 1995, the number of foreign nationals born (to foreign-national parents) and living in Sweden, was just over 90,000.

In statistics, an 'immigrant' is defined as a person who has moved from one country to another. In Sweden, the time

of immigration is counted from when that person became a registered resident. What we usually mean by 'immigrant' requires thus further qualification – that the person has moved in order to settle permanently in the new country. However, in both groups, those born in other countries and foreign nationals, there are in fact people who plan to, or actually do stay in Sweden for only a year or two. Of the people who immigrated to Sweden in the 1970s, about half had left the country again within a 10-year period. Of all foreign-born people in Sweden, 40 per cent have been here for 20 years or more, and more than 50 per cent for 10 years or more. Only slightly more than 25 per cent have been in Sweden for less than 5 years (figures from 1994, *Sverige, framtiden och mångfalden* (Sweden, the future and plurality) SOU 1996:55). We can therefore ask ourselves, when it is appropriate to call someone who has lived in the country for more than 20 years an "immigrant". The answer may well be "not very often", and then only when it is the experience of the migration itself that is in focus.

The group *immigrants* is also a highly heterogeneous one. Some people are better able to manage the changes migration involves, equipped with higher education, better linguistic abilities, etc. Some may have had no opportunity to education; others from rural settings may have a background in farming; and still others come from big cities and positions of authority in administrations or politics. Once here, many of these people end up – despite their background – in areas characterized by social and economical disadvantage.

A particular problem with quantitative research is that it has a tendency to concentrate on "immigrants". Most often, it is factors at the individual level that have been the basis for research interest, less often factors in the surrounding Swedish society – factors such as marginalization and discrimination. This has meant, in extension, the risk of further "blaming the immigrants" for the situation in which they find themselves and overlooking the obstacles and exclusionary mechanisms that may exist in Swedish societal structures.

The concept of "immigrant" carries with it characteristics that hover like a cloud above any other characteristics an individual may have. Certainly, in the beginning, there are difficulties related to the new language, new societal conditions and the lack of social contact outside one's own group, all of the things that characterize one's first meeting with a new country. But use of the concept of immigrant has tended towards a branding of people, an association with general problems in society. In many cases, this can be due to new refugees being referred to housing in areas that already have

an overrepresentation of members of society, often native-born Swedes, with social problems.

In addition to this tendency towards stigmatization, many individuals and groups are lumped together under one and the same category, when in fact the only thing they really have in common is that they have crossed into Swedish territory to resettle or seek shelter.

There is also considerable variation among foreign-born people based on how long they have been in Sweden. Studies show, not surprisingly, that those who have been in Sweden for a longer period demonstrate increasingly more similarities with the native Swedish population. It is also during the first 5-10 years that the geographical mobility of new immigrants is greatest, regarding both moves within and from the country. Thereby, is demonstrated a need for distinguishing between new immigrants and people who have lived in Sweden for some time.

The way in which *immigrant* is commonly used – even in research contexts – seldom conjures a particularly nuanced image. Here, our aim is to be as precise as possible. If the statistics deal with foreign nationals, which they do to a large degree regarding elections, we try then to use this as our definition – despite the fact that we may also be including children born to foreign nationals who themselves have not immigrated. However, it is sometimes difficult to be as precise as one would like, and the researchers involved in our study illustrate this in their somewhat different approach to the concept of immigrant. The studies based on statistical registry data deal for the most part with foreign nationals and, to some degree, foreign-born persons, which simplifies matters. The studies based on more qualitative interviews and questionnaire surveys show more difficulty defining the term this precisely, especially when dealing with questions in the original material that may have included the actual wording “immigrants”.

Disadvantaged areas

The term disadvantaged areas is used to describe resource-poor housing areas that have gradually come to have a high concentration of immigrants from non-European countries. The definition of this given by Bostadspolitiska utredningen (the Commission on Housing Policy) reads:

“Disadvantaged areas are areas in which a characteristically large portion of residents lack socioeconomic resources, are

born abroad, and exhibit lower health standards than the average population as a whole. The areas concerned are for the most part those built during the time of the Miljonprogram [a housing program designed to create a million new homes] and are almost exclusively under the management of municipal housing corporations. ... The large-scale aspect, anonymity, lack of security, low quality standards, lack of services and transit, etc., that are often features of these disadvantaged areas, contribute to further impair the area's living conditions and opportunities available to its inhabitants. Harsh living conditions combined with a sense of inability to influence one's own situation can lead to feelings of powerlessness and exclusion." (SOU 1996:156)

The areas most often referred to in this context are: Rinkeby, Tensta, Akalla, Husby, Kista and Skärholmen, in Stockholm; Alby and Fittja, in Botkyrka; Hjällbo and Bergsjön, in Göteborg; and, in Malmö, primarily Rosengård. Disadvantaged areas are, however, also found in other large Swedish cities. In the data presented below, are also included: Norsborg in Botkyrka; Flemingsberg in Huddinge; and areas in Södertälje, Solna, Eskilstuna, Norrköping, Jönköping; Hyllie in Malmö; and Kronogården in Trollhättan (Andersson 2000).

From 1990–1995, the social and economic situation of these specific areas deteriorated dramatically. Unemployment figures rose, employment in other programs fell, and dependence on public assistance increased sharply. Among the most extreme cases, is that of some areas of Rosengård in Malmö, where the numbers in employment programs during this period dropped from 48 per cent to 8 per cent. The number of welfare recipients increased such that, in 1995, in some areas, an entire 75 per cent were receiving public assistance. In areas of Hjällbo in Göteborg, the rate for immigrant residents of employment in different programs fell from 62 per cent to 18 per cent during this same period (1990–1995).

The population of these areas is also very transient. Approx. half of the 1990 population had moved to a different area by 1995. The areas were filled instead by new immigrants who had not been in Sweden long, with weaker ties to the labor market and greater problems with the Swedish language, etc. The lack of resources characteristic of these areas was thereby intensified. The relative proportion of immigrants living in these areas varies from 30 per cent to more than 70 per cent. A study of the population structure shows that only 25 per cent of the children and youth living in these areas were born outside of Sweden, compared to a corresponding 75 per cent of their parents. In some

areas, the percentage of this parent generation born elsewhere approaches 90 per cent. Not only do these disadvantaged areas have a higher proportion of foreign-born citizens, but, in some cases, more than half of them immigrated between the years of 1992–1998 (Andersson 2000).

Six sub-studies

Allowing for the time limitation placed on our study, we widened the scope of the assignment from the delimited behavior of *voter participation* to a wider concept of *political participation*. Despite limitations, we wanted to widen the study as far as possible so enlisted the expertise of researchers from various universities and colleges to conduct the following six studies:

Folke Johansson, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Göteborg University. A quantitative analysis of political participation, comparing different areas and changes undergone in these areas over time. (*Utanför demokratin? Del 2, Varför röstar inte invandrarna? (Excluded from Democracy? Part 2, Why don't immigrants vote?)* Report Series 2000:15, National Integration Office.)

Doctoral students Per Adman and Per Strömblad, and Associate Professor Anders Westholm, (supervisor) Department of Government, Uppsala University. In-depth study on the political resources of immigrants, with a comparison over time. (*Utanför demokratin? Del 3, Resurser för politisk integration (Excluded from Democracy? Part 3, Resources for political integration.)* Report Series 2000:16, National Integration Office.)

Doctoral student Paula Rodrigo Blomqvist and Professor of Political Science Henry Bäck (supervisor), School of Public Administration, Göteborg University. Study of the role of the introduction of personal elections in the voter participation of immigrants. (*Utanför demokratin? Del 4, Personvalets betydelse för valdeltagandet (Excluded from Democracy? Part 4, The importance of personal elections for voter participation.)* Report Series 2000:17, National Integration Office.)

Doctoral student Magnus Dahlstedt, and Professor Aleksandra Ålund (supervisor), Department of Thematic Studies, Linköping University. In-depth study of the views of different actors, native Swedish and foreign-born, in the political process. (*Utanför demokratin? Del 5 Marginaliseringens politiska konsekvenser (Excluded from Democracy? Part 5, The political impact of marginalization.)* Report Series 2000:18, National Integration Office.)

PhD of Sociology Erik Olsson, Department of Thematic Studies, Linköping University. Study of measures designed to increase voter participation. (*Utanför demokratin? Del 6 Strategi för demokrati*, (*Excluded from Democracy? Part 6, A strategy for democracy*.) Report Series 2000:19, National Integration Office.)

PhD of Sociology Marianne Freyne-Lindhagen, and Henry Pettersson, doctoral student in political science, Department of Social Sciences, Örebro University. Case study of Örebro, a city large enough to demonstrate clear ethnic and social segregation. The study includes both quantitative and qualitative studies. (*Utanför demokratin? Del 7 Politiskt deltagande i Örebro kommun*, (*Excluded from Democracy? Part 7, Political participation in Örebro*)). Report Series 2000:20, National Integration Office.)

Our presentation

Because the material is fairly extensive, we have chosen to present the sub-studies separately: the quantitative study on political participation, the qualitative study on political resources, the study of personal elections as a new possibility, the studies on the political impact of marginalization and different strategies for democracy, and the case study of Örebro.

In this section, we present the assignment, the background, political rights in Sweden and surrounding nations, including the EU, and development in the area of voter participation. We also present a summary of the sub-studies and discuss what can be done to improve participation in the political process.

The political rights of immigrants

The right to vote in federal parliamentary elections applies to Swedish nationals, residing in the country, 18 years or older on election day (Chapter 3 §2 the Constitution Act, and Chapter 1 §2 the Elections Act 1997:157). Swedish citizens living abroad have the right to vote in federal elections if they have at some time been registered residents of Sweden. Anyone with this right to vote may also run for federal office.

Sweden – A forerunner

“Capital, trade and industry cross national borders, and the labor movements of many countries work together to protect the common interests of their members in the international economy. From a wide perspective, it seems unbelievable that so many serious attempts have been made to prevent foreign nationals from holding political speeches, forming their own organizations, or participating in political demonstrations,” comments Professor of Political Science Tomas Hammar, who has studied developments in political participation in Europe and Sweden (Hammar 1990).

Although it has not been possible to exclude foreign nationals from the political life of democratic states entirely, the dominant tradition of the past century in Europe has nevertheless been to forbid foreign nationals to take part in political activities, i.e., to reserve the right of political participation to a country’s own citizens, Hammar concludes. This was especially prevalent during the two world wars, citing reasons of national security. Neutral, or non-allied countries such as Sweden and Switzerland had, under these conditions, a particularly great interest in prohibiting foreign meddling and for this reason banned the activities of foreign nationals.

Citizens only

This extreme, negative attitude toward the political activities of foreign nationals has changed since WWII, a number of international conventions and declarations having hastened development in this area. The 1948 UN declaration concerning human rights, for example, mentions political rights. It speaks of individual rights, but political rights are, in practice, only applicable to citizens, though the actual term is not used. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights approved by the 1966 UN General Assembly does, however, express this, specifically stating that every citizen shall have the right and opportunity to vote and participate in political affairs.

The 1953 European Convention for the Protection of

Human Rights states that parties to the convention may introduce restrictions regarding the political activities of foreign nationals, with reference to the freedoms of expression and association. According to the convention, however, this type of restriction shall occur by legislative means.

The conventions went against earlier principles in that human rights were first defined in general terms and then specification of conditions under which foreign nationals could be excluded were given (Hammar 1990). In 1977, the Parliamentary Assembly of the European Council urged the Committee of Ministers to consider the right of foreign nationals to vote in local elections. Sweden, Norway and Denmark had already taken, or were in the process of taking this step, and the Netherlands was considering the introduction of the right to vote in local elections for foreign nationals who had settled in the country. The proposal was also supported by the emigration countries, but other member states of the European Council were against it.

New winds blowing

Following the refugee migrations of WWII, serious attempts were made in Sweden to stop foreign nationals from becoming involved in politics. Despite this opposition, a proposal was made in the 1960s to extend the right to vote, and later, in 1976, when Swedish Parliament legislated foreign nationals' right to vote in local elections, all of the political parties stood behind the decision.

The purpose of this reform was, among other things, to increase the immigrant's direct political influence at the municipal level.

“The 3-year rule, however, was to provide a reasonable guarantee that the voter would have a satisfactory knowledge of Swedish, that he/she would be familiar with and have an understanding of Swedish conditions, and have a natural interest in municipal affairs, not only those relating directly to his/her immediate concerns, but also to long-term issues of municipal interest.” (excerpt from: *Svenskt medborgarskap*, Medborgarskapskommittén, (*Swedish Citizenship*, Citizenship Committee) SOU 1999:34).

Through the 1976 reform of the right to vote in Sweden (prop. 1975/76:23, bet. 1996/97:KU16, rskr. 1996/97:177), suffrage and the right to run for public office – in municipal, county and church councils – was extended to include also non-Swedish nationals registered as residents of a municipality as of 1 November, 3 years prior to the election year in question.

Expanding the right to vote to federal elections?

The question of extending the right to vote for immigrants who had not become Swedish nationals in federal elections was taken up by the 1983 suffrage committee. The majority of committee members proposed that citizens of the other Nordic countries be granted the right to vote in federal elections after being registered as a resident in Sweden for 3 years, and that Sweden work to gain approval for the right to vote based on the residency principle internationally. Residency, and not nationality, would determine who had the right to vote in federal elections. One member proposed that all foreign nationals who met the requirements for municipal voting rights would also be granted the right to vote in federal elections. Three members were of the opinion that the requirement of Swedish citizenship should remain. The work done by the committee did not lead to a change in legislation.

The 1985 Medborgarskapskommitté (Citizenship Committee) (*Dubbelt Medborgarskap, Dual Citizenship*, DsA 1986:6) also stated that the fact that people would be able to vote in two countries was an undesirable consequence of dual citizenship. The committee engaged in lengthy discussions on the possibility of introducing regulations to prevent persons from voting in two countries, or requiring a guarantee from these individuals that they would abstain from voting in both countries, etc. The committee came to the conclusion that right to vote in more than one country was tied to one's basic right as a citizen of that country and a right that citizens should not be expected to renounce. For this reason, the committee did not wish to make such a decree.

The question of voting rights and the right to run for office of residents of Sweden who are not Swedish nationals has, however, remained on the agenda in the form of motions before Parliament made by representatives of the Left and Green parties. The Standing Committee on the Constitution took up these matters in a report on the new Elections Act (*Ny Vallag* 1996/97:KU16), concluding that they could not support stipulations whose purpose it was to break the existing connection between Swedish citizenship and the right to vote in federal elections. The committee referred instead to the next Citizenship Committee (appointed 1997), whose task it was to present a proposal that would make it easier for immigrants to obtain Swedish citizenship.

Membership in the EU has, as of 1998, meant expansion

of the right to vote in municipal and county council elections to include also citizens of other EU states who are registered residents – with no time condition. In conjunction with this expansion of voting rights, Swedish Parliament has chosen to make it easier for other Nordic nationals, from non-EU countries, residing in Sweden, to also participate in municipal elections with no time-related residency condition.

The voting rights of other foreign nationals were also under discussion in connection with the Commission on Immigration Policy's report (SOU 1996:55). One of the conclusions reached by the committee was that the voter participation of foreign nationals was considerably lower than that of Swedish nationals. During Parliament's treatment of the matter, the Green Party proposed that the 3-year requirement be removed for foreign nationals in municipal and county elections. The background for this was that the time stipulation for citizens of EU member states was removed in 1997, according to the EC directive, and that it had been made easier for citizens of Norway and Iceland at that time as well.

The Standing Committee on Social Insurance responded to the motion (1997/98 SfU6) by stating that the change constituted an example of the principle of equality between and equal treatment of a member state's citizen and citizens in other member states, and a consequence of the right to move and reside freely as stated in Article 8a of the Treaty of Rome. The Standing Committee on the Constitution was not of the same opinion regarding the motions before Parliament, that the rules should be applicable to all immigrants residing in Sweden, regardless of whether or not they were covered by the EC directive. The committee therefor rejected the motions.

In a democracy, or governance by the people, the *people* can naturally be equated with those who are *citizens* in the formal sense of the word, states Hammar. Only citizens (nationals) are full members of a state and should be represented in its government. Foreign nationals must therefor be excluded. Using this interpretation, democracy's dilemma lies in the possibilities of becoming a citizen. If permanent residents who are foreign nationals are able, after a stipulated residency period of 5–10 years, to apply for and become citizens and thereafter participate in political life, then democracy can be said to work even in times of substantial migration.

However, the situation is such that few immigrants become citizens of Sweden or of the other resettlement countries. The percentage of foreigners who have not become citizens

Invandrarpolitiska kom-
mittén

Socialförsäkringsutskottet

Konstitutionsutskottet

of their new countries after 10 years of residency is surprisingly high almost everywhere. Naturalization has quite obviously failed to solve the democratic dilemma in Europe. The fact that only citizens are permitted to partake of political life thus implies considerable limitations with respect to a representative democracy. A considerable portion of the adults residing in the country are not represented, and the political balance between different social groups and classes is changed, in particular if immigrants are overrepresented in any one group or class, e.g., the working class. If, by *democracy*, we mean that those affected by political decisions are also able to be involved in how these decisions are made, then we must also admit that political democracy has not been working as it should in Western Europe for a number of decades.

Members of society but not citizens

Postwar immigrants to Western Europe have to a great extent become members of the settlement countries on the basis of their physical presence and long periods of residency in these countries (Layton-Henry 1990). This is true even though, from a psychological standpoint, these people may feel and define themselves as members of their countries of origin. They participate in the labor market, pay taxes, contribute to and share the benefits of the welfare system, bring up and educate their children in the country's schools, pray in their churches and temples, and partake of a long list of other civic activities.

Despite this, a significant number of these immigrants choose not to seek citizenship in the new country. This may be due to their not wanting to give up citizenship in their country of origin, or due to the requirements for citizenship being unattainable or the naturalization process itself being complicated and costly.

In most Western democracies, residents of foreign descent have received an increasing amount of the social and economic rights, as well as obligations associated with native citizens – without becoming citizens in the official sense. They have a right to housing and employment, and have, in most cases, the right to freedom of expression and religious beliefs, the right to form associations, publish magazines, join trade unions and participate in public demonstrations. They may participate in extra-parliamentary activities and seek allies among different interest groups such as churches, trade unions and political parties. They are also able to receive finan-

In theory, citizen rights are often divided into three categories: civil, political and social (Marshall 1977). By *civil rights*, are meant rights that are necessary for individual freedom: personal freedom, freedoms of expression, thought and to practice one's religion, and the right to own property, enter agreements and the right to equality in the eyes of the law.

A decisive factor in *political rights* is the right to participate in the execution of political power and decision-making processes, i.e., the right to vote and to participate in politics at the local or national level. *Social rights* have come later, and include the right to a certain standard of living, and the right to economic welfare and social security. Here, is also included the right to an education and medical care, and to live a civilized life according to the standards of the society in which one lives. In this context, are also mentioned "industrial rights", a sub-category of social rights, such as the right to participate in trade unions, business councils and other activities associated with working life.

cial assistance and other forms of support from the governments of their homeland. The size and concentration of one's immigrant group is a source of security and resources. Although individuals and groups who have immigrated do not have the right to vote, there are other ways to influence politics on the local level.

The rights missing are political rights, and this has created a growing gap between what we could call substantial and formal citizenship. We could also speak of a kind of hollowed-out citizenship in the welfare states, where forms of care have been considered due all inhabitants, with an end to preventing social gaps that could lead to tension in society. We are unable to escape the dichotomy of the liberal democratic state on one hand, and the existence of large groups lacking political rights on the other.

The right to vote through citizenship

Growing second and third generations born and educated in Western Europe bring with them the question of what citizenship and membership in a modern democratic state really encompasses. Should these young members of society who have inherited their parents' foreign citizenship really be seen as citizens of states in which they have hardly lived? Does the fact that one lives, works and pays tax in a country mean nothing? The slogan of US freedom fighters of the 1700s, rang to the tune of "no taxes without representation", a phrase

kommer denna "nyöversättning" att påverka texten framöver? finns orden formal och actual citizenship ngn annanstan?

that could be used even today. Or should that instead be “no representation without naturalization”?

The Swedish Citizenship Committee of 1997 (Medborgarskapskommittén 1997, SOU 1999:34) proposed that we accept dual citizenship without contention, and dealt in following with the issue of suffrage as a consequence of this dual citizenship. One of the key arguments against dual citizenship has been that it would entail the right to vote in two countries, thereby contradicting the fundamental principle of democracy “one person – one vote”. On the flip side, the committee concludes that an increased acceptance of dual citizenship would lead to a larger number of people applying for Swedish citizenship, in that, in doing so, they would not be forced to renounce citizenship in their country of origin. This would allow a greater number of immigrants to participate in federal elections. The committee also suggested expanding the right to Swedish citizenship to include, among others, children whose fathers are Swedish, children adopted by parents of which at least one is a Swedish national, children to foreign nationals with permanent resident permits who had made their home here for 5 years or more, and stateless children.

According to the proposal of the committee, Swedish Government presented a bill in June 2000 regarding a law proposed to enter into effect 1 July 2001. According to the proposal, persons seeking Swedish citizenship will not be required to renounce their former citizenship. The bill will be read in Parliament in the spring of 2001.

Immigrant rights in other countries

Significant differences between countries

The democratic framework of governance has been enacted in an increasing number of countries around the world – at least in principle. However, as a rule, the modern states presume that only citizens of a country have the right to vote, to run for public office, and to partake of the country's political life.

Access to political rights differs greatly between countries – in some cases also within one and the same country (Layton-Henry 1990). In Switzerland, for example, the canton of Neuchâtel extended the right to vote in regional elections to some (male) immigrants as early as 1848. In other cantons, other foreign residents still don't have the right to make political speeches, public or private, without special consent from the canton government. Even when permission is granted, the speaker must refrain from saying anything that can be construed as having to do with Swiss internal affairs.

At the same time as other political rights have been introduced in country after country, resistance to expanding the right to vote has grown (Hammar 1990). In times when terrorism has been a noted problem of society, this liberal trend has been met by strong opposition. Instead, the demand for increased monitoring of foreign nationals who have been involved in violent activities has risen.

Democracy's meaning of "government by the people" and the delimitation of the political sphere to nationals only, contradict one another in light of the large immigrant populations resulting from postwar migration to the Western European countries. In several settlement countries in Western Europe, foreign nationals make up 10-25 percent of the workforce. Some of these states have come to accept this, i.e., and see guest workers as permanent residents, while others adhere to their being only temporary guests and not future members of the federal state.

New populations

Immigration to Western Europe is unlike any earlier migration, both in its magnitude and its diversity. It is above all countries in western and northern Europe that, in the postwar decades, have sought and received migrant workers, among them: Belgium, France, West Germany, The UK, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland. Some estimates indicate increases to the populations of these recipient countries to upwards of 15 million, and millions more who have come as seasonal workers, illegal workers, or guest workers who have become naturalized.

In 1994, foreign nationals in Belgium constituted 9.1 percent of the population; in France – 6.3 percent; Germany – 8.5 percent; The UK – 3.5 percent; the Netherlands – 5.1 percent; and Switzerland – 18.5 percent. The most recent corresponding figure for Sweden is 5.9 percent (1998). In addition to these foreign nationals, there are relatively large groups of immigrants who have become naturalized and obtained citizenship in the country of resettlement. This is particularly true of France, Sweden, The UK and the Netherlands. Former colonial powers such as The UK, France and the Netherlands also have large groups from developing countries who obtained citizenship through their former colonial ties.

However, the figures tell us little about the diversity. Behind the high percentage of foreign nationals in Switzerland, e.g., lies a relatively high number of guest workers from Italy and Spain. In West Germany, immigration came first and mostly from southern Europe – Italy, Yugoslavia, Spain and Greece – and later from Turkey, Turkish citizens now making up the largest of Germany's immigrant groups. It can also be added that many of these Turkish nationals are ethnic Kurds.

Most of the migrant workers who came to Sweden, came at first from neighboring Finland, and later in large groups from Yugoslavia and Turkey, as well as refugee groups from other countries and continents. In the Netherlands, the largest groups of foreign workers are from Turkey, Morocco and Spain. In addition, there are also large groups from the Dutch Antilles, other former colonies in Indonesia and Surinam.

The immigrant population of Belgium resembles that of the Netherlands in that it includes large groups from the Mediterranean countries, including Turkey and Morocco. Migration to France has been a combination of workers and immigrants from countries with earlier colonial ties to

France. Some of these people have held French citizenship. Others, e.g., from North and West Africa, had special agreements, which were terminated toward the end of the 1970s. Many of France's migrant workers come from Italy, Portugal and Spain, but there are also groups from Turkey, Vietnam and Pakistan.

Immigration to The UK has differed from that to the rest of Western Europe. Here, most of the foreign workers have been from Ireland or former British colonies. In contrast to those from Pakistan, people from Ireland have always been seen as British as long as they reside in the country. When Pakistan left the Commonwealth, new Pakistani immigrants lost the rights extended to Commonwealth members. They became official foreigners and were unable to exercise the political rights enjoyed by earlier immigrants from Pakistan.

For many years, the governments of the recipient countries believed these workers, who had either been recruited or taken it upon themselves to seek work in their countries, would later return to their homelands. When this did not happen, the reaction of those in power was one of surprise. Earlier policy geared toward limiting the number of immigrants, citing the immigrant him/herself as responsible for his/her own integration, was unsuccessful when the volume of immigration increased (Layton-Henry 1990).

Limited rights

With very few exceptions (e.g., Brazilians in Portugal), foreign nationals in most of the European countries, including Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland, do not have the right to vote at any level – local, regional or national.

Other civil and social rights extended to foreign nationals, however, vary greatly between the countries. In Switzerland, e.g., foreign residents have, for the most part, the same civil rights as native Swiss with respect to the freedoms of opinion and expression, association, publishing, etc. The political parties themselves determine what conditions will apply for accepting foreign nationals as members. Since 1970, there has been a federal commission that handles the problems of foreign residents. In some municipalities, there are advisory groups, with a mixture of both Swiss and foreign members. Many cantons allow foreign residents to vote in church elections (Oriol 1992).

The right to vote in federal elections is reserved for Swiss nationals, while at the canton level, there can be some expan-

sion of rights. In two of the country's 24 cantons, foreign nationals have the right to vote at this level, though conditions may vary. In Neuchâtel, foreign residents may vote if they have resided in the canton for more than 1 year and hold a valid work permit. Such permits are granted after 10 years residence for citizens of Spain and Italy, and after 5 years for Belgian and French nationals. This right to vote was introduced for some groups of men in 1848, and later in 1959 for women. In the canton of Jura, formed in 1978, foreign nationals may vote in municipal and canton elections after 10 years residence. As in Neuchâtel, foreign nationals may not run for public office. In order to be granted universal voting rights, one must become a Swiss citizen, which requires having been a resident in the country for 12 years, with shorter qualifying times in some cases for people married to a Swiss national, for youth, etc.

In The UK, a distinction is made between "subjects" and "citizens" (nationals). All foreign nationals may participate in trade union- and professional activities, belong to a political party, and enjoy the same individual freedoms as native British nationals. Citizenship rights are, however, in principle, reserved for British nationals. Under current law, citizens of British territories in other parts of the world are considered foreign nationals. Freedom of movement is extended to British and Irish nationals, as well as citizens of the Isle of Man, Channel Islands and EU nationals. The former colonial power distinguishes between the concept of *British citizen*, a person with permanent ties to the country, and *British subject*, a somewhat vaguer description for citizen of the Commonwealth, with the latter not having free entry clearance to the territory. Once having gained clearance, however, even subjects are extended full rights, including suffrage and the right to run for public office in any election. A foreign national may apply for naturalization when he/she has spent 4 out of 7 years in the territory. He/she must know English, have a good reputation, and swear allegiance to the British crown. The UK also allows dual citizenship.

Other countries, e.g., Spain and Portugal, have requirements that include reciprocity, i.e., where country A will grant country B nationals the right to vote if, in turn, country B extends the same right to country A nationals. Such an agreement also exists between Portugal and Brazil.

Spain allows foreign residents the right to form associations, partake in demonstrations, etc., but not to participate in administrative organs. Naturalization normally requires 10 years of previous residence. Foreign nationals born in Spain or whose parents are of Spanish origin, and who are married

to a Spanish national need only have resided in the country for 1 year. For nationals of some Spanish-speaking countries, a 2-year residence requirement applies. Other Spanish-speaking nationals, from Latin America, may hold dual citizenship.

In France, there has been recent debate in the national assembly (see *Svenska Dagbladet*, 3 May 2000) concerning granting all permanent foreign residents the right to vote in municipal elections. The proposal was presented by the Green Party, but ran aground with the socialist party in power. According to current Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, the time for this was not ripe. The proposal had also been an item on former President Francois Mitterand's list of reforms, almost 20 years earlier, in 1981. The left-wing majority planned to vote in the proposal in the national assembly, despite the awareness that it would later be stopped by the predominantly right-wing senate. Many members of these conservative parties opposed the proposal citing that the right to vote, nationality and citizenship were inseparable. For foreign nationals to obtain the right to vote in France, would require further approval in the form of a national referendum. "It would seem more natural for an Algerian living in France for 10 years to be able to vote, than a Finn, who had just landed, to do so," commented former Minister of Internal Affairs, Jean-Pierre Chevènement, on EU nationals' right to vote and the lack of that right for nationals of developing countries. Of the approx. 3.6 million foreign nationals living in France, only the 1.2 million who come from other EU countries are able to vote in municipal elections. Until 1981, France's immigrant associations and organizations, in which foreign nationals have much say-so, also had to request special permission from the Ministry of Internal Affairs to engage in their activities.

In Germany, foreign residents have the right to form associations and, in 1967, also gained the right to belong to political parties, though not to participate in the nomination of candidates for public office. Conditions are such that they must be accepted by the party in question and that the majority of a party's members are German nationals. The political activity of foreigners is otherwise restricted by a law from 1965, with reference to maintaining general law and order. Participation in demonstrations, strikes, etc., is thus not permitted. Foreign nationals do, however, have the right to vote and participate in civic councils regarding issues such as housing, social insurance, etc. Most of the larger German cities also have a special *foreigner parliament*. With a number of exceptions, the right to vote is reserved for German natio-

nals. In 1989, a law was passed by Hamburg Parliament granting foreign residents of more than 8 years the right to vote in district assembly elections. The same year, Schleswig-Holstein also decided that nationals of Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland, could vote after a 5-year residence period under the provision that the right be reciprocal for Germany nationals in their countries. This right was later expanded to include all foreign residents. The German Constitutional Court questioned this, however, and with reference to the constitution the right was annulled.

In the German debate, there has been talk of making it easier to obtain citizenship rather than expanding the right to vote for foreign nationals. To be eligible for German naturalization, one must have lived in Germany for 10 years, be able to read and speak German, demonstrate an upstanding lifestyle, and renounce one's earlier citizenship. Relatively few immigrants to Germany have become German citizens.

Many of the foreign nationals living in Germany were born there, and a large majority have lived there for more than 10 years.

In Sweden, Denmark and Norway, all foreign nationals who have legally resided in the country for a minimum of 3 years were granted the right to vote and run in local elections in the late 1970s. Foreign nationals in the Netherlands are given this right after 5 years in the country. In one settlement country outside of Europe, New Zealand, anyone holding a permanent resident permit, regardless of nationality, may vote in all elections, including parliamentary, after 1 year of residency. Foreign nationals are, however, not permitted to run for public office.

In Canada, another country with many immigrants, foreign nationals have the same civil and social rights as Canadian nationals, but generally not the right to vote. The right to participate in political elections is reserved primarily for Canadian nationals and citizens of the Commonwealth, though exceptions do exist, e.g., Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia, where some municipalities grant property owners and heads of foreign businesses the right to vote. It is, however, relatively easy to become a Canadian citizen, and thereby gain full political rights. Anyone born in Canada is automatically a Canadian citizen, and naturalization is also automatic after 3 years of residence in the country.

Since the 1970s, most of the settlement countries have set up some form of council where immigrants and immigrant groups are represented. These councils play a certain part in keeping the decision-makers informed of the needs and wis-

hes of immigrant groups, as well as mediate information to immigrant representatives. This also serves to help increase knowledge of the political system in the settlement country. Advisory functions are however not synonymous with political influence and power, and another limitation may be that some ethnic groups are not represented.

No representation

Most democratic states have thus replaced an absolute ban on political activities with successive extension of civil, social and political rights. Foreign residents, above all those with permanent resident permits, have been granted the freedoms of opinion and expression, the right of publishing, association and demonstration, as well as the right to belong to a political party. They have, on the other hand, not been given the right to vote in political elections. Resettlement countries have continued to exercise the right to forbid certain political activities seen as threats to national security or general law and order.

In the large immigrant groups who have come since the end of WWII, there has thus been large numbers of foreign residents with no political representation in the democratic Western European states. This need not mean, however, that these people have been silent or forced to accept injustices (Hammar 1990). In France, housing conditions have led to open protests by foreign residents with no political rights. In Germany, Turkish laborers have taken the initiative to wild strikes in an effort to improve their working conditions, resulting, among other things, to better representation of foreign workers in German trade unions. Some foreign residents have in reality managed to take advantage of political rights that they do not officially have, and through this gain better representation than could be expected in the political process.

To be or not to be a citizen

Over the past decade, much has happened in the area of the ability to obtain citizenship in a number of Western European countries. Naturalization has been made easier for first generation immigrants and their families through reduced waiting periods, with respect to residency, to qualify (Belgium), through allowing people to retain their previous citizenship (the Netherlands, Italy, Switzerland), or through

giving foreigners, and their children, who have resided in the in country for a long time, political rights (Germany). The ability to hold dual citizenship has been made easier in several countries. Such a proposal also currently lies on the agenda of Swedish Parliament.

At the same time, there are trends in the opposite direction, where proposals to lift restrictions have not been approved by national parliaments. Examples of this are the proposal concerning dual citizenship in Germany, proposals that call for lifting restrictions for children of immigrants in Switzerland, and a new law in The UK that, for the first time ever, defines British citizenship clearly. This law guarantees citizenship according to *ius soli*, the territory principle, and lists a range of classes with varying degrees of citizenship rights. In France, a proposal to grant automatic citizenship to children of parents of foreign nationalities was stopped. Reasons for its rejection stem from the majority questioning the will of immigrants from North Africa to assimilate and identify with the new homeland.

EU and the political rights of immigrants

The right to vote for EU nationals

Membership in the EU has given EU nationals extended rights to vote in the member states. In the Maastricht Treaty, regulations were introduced to the Treaty of Rome concerning EU citizenship for all member state nationals. The purpose of EU citizenship is to facilitate integration of EU nationals in the host country. The Treaty of Amsterdam clarifies that the basis for EU citizenship is citizenship in one of the EU member states.

Article 8.1b of the Treaty of Rome cites a decision concerning the right to vote and run for public office in municipal elections for EU nationals living in another EU country, other than their own. More detailed decisions on this point can be found in the EU Council's Directive (94/80/EEC) of 19 December 1994. The aim is to ensure that all EU nationals, regardless of whether they are nationals of the EU country in which they reside, are able to exercise their right to vote and run for municipal office in the host country on equal terms. This regulation is an example of the application of the principle of equality between and equal treatment of the nationals of one member state and nationals of the other member states.

The directive was introduced into Swedish law in an amendment to the Elections Act (prop. 1996/97:70, bet. 1996/97:KU16, rskr. 1996/97:177) which took effect 1 June 1997. The change means that non-Swedish EU member state nationals residing in Sweden who meet the requirements have the right to vote and run for public office at the municipal and county level. The amended Elections Act applies these same rules to nationals of Iceland and Norway. For other foreign nationals residing in Sweden, the Government decided, with support of Parliament, that the 3-year rule would remain.

EU Parliament's demand to extend the right to vote

The European Parliament, which lacks formal administrative power and is only able to make recommendations to the member states, repeats in its Annual Report on respect for human rights within the union in the 1990s, that EU members should make the necessary adjustments to legislation, as soon as possible, and pursuant to the Council's convention of 1992, to allow all non-EU nationals, who have lived in the EU for more than 5 years, the right to vote and run for office in both municipal elections and EU parliamentary elections. Parliament regrets that all member states have not yet incorporated this directive (94/80/EEC) into their legislation. The Directive acknowledges the right to vote and run for municipal office, stressing the importance of suffrage with respect to social integration of foreign residents, and encourages member states to take the necessary measures as quickly as possible. However, few member states have complied with this recommendation.

Charter regarding human rights

The EU Commission, which has considerably more power than EU Parliament, has taken steps to augment the political rights of immigrant populations within the EU. The long discussed convention concerning the freedom of third country nationals to move and reside within the EU has been rescinded.

Discussion has instead centered on whether the EU should have its own Charter on Human Rights. The current proposal speaks mainly of citizen rights, but also of the rights of EU's new minorities. It is somewhat unclear whom this refers to, whether it is larger immigrant groups or migrant minorities as expressed in the minority convention. In the motivation for the charter, it reads, among other things, that "Development toward a common policy for immigration and asylum speaks for the establishing of new legal minorities within the EU."

EU Parliament is of the opinion that the charter should, in principle, apply to everyone living in EU countries. Exception is made for certain rights, e.g., political rights, the right to freedom of movement, a passport and diplomatic protection, which they would like to reserve for nationals of the member states. This would then be regulated in a special chapter of the charter. There is also talk of the charter play-

ing an important part in special categories of rights for EU nationals and foreign nationals residing in the EU.

When EU Parliament discusses whom the charter will apply to, individual persons or groups who may have rights are named. Here, there is mention of three broad sets of rights: general application of human rights such as those regulated by international law; basic rights applicable to anyone who falls under the jurisdiction of the EU courts; and citizen rights for EU nationals only. The latter would appear to have to do with social rights, at present strongly associated with employment, i.e., reserved for workers.

Further, it is said that social rights can only be an issue for the member states and not for the EU.

A deciding issue has been that of what legal force an EU charter would have. The Charter of Fundamental Rights was concluded by EU parliamentarians, government representatives and national parliamentary members, in a separate charter in fall 2000. Here, it was decided that it would not be legally binding but remain instead a declaration of principle, a standpoint presented by, among others, Swedish Government.

Low voter participation by foreign nationals

Large differences between immigrant groups

In general, foreign nationals have taken advantage of the right to vote in local elections to a very limited degree (Hammar 1990). In Sweden, participation has fallen from 60 percent in 1976, the first year foreign residents could vote in municipal elections, to a mere 35 percent participation in municipal elections of 1998. In 1978 in Denmark, where other Nordic nationals were the only foreign residents with the right to vote, voter participation was 60 percent in 1978. For the population as a whole, it was 73 percent that year. In the local elections of 1981, when the right to vote was extended also to other foreign nationals, voter participation of foreign residents was 61 percent. In Norway, where foreign nationals had also been granted the right to vote in local elections in the late 1970s, foreign voter participation hovers at about half of that of Norwegians. In the elections of 1983, foreign voter participation totalled 43 percent, compared to 79 percent of Norwegian nationals.

The Netherlands granted foreign residents of more than 5 years the right to vote in local elections in 1986. In Rotterdam and Amsterdam, however, foreign nationals had had the right to vote in neighborhood councils since the early 1980s. Participation in these elections was very low, ranging from 12-20 percent. In the first real "immigrant election" in 1986, participation was also relatively low, showing an average of 40 percent. It was, however, considerably higher in urban centers, at approx. 70 percent (Rath/Layton-Henry 1990).

A comparison showed differences in participation depending on nationality group, e.g., Turkish nationals participated to a greater degree than Moroccans, 70 percent versus 35 percent, respectively. One of the reasons for the low participation levels of the latter group, may have been that the Moroccan king of that time, Hassan II, had urged his subjects living abroad not to vote. In the following elections, in 1990, voter participation averaged 50 percent for Turks, 30

percent for Moroccans (King Hassan did not involve himself in this election), and 25 percent for Surinamese. In 1990, voter participation also fell among native Dutch nationals – to just over 60 percent. Participation for Dutch nationals from the Antilles, Molucca Islands and Surinam was also below average. The exception was in The Hague in 1982, when the voter participation of these groups exceeded that of citizens of Dutch origin due to an intensive campaign aimed at getting people to vote for ethnic candidates.

Voter participation in The UK is hard to compare to the above countries in that the British use majority elections, and legal voters of foreign descent have often been naturalized and are now British nationals (Hammar 1990). In the 1960s, when study of this area first began, research showed a very low participation of various ethnic groups, some as low as 13 percent (Rath 1990). Since then, participation has increased, however, especially for immigrants from the Asian countries, whose participation is at times lower and at times higher than citizens of British origin. Immigrants from the West Indies, however, participate to a lesser degree than immigrants from Asia or native British nationals.

In the 1960s, approximately half of the immigrants from Commonwealth countries in The UK did not register to vote, registration not being automatic as it is here in the Nordic countries. In 1983, however, the situation was a different one, and 79 percent of Asian and 76 percent of Afro-Arabic immigrants registered to vote, which can be compared to an overall average of 81 percent. The actual voter participation of these registered voters varied greatly according to electoral district, reflecting the degree of competition between candidates. Many districts were seen as an easy win for a particular party, which may have led to lower participation. On the other hand, the fact that an increased number of candidates were from minority groups may have contributed to increased voter participation.

Thus, fairly low voter participation appears more the rule than the exception, with respect to the expanded right to vote for foreign nationals in local elections.

The outcome in voter participation by foreign nationals in the Nordic countries has been significantly below the average for all legal voters (Hammar 1990). In Sweden, participation in 1976 was 30 percent below the overall average, and in 1985 – 40 percent below the average. The corresponding figures for Denmark were: in 1981 – 12 percent, and in 1985 – 17 percent below the average. In Norway, voter participation of foreign nationals was 27 percent below the average in 1983. So, despite both Sweden and Denmark having voter

participation levels of about 60 percent in the first elections, this was a bigger feat in Denmark where total legal voter participation averaged 73 percent, than in Sweden where the overall average was 90 percent.

One explanation for the Danish results, may be found in the election system itself. Denmark uses a personal election system, which can raise the number of foreign nationals who vote. In Sweden, elections to municipal and federal government are held on the same day. Denmark and Norway have separate election days, which tends to reduce voter participation in municipal elections to approx. 75 percent, where Swedish averages are closer to 90 percent.

Election system affects participation

Danish researcher Lise Togeby also shows that immigrants in Denmark vote more than in other countries where they have local voting rights (Togeby, 1999). Togeby's explanation is that this is connected to the Danish personal election system. The system appears to encourage a collective mobilization that is lacking in Sweden. For certain ethnic groups in some Danish cities, this mobilization has led to voter participation figures exceeding that of native Danes.

Because parliamentary and municipal elections are on separate days in Denmark, more issues find their way onto the local agenda than in most other countries. The Danish election system also enables you to actually elect a candidate that is a long way down on a party's list, without a sweeping number of votes. In comparison to other systems, e.g., that in Sweden, the Danish political structure is thus also more open to new groups.

The largest immigrant group in Denmark is the Turkish group. Turkish immigrants began coming to Denmark to work as early as the 1960s. Togeby compared the voter participation of Turkish and Lebanese immigrants in Århus and Copenhagen, where large groups of these immigrants live. In Århus, Turkish immigrants live in a more concentrated area, and are also better organized as a group, than in Copenhagen. The Turkish group has grown above all through immigration for family reasons. Most immigrants come from rural areas of central Turkey and their settlement is concentrated to a few large metropolitan areas, most of which are located in southwestern Copenhagen. In comparison with other immigrant groups, the Turkish group has a higher rate of employment and higher degree of participation in trade unions. This

applies to Turkish women as well. However, few Turks have chosen to seek Danish citizenship.

Lebanese immigration to Denmark came later, and most of the immigrants came as refugees in the 1980s. The Lebanese group also includes a large number of stateless Palestinians. The largest concentrations of Lebanese immigrants are found in Århus, Copenhagen and Odense. In Århus, 75 percent of these people live in the Gellerup area. Employment rates among the Lebanese are relatively low, especially for the women. A greater number of Lebanese immigrants have, however, applied for Danish citizenship.

The two groups display a number of similarities, says Tøgeby: both come from the Middle East, have darker complexions than most Danes, are of the Islamic faith, and live by a gender role system that differs significantly from that of the Danish norm. The preconditions for collective mobilization are likely better for the Turks than for the Lebanese, and better for groups living in Århus than groups in Copenhagen, due to a stronger social network in the Turkish group. The Turks immigrated to Denmark voluntarily, live in concentrated numbers in selected metropolitan areas and organize themselves to a larger degree than do the Lebanese.

When Tøgeby looked at other immigrant nationalities in Denmark, she found that the level of voter participation for Pakistani immigrants in Copenhagen equalled that of native Copenhageners, and that Pakistani and Turkish voter participation in Århus equalled that of native Århus-dwellers. In comparison, she mentions that participation of legal voters of Turkish origin in 1998 elections in Sweden, totalled only 39 percent. Even other groups in Copenhagen, from Ghana, Algeria, Brazil and Iraq, as well as groups from Somalia, Lebanon and Vietnam in Århus, demonstrated signs of mobilization. Why this mobilization of groups is seen in Copenhagen is unclear. In Århus, however, Tøgeby believes that one explanation is tied to the relative size of the group and their concentrated living patterns. In Copenhagen, the groups are more widely dispersed.

The lowest voter participation by Lebanese groups was found in Copenhagen among those who had not become Danish citizens, and the highest by those in Århus who lived in the most concentrated area. The explanation closest at hand is that this is due to a collective mobilization of the group in Århus.

With respect to the Turks, the most interesting finding was that young women showed higher voter participation than young men, at the same time as older women participated to a lesser degree. Turkish participation patterns resembled

in fact that of native Danes. The highest participation was found among Turkish immigrants in Århus who had lived there for many years and who lived in areas with large numbers of Turks. The lowest participation levels were found among Turks living in areas of Copenhagen with few immigrants, who had lived there only a short time, and who, in addition, had retained Turkish citizenship.

Thus concentrated living conditions appear to have been important for the Turkish immigrants in Copenhagen and Århus, while nationality was only a prominent factor in Copenhagen. The lack of relation between voter participation and nationality, for both Lebanese and Turkish immigrants in Århus, is of particular interest when comparing Swedish and Norwegian studies that clearly show a clear link between immigrants who have obtained citizenship and voter participation – naturalized immigrants showing significantly higher participation than their “unnaturalized” counterparts.

It was thus the Turks whose voter participation was most surprising, and there especially that of the younger women. Turkish immigrants with the highest voter participation were women with gainful employment, Danish citizenship, good Danish language skills, and who were able to formulate complaints in cases where they felt they had been mistreated. Thus for Turkish women, greater cultural integration in Danish society leads to higher voter participation. This did not apply to the men, however, where the situation was more the reverse. Concentrated living conditions and membership in ethnic organizations played a role in the participation of both men and women. While greater proficiency in Danish increased a woman’s voter participation, it meant a slight decrease for that of men. The lowest noted participation levels were seen in young men and women living in areas with few immigrants and whose Danish language skills were poor. The highest levels were found among middle-aged persons living in areas with a high concentration of Turks, regardless of their proficiency in Danish, and women in the same areas with good skills in Danish.

The conclusion drawn is that, for the Turkish group, collective mobilization works for both men and women, but that women are also influenced by their cultural integration in Danish society. Tøgeby adds, in closing, that the voter participation of Turkish women shows clear signs of being related to the emancipation of individual women, while collective mobilization is of greater importance in the participation of men

Collective mobilization has been found to be significantly

greater for Turkish than for Lebanese immigrants, even if there are also obvious signs of mobilization in the Lebanese groups in Århus. Further, collective mobilization of the Turkish groups of Århus is stronger than that in Copenhagen, and there are few indications of mobilization based on the individual integration of Turkish men – in contrast to Turkish women.

There is no doubt that the relatively higher voter participation of certain ethnic minorities in some cities in Denmark is a result of collective mobilization. The Danish election system is structured in such a way that it favors collective mobilization. And a limited number of votes is often sufficient to elect someone who is far down on a party's list of candidates. In the 1993 election in Århus, e.g., the last candidate got in with just over 400 votes. The large minority groups seem to have understood this. The unique situations of these groups are also of importance, and it appears that mobilization has occurred, above all, among the older Turkish and Pakistani groups of migrant workers, while it is less common among older refugee groups. Perhaps the explanation lies in the fact that these groups are generally too small or too widely dispersed.

Mobilization in immigrant-dense areas

Togeby is surprised to find that concentration to certain metropolitan areas has a seemingly positive effect on voter participation. The explanation here likely lies in the existence of strong social networks that contribute to this mobilization. This is in agreement with our knowledge of integration and mobilization of immigrant groups in the US, but contradicts findings in Sweden where the data suggests that voter participation decreases with more concentrated living patterns, which is often attributed to a lack of contact with Sweden's majority society.

The biggest difference between Denmark and Sweden is that the voter participation for a number of immigrant groups in Denmark is just as high as for native Danes, while in Sweden, voter participation of immigrant groups is lower across the board. It is also worth noting that nationality does not appear to play a significant role in voter participation in Denmark. The reason for this appears to be that, in Sweden, mobilization is based primarily on individual resources, while mobilization in Denmark is a collective phenomenon, the latter having been facilitated by a dense immigrant population in some areas. Togeby believes the latter may have an

influence in both directions, as her comparison of Sweden and Denmark shows. The reason for this may be that in the areas of concentration in Sweden, are shared by over 100 ethnic groups who have immigrated relatively recently. In Denmark, conditions are more often such that one ethnic group predominates, in the case of the Turks – a group that has lived in the country for a long time.

Obstacles to participation

Sweden's traditionally high voter participation

According to many sources, voter participation dropped in the 1998 elections. A decline in participation of over 5 percentage points in federal- and municipal elections was unusually large in relation to figures for participation in Sweden's democratic institutions since the 1970s. At that time, voter participation was up over 90 percent – very high for a country where voting is not mandatory. The decline has occurred in stages, from the late 1980s, when numbers fell by 4 percentage points, to the 1998 elections where they further sank by 5–6 percentage points. This means that 1,228,541 legal voters of Swedish nationality did not vote in the federal election. For naturalized Swedish citizens, the decrease in voter participation was even greater, falling to 67 percent, 13 percentage points lower than in the 1994 election.

Some researchers suggest that this is a break in trends and a sign that democracy's institutions are faltering. Others ask instead why voter participation in Sweden was so high in the 1960s and 1970s compared to other Western democracies.

As shown by Folke Johansson in his study, the fall in voter participation among foreign nationals was, in percentage points, the same as for Swedish nationals in the federal- or municipal elections (*Excluded from Democracy?* Part 2). If we look instead at the relative reduction of active voters, it was closer to twice as high. While approx. 1 in 16 voters who participated in the 1994 federal election failed to vote in 1998, 1 in 8 who voted in the 1994 municipal elections did not vote in 1998, with the reservation, of course, that the populations vary – in some groups considerably – and that the people who voted in 1994 are not necessarily the exact same voters as in 1998.

Some of the foreign nationals who voted in the 1994 elections may have become Swedish nationals in 1998. Others may have left the country, while the category of foreign nationals was replenished by new immigrants. Thus, as groups, foreign nationals are more likely to vary over time than Swedish nationals. Because we can assume that political parti-

icipation varies according to how long one has been in the country, we can also assume that the voter participation of foreign nationals will always be less than that of Swedish nationals.

Since the 1970s, when total participation was over 90 percent, as shown by Johansson, an average of 1 in 9 Swedish nationals who voted in the 1976 federal election no longer participate, while almost 1 of every 2 foreign nationals no longer vote. The downward trend is unambiguous when it come to foreign nationals with the right to vote, while it varies somewhat for federal elections and Swedish nationals' participation in municipal elections. The decline in voter participation currently noted at the municipal level is largely due to the lower participation of foreign nationals, concludes Johansson.

Many people in disadvantaged areas don't vote

As early as 1988, an urban regeneration project (*Storstadsutredningen*, Big City Report) observed marked differences between voter participation in different areas of Sweden's large cities, where low participation was linked to social and economic disadvantage. When the figures for voter participation in the 1998 elections were presented, similar relations could be seen, with visibly lower voter participation in these disadvantaged metropolitan areas.

In Rinkeby in Stockholm, 35.1 percent of all foreign nationals voted in the 1998 municipal election, compared to 61 percent of Swedish nationals living in the same area. In some electoral districts in Skärholmen, Husby and Rågsved, participation levels were as low as 26–33 percent for foreign nationals, compared to 60–70 percent for Swedish nationals (National Integration Office 1998). In Bergsjön and Gunnared electoral districts in Göteborg, voter participation by foreign nationals totalled 19.8 and 23.8 percent, respectively, a decrease for both areas of over 10 percentage points compared to the previous election (Jonsson, Christer, National Integration Office 1999).

In our study, the case study of Örebro shows a clear relation between immigrant-dense disadvantaged areas and low voter participation. The immigrant populations are, however, not exceptionally high, with the greatest densities of foreign- or foreign-born voters never exceeding one quarter of the overall population. The proportion of foreign nationals is between 10–14 percent, for foreign-born citizens it is at

most 24 percent. The large majority of people living in these areas, are thus native-born Swedes.

In Örebro, voter participation by foreign nationals was 44.3 percent in 1994, compared to the 40 percent nationwide average, and fell in the 1998 municipal election to 32.5 percent, i.e., below the national average of 35 percent.

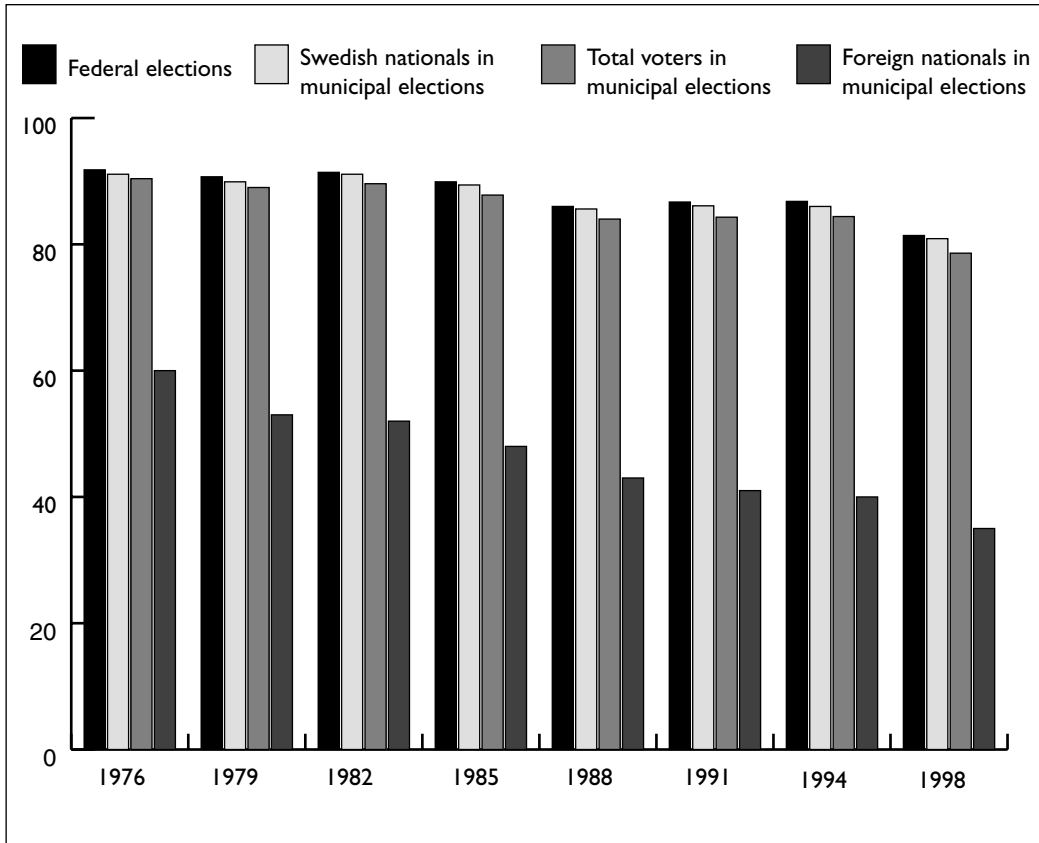
Large differences between immigrant groups

Voter participation of foreign nationals has, however, dropped radically from 60 percent in 1976, the first year foreign residents could vote in municipal and county elections, to 35 percent in the municipal elections of 1998. A study conducted by Statistics Sweden on voter participation of foreign nationals in 1998 municipal elections shows that there are large variations with respect to nationality.

Just over 342,000 foreign nationals had the right to vote in the 1998 municipal elections. This figure constitutes 5 percent of the total overall number of legal voters. A study base of 27,000 persons was used in the Statistics Sweden survey, but despite the size of the sample, it is still insufficient to account for all nationalities represented in the country separately.

The overall percentage of legal voters who participated in the 1998 municipal elections was 78.6 percent – which can be compared to a voter participation of foreign nationals of 35 percent. Nationals of Germany and Chile showed the highest participation levels, at 49 and 47 percent, respectively, while nationals of the former Yugoslavia showed extremely low participation at 19 percent. Other groups with low participation levels included Iraqi and Polish nationals, 26 percent and 27 percent, respectively.

The different immigrant groups thus displayed large differences in voter participation, and all of the groups show a decline from the first elections in 1976 to the 1998 elections. This is a decline that also corresponds with the voting behavior of Swedish nationals. However, in some groups, the downtrend in participation is much greater. For example, British nationals in Sweden, whose participation was relatively high in 1976, show a participation decrease of almost one half. It is nevertheless Yugoslavian nationals who show the steepest drop, from 66 percent in 1976 to 19 percent in 1998.



Women vote more

In its voter survey, Statistics Sweden had access to a number of other background variables besides nationality, including: gender, age, marital status and income. Since the right to vote was extended to foreign nationals, women have demonstrated higher voter participation than men. This has risen from only a couple of percent in 1976, to a difference of about 5 percent in the last elections. Even among Swedish nationals, voter participation is higher for women than men, though the differences here are less. Women from Finland, Poland and Turkey showed approx. 10 percent higher voter participation than the men from these countries. For the groups with the lowest participation levels, i.e., the former Yugoslavia, Iraq and Iran, a similar difference between the sexes did not exist, nor was it found for immigrants from Chile and Germany whose participation levels are relatively high.

As with Swedish nationals, slightly more women in the

younger age groups voted, and men voted more as they got older. The percentage of foreign women voters was highest between the ages of 50-60 years. Married voters demonstrate a generally higher participation than singles, both foreign- and Swedish nationals, with men showing the greatest variation in this respect. For both foreign- and Swedish nationals, people with higher incomes also show higher voter participation. Foreign nationals in the income class of “200 000 SEK or more” showed a voter participation of 48 percent.

Statistics Sweden was also able to identify regional differences in their study. The highest participation levels for foreign nationals were found in northern Sweden, in Norrbotten County, where close to 40 percent voted in the elections. Stockholm County also showed relatively high participation, while voter participation levels in the counties of Blekinge, Gävleborg and Västernorrland were below 30 percent.

Why the downward trend in voter participation?

Why is it then that foreign nationals are not exercising their right to vote in municipal elections? Since we have also witnessed falling numbers for Swedish voters, let us start there. What is it that lies behind the general decline in voter participation?

Social and political exclusion

Demokratiutredningen (The Commission for Democracy) was given, in the form of a supplementary directive following the elections of 1998 (Dir. 1998:100), the task of trying to map out why voter participation was falling. In an official report (*Valdeltagande i förändring*, Trends in voter participation, SOU 1999:132), Martin Bennulf and Per Hedberg seek answers to whether the falling voter participation is a reflection of a hollowing out of Swedish democracy, and whether the decline is occurring at the same rate across social groups or if the marked decline is restricted to certain groups of the population.

Among other things, Bennulf and Hedberg make reference to a recent analysis of voter participation in 37 countries (Franklin 1996). In this study, it was found that factors that affected voter participation could be the individual's social resources and political involvement, as well as, more often,

Voter participation (in percent) for foreign nationals in municipal elections 1976–1998. By country of citizenship.

	-76	-79	-82	-85	-88	-91	-94	-98
Bosn.-H.	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	31
Chile	–	–	–	77	70	65	59	47
Denmark	57	46	49	46	41	42	45	38
Finland	56	51	49	45	39	35	40	35
Irak	–	–	–	–	–	–	42	26
Iran	–	–	–	38	39	41	41	30
Ex Yugosl.	66	56	52	45	38	35	27	19
Norway	59	54	52	49	45	46	42	39
Poland	64	59	54	47	40	36	32	27
The UK	71	57	55	54	50	48	48	39
Turkey	63	62	61	54	54	51	47	39
Germany	67	64	61	59	52	51	51	49
USA	45	45	47	45	44	43	40	38
Overall total	60	53	52	48	43	41	40	35

Source: Statistics Sweden 1999

factors related to cultural differences between the countries, and differences in political- and election systems. For example, the fact that someone was Swedish or American, better explained the differences between these nations' voter participation, than if a person was interested in politics or not.

As far as general factors that affected voter participation go, such as election systems, mandatory voting, the ability to vote by post, etc., Sweden already has very favorable conditions. The decline in voter participation can thus hardly be explained by these factors – though they do contribute to the continued, relatively high, voter participation.

Changes in the election system introduced between 1994 and 1998, to the current combined form of personal-party elections and a mandate period that has been lengthened from 3 to 4 years, could just as easily cause a rise in voter participation as lower it, claim Bennulf and Hedberg. The reasons underlying the decline in participation must therefore be sought elsewhere – in the parties, in the election procedures or in the voters themselves.

Here, research has noted that the parties' hold on voters has slackened. Increasing numbers of voters change parties and more and more are making their decision at the last minute. Election campaigns have therefore increased in importance. The lack of confidence in political parties and politicians has escalated and can be one explanation for the falling

interest. Campaign efforts could therefore act to compensate for the loss of identification with a party and heightened distrust. According to many, however, the election campaign of 1998 held relatively little interest for voters. The question of who would form government was practically predetermined and it was difficult to find any issues that really distinguished the parties. Thus, there was little compensation to be found in the campaigning here. But the signs pointing toward a downward trend in voter participation have been around for a long time, and we should perhaps instead be asking ourselves why the participation of earlier decades was so high.

Most of the research on Western democracies cited earlier suggests that social factors play a part in voter participation. People who find themselves in less favorable social positions, tend to vote less than people in better positions. The question that Bennulf and Hedberg ask is whether the social basis for voter participation has changed. Is voter participation falling at the same rate across all social groups – or are their differences between the groups?

Statistical analysis shows that lower participation is seen in all voter groups, when considering a number of individual-bound factors. This is true of both genders, regardless of where the voters live, in both married and unmarried voters, and, in general, across all age groups. The downturn in voter participation is more accentuated in some social groups than others, and especially in first-time voters, people who live in smaller towns and cities, and among unmarried or divorced voters.

When we look at socioeconomic background, however, the picture becomes clearer.

Democratic theorists frequently claim that the elected body not only represents voters when it comes to opinions, but also in a social sense. Experience from all walks of society should be represented. In Sweden, the working class has always voted less than the middle class, say Bennulf and Hedberg. In the record-setting elections of 1976, 94.2 percent of the middle class and 89.6 percent of the working class voted. In 1988, this difference in voter participation of 4.6 percentage points climbed to 9.6. In the elections of 1998, it grew again, with participation of the middle class at 87.6 percent and the working class at 75.5 percent.

An especially big downswing was seen in the participation of unemployed persons, of whom only 60.3 percent voted. Thus two out of every five unemployed failed to partake of the democratic process. Voter participation of people with high incomes, on the other hand, fell by only 1 percentage

point, though a decline in groups with higher education was also witnessed. The relation between social position and voter participation, however, grew stronger between the 1994 and 1998 elections. To researchers, this indicates that voter participation can be viewed as a question of class – the working class votes less than the middle class – and the difference between the two classes in the last elections was bigger than ever.

The statistics show a clear relation between social resources and voter participation, with resource-poor voters staying away from the polls. This is not an unexpected pattern when you compare other countries. The question is why Sweden was different earlier. Why did people with fewer resources earlier show such high voter participation? Here, the researchers conclude that there used to be a well-established societal norm of participating in elections, a norm that also caught on in the resource-poor group. The assumption is that this had changed dramatically by 1998. Researchers believe there are several factors to indicate that what we are now seeing is a dissolution of norms. In the 1998 elections, a relation between social and political exclusion could also be observed, which had not been seen earlier. Bennulf and Hedberg's prognosis is that voter participation could very well continue to fall, and that this must be seen as a serious problem for democracy. Why the decline in the voter participation is so great in this socially and politically excluded group, however, is not explained, i.e., whether failure to go to the polls is an active protest against current politics or whether it is a sign of the non-voters' resignedness to an existence they believe they have no chance of influencing.

From outside and exclusion

This is something Hanna Grahn Strömbom attempts to take up in her investigation of how immigrants (here: *people not born in Sweden*) and native Swedes motivate their not voting (Grahn Strömbom 2000). To do this, Grahn Strömbom interviewed a number of legal voters, immigrants and native Swedes, who did not vote. Studies on the reasons for people not voting are relatively rare, and explanations of low voter participation often stop at the statistical relations as seen above – citing merely the lack of resources, socioeconomic status, etc. How non-voters themselves explain their choice is something we know very little about.

One of the questions Grahn Strömbom poses is whether the registered immigrant voters' reasons for not voting differ

from reasons given by native Swedes. Her interviews show big differences in the explanations given by immigrants and native Swedes for why they did not vote. The former cite a number of immigration-related reasons that have given rise to a lack of motivation and even an active aversion to voting. Factors cited include the current political situation, previous negative experience with politics, or simply not “feeling” Swedish. Swedish politics are further viewed as dealing with “trivial” issues, and non-voters can also be dissatisfied with how Swedish politicians treat issues concerning their homeland.

Factors relating to immigration can also be found outside the political sphere. The respondent can have felt left out of Swedish society, or experienced discrimination in the labor market, which affected their willingness to participate in elections.

The experience of having immigrated and being an immigrant in Swedish society can also serve to reinforce other reasoning, but not to the extent that immigration-related reasons take over, says Grahn Strömbom. The persons interviewed gave almost as many non-immigration-related reasons for not voting as the native Swedes she interviewed.

Both immigrants and native Swedish non-voters cited reasons such as a disinterest in politics, the parties being too similar, not identifying with any political party, a distrust of politicians, politicians’ abuse of power, or disappointment in the cutbacks made to the public sector, etc. That is, reasons associated with how they evaluate the current political scene.

Of the reasons given for not voting, there were five reasons given by immigrant respondents that did not appear in the responses of native Swedes. These were: lack of time, a lack of pressure from their surroundings, a lack of sufficient knowledge on politics, that their vote would not change things, and that society is too easy on criminals. There are also a number of reasons given by native Swedes that do not appear in the answers of the immigrants, including: a disinterest due to upbringing, a non-dependency on politics, the complexity of politics, a hollowing-out of democracy, their holding different political visions, and that politics create problems. Two of the motivations from the different groups, insufficient knowledge on politics and complexity of politics, are related. Both indicate the difficulties of orienting oneself in the world of politics.

The conclusion drawn by Grahn Strömbom is that there is justification for speaking of an *immigrant-specific* perspective. There are experiences immigrants bring with them to

Sweden from other political systems, and ties they have to the country of origin. One's propensity to vote can also be affected by how "Swedish" one feels. While this may be tied to whether or not one plans to return to the homeland, it can also stem from being excluded from Swedish society.

The immigrant perspective is therefore, despite certain similarities between the groups, more complex than that of the native Swedes. Motivations common to both groups are mainly founded in the value one assigns politics, while the immigrant perspective encompasses many more angles than that of the native Swedish perspective. Grahn Strömbom speaks here of a perspective that begins on the outside and moves toward exclusion. She believes that to classify, as many election researchers have done up until now, the state of being an immigrant (immigrantship) or belonging to an ethnic minority as one of the low-status factors that leads to non-participation due to a lack of individual resources, is not enough. Access to resources is important, as her interviews show, but the factor of the immigrant's living conditions in Swedish society must also be considered.

Influential factors can thus be poor integration, due in part to the immigrant's own outlook, and in part to exclusion mechanisms and discrimination in Swedish society. Previous experience can clearly also play a significant role, as well as the difficulty of acquiring information about Swedish politics etc. due to insufficient skills in Swedish.

What

Do the explanations given by researchers for the general decline in voter participation hold any relevance in explaining low voter participation by immigrant voters? Grahn Strömbom's survey suggests that they do, despite the fact that many of the explanations are founded on changes in groups or individuals assumed to be well-versed in the Swedish political system. Even if someone has been registered in Sweden for 3 years, the residency requirement to vote in local elections, it is not certain that this person has had the chance to become acquainted with the Swedish political system. The earlier widespread conception in Sweden, of it being a person's civic duty to vote in elections, may be a completely alien concept to recently arrived immigrants bearing with them experience of entirely different political systems.

Lack of involvement?

Folke Johansson asks whether, in this situation, individual characteristics play an especially large part in political involvement (*Utanför demokratin, del 2: Varför röstar inte invandrarna? Excluded from Democracy? Part 2, Why don't immigrants vote?*), and whether foreign nationals differ from Swedish nationals in this respect. He also contemplates whether foreign nationals are interested in the municipal election itself. On the basis of existing data, he also tries to elicit whether social environment has a key role in voter participation – whether a connection can be demonstrated between social environment and political activity.

Johansson bases his investigation on studies conducted in 1979, 1991 and 1998. He compares foreign nationals with Swedish nationals to find whether the propensity to participate in politics has any relation to individual factors such as such as age, gender or education, etc. He also looks at interest in politics in general, knowledge about politics, above all municipal politics, confidence in municipal actors and the political system as a whole, political activity, and whether social environment has any effect on this political activity.

Less interested

Using the average Swedish municipality as a starting point, Johansson shows that foreign nationals are generally less interested in politics than their Swedish counterparts. This could be explained to some degree by new immigrants having less interest, something it has not been possible to look at here. In addition to interest, knowledge about politics may also be a precondition for political participation. Here, the picture is more diffuse. Approx. the same percentage of both groups see themselves as having a clear picture of party politics. The same number of people state familiarity with some municipal issue. Familiarity with the political candidates is, however, not as equally distributed. In the 1991 and 1998 studies in particular, the numbers for this indicate significantly higher figures for Swedish- than for foreign nationals.

Foreign nationals display consistently less interest than Swedish nationals in both federal- and municipal politics. They are, however, more interested than Swedish nationals in political happenings outside of Sweden. It has not been possible to establish whether this interest is synonymous with interest in the political goings-on in the homeland, but is highly likely. The difference in political interest of foreign- versus Swedish nationals increases when considering federal politics, but remains largely unchanged for municipal politics. At the same time, the voter participation of foreign nationals in municipal elections is declining rapidly.

A shift in confidence

From 1991 to 1998, confidence in municipal politicians and civil servants sank significantly more for foreign nationals than for Swedish nationals. In this group, there is also a greater propensity to become involved in extra-parliamentary manifestations in an attempt to be heard. At the same time, the confidence of foreign nationals in the political system in general is about the same (i.e., limited) or greater than that of Swedish nationals. Seemingly contradictory, this can perhaps be interpreted as people viewing the Swedish system as one that works in principle, yet they still feel unable to make themselves heard to the extent they would like.

Political activity related to attempts to influence municipal decisions has fallen somewhat for Swedish nationals, and perhaps even more for foreign nationals from 1991 to 1998. Johansson finds the same pattern with respect to whether or not a person engages in discussion of municipal politics

and whether a person supports a particular party. What does seem to get foreign nationals to the polls is, above all, this support of a political party. Political parties are thus central in the political activity of foreign nationals. The overall decline in party membership and their followers has thus likely had great significance for voter participation – not least in this group. For Swedish nationals, other factors also play a part.

A study of voters in Stockholm showed that, among Swedish nationals, an interest in politics in general and the factor of supporting a particular party, not surprisingly, contributed to voter participation. For the foreign nationals in the study, the voter participation of those who supported a political party was also considerably higher.

The importance of environment

What role does environment play? And are there differences between nationality groups with respect to political activity? Johansson's study showed that women voted more than men, a higher family income was linked to higher voter participation, and that immigrants from Chile and Germany, in particular, had relatively high participation levels, while those from Yugoslavia, Finland and Poland voted less, a general pattern also seen in a special study done by Statistics Sweden (SCB 1999). There is a relation between voting and the number of years one has lived in Sweden, which is strengthened when the variable of income is added. That is, often the longer someone has been in Sweden, the higher their income, which in turn is the best indicator for a person's propensity to vote in elections. The role of environment shows up in that the higher the average income of a person's immediate environment, the higher the voting rate. The effect here is small, however, and applies only to areas outside large urban centers. For the large urban regions, there was a positive link between the average income of an area and voter participation only in Göteborg. Johansson points out here that Göteborg is more socially segregated than Sweden's other large cities.

The gap widens

Johansson's conclusion is that the picture, with respect to immigrants' political activity and attitudes towards politics, is not a pretty one. A shrinking number of immigrants view themselves as having a clear idea of what the parties stand for, few are familiar with the candidates running in the elec-

tions, they are critical of existing municipal service, they have little faith in political actors, they are doubtful to whether it matters what party is in power, and they have a more positive attitude than Swedish nationals towards extra-parliamentary actions. However, these changes are not unique to foreign nationals. Similar trends can be seen among Swedish nationals as well.

Johansson's explanation to the decline in voter participation is in line with that of a number of other researchers – that it can be linked to a change in the norm, i.e., that increasingly fewer people today share the perception that is one's civic duty to vote. The problem is that immigrants to the country have to only a marginal degree had time to adopt this norm, meaning that a weakening of it yields a greater effect.

Political content

In addition, all voters have more difficulty obtaining a clear picture of the political alternatives, likely due to election campaigns having become less concerned with the issues at hand. Another point, that Johansson does not mention, is that of political content. Perhaps the political issues are uninteresting. They rarely have to do with one's day-to-day life, and there may seem little difference between the parties. Long and sometimes arduous study may be necessary to enable one to discern subtle differences in viewpoints. We will return to this later. In elections where campaigns no longer spur much interest, familiarity with party candidates could serve as a counterbalance, suggests Johansson, especially with our introduction of a form of personal election. But voter familiarity with the candidates can hardly be said to be growing. More often the opposite is true – especially for foreign nationals. What does offer some balance here, nevertheless, is a certain interest in local issues and in the outcome of elections.

Unfamiliar voting norm

Another way to offset low voter participation may be by supporting a particular political party. This increases one's propensity to become politically active. When the number of party supporters drops, so does the rate of voter participation. The effects of this can be especially great in a group such as immigrants who have not assimilated the voting norm to the same degree. For immigrants, the voting norm

has neither been internalized by way of experience nor by education – a factor Johansson identifies as distinguishing them from other groups of legal voters.

Higher social status, on the other hand, contributes to voting – perhaps more so among foreign nationals than Swedish nationals, which can be observed in the positive effect family income has on voter participation. The factor that best promotes voting, however, appears to be association with a political party.

Social environment, on the other hand, only affects the voter participation of foreign nationals in certain cases, Johansson concludes.

Less resources?

The tendency has been for immigrants to become an increasingly passive group in politics in Swedish democracy. The starting point used in the study by Per Adman and Per Strömblad (*Utänför demokratin, del 3: Resurser för politisk integration Excluded from Democracy? Part 3, Resources for political integration*) is that immigrants are not a homogeneous group. Some people have immigrated from neighboring countries and lived in Sweden for several decades. Others come from further away and have only lived here a short number of years. Some live in disadvantaged areas; others live in areas with more resources. One of the questions Adman and Strömblad ask is whether it is in fact only people from other parts of the world who find themselves outside of politics, or whether it is new immigrants or those who live in areas characterized by unemployment and a dependency on public assistance, who belong to this increasingly politically passive part of the immigrated population.

Adman and Strömblad's task has been to try to explain the differences between the political involvement of immigrants and the involvement of native Swedes. In doing so, they look at whether the immigrants lack the knowledge and skills that promote political involvement, whether they lack access to social networks that may stimulate political involvement, or whether the differences observed are simply a result of a lack of political interest. Perhaps the immigrants are not sufficiently motivated to spend their time and energy on political activities in Sweden.

Earlier research suggests that the exclusion of immigrants from politics has become more marked in the 1990s – a change that can be traced to changes in background social conditions. The conclusion is thus that Swedish society offe-

red less possibility of political integration at the end of the 20th century, than it did earlier on. They therefor conduct a comparative study of research in the subject, using data on nationality from 1987, 1997 and 1999 in an attempt to explain the increased differences (Petersson et al. 1989, 1998, 1999).

To do this, Adman and Strömblad measure political participation according to four dimensions: voter participation, political party activities, *political contacts* and manifestations. By political contacts, is meant activities where the individual has contacted societal actors or institutions in an effort to influence an issue. *Manifestations* can include signing a petition, wearing a campaign button, or participating in demonstrations aimed at waking opinion. Lack of political activity is harder to interpret, since it need not be an expression of exclusion or powerlessness, but merely an expression of one's being content with the current situation – "no news is good news!" In order to investigate whether or not this is the case, an individual's political self-confidence and perception of one's own power to appeal decisions were also measured.

Less involvement

When Adman and Strömblad investigated the overall differences between immigrants and native Swedes, the picture of a lower level of participation for immigrants in all forms of political involvement emerged. The differences found were statistically significant for all of these forms of involvement except *political party activities*. The percentage of the population active in parties for both groups is very small, but only half as large for the immigrant group as for native Swedes. Individual variables such as age, gender and education could play a role here, so these factors were also studied – but the same general picture remained. The evidence therefor substantiates that it is the *immigrantship* factor itself that is connected to a lower degree of political involvement.

The importance of origin

In order to shed some light on possible differences within the immigrant group studied, Adman and Strömblad also studied the political involvement of immigrants with respect to what part of the world they came from. The sample is, in most cases, not large enough to present individual nationalities, but the origin of the immigrants has instead been divided into first-, second- and third world (with no hierarchical

context), where *first world* denoted immigrants from Finland, Denmark and Norway, *second world* – immigrants from other countries in Europe, including here Yugoslavia, Bosnia, Poland and Estonia, and *third world* – people from outside Europe, here – Iran and Lebanon.

Adman and Strömblad formulated the hypothesis that, of the three groups, those who had emigrated from the first world should demonstrate the highest political involvement, since we were dealing here with stable Western democracies and, with the exception of Finland, countries whose languages are closely related to Swedish. The hypothesis was supported to some degree, with the highest political involvement coming from first world immigrants. In general, second- and third world immigrants appear to be somewhat less politically active. Immigrants from the second world show especially low involvement in political contacts, while third world immigrants show approximately the same levels as native Swedes. Both of these differences also remain when year of immigration is considered, i.e., how long a person has lived in Sweden.

Thus, there are differences in political involvement within the immigrant group, and the geographic origin of an immigrant group plays a part, even if the observed differences between these rather large sub-groups are not very big.

The importance of time in Sweden

Does the length of time one has lived in Sweden have any significance? Is it among the most newly arrived immigrants we see the least amount of political activity? This could be expected, considering the time it takes to learn the language and become acquainted with political issues. Have immigrants who have lived in Sweden for many years “caught up” to native Swedes, with respect to political involvement? That is, has political integration occurred?

The analysis shows that the longer someone has been in Sweden, the more closely that person’s activity patterns resemble those of native Swedes. For most forms of political involvement, it appears to be the most recently arrived immigrants who demonstrate the least activity. Though immigrants in general continue to show somewhat lower involvement than native Swedes, the political involvement of people who have lived in Sweden the longest approaches that of native Swedes, with respect to political party activities, manifestations and political self-confidence

The importance of where one lives

Adman and Strömblad also question whether political involvement is affected by environment, i.e., the area in which an immigrant lives. As earlier indicated, voter participation has been shown to be especially low in a number of so-called *disadvantaged* areas. As we have also seen, research on elections has shown a connection between social and economic factors and voter participation in Swedish nationals. It is also natural to assume that political exclusion may easily result from social disadvantage. The concentration itself, of people in socially and economically weaker situations, could serve to underpin political passivity.

Using unemployment as a measure of social situation, Adman and Strömblad find that where one lives does not have an effect on political participation or political self-confidence. In no case could they show a negative relation linking immigrants political involvement to housing area. They were thus unable to draw the conclusion that areas with high unemployment generated social environments that increased the political exclusion of individuals who had immigrated to Sweden.

For native Swedes, the case is not the same. For this group, Adman and Strömblad found significant negative links to housing area in four out of five cases. They found that as unemployment in the area one lives in rises, native Swedish voter participation falls, as does the number of political contacts, political self-confidence, and a person's belief in his/her ability to appeal decisions made by government authorities. Thus for native Swedes, living in disadvantaged areas would appear to contribute to political passivity. Regardless of their own employment situation, living in an area with higher unemployment negatively affects their participation in the democratic process.

For immigrants, Adman and Strömblad found the tendency to be almost reversed, i.e., an indication of a positive relation between where a person lives and political self-confidence and the power to appeal. It appears thus that housing area can influence native Swedes and immigrants in completely different ways.

The question is: Why? As research shows, there is another factor involved here. The areas studied where unemployment was high were areas where many of the inhabitants were immigrants. It can therefore be the high degree of immigrant representation, rather than the high rate of unemployment, that creates the positive effect on political involvement.

Children of immigrants more active

Adman and Strömblad also look at what happens to political involvement with respect to the children of immigrants, i.e., children who were born in Sweden and did not immigrate. Does the generally lower political involvement of immigrant parents get passed down to the next generation? The results suggest the opposite of what one might expect here. None of the forms of political involvement measured for the children of immigrants identified them as less active than native Swedes. In fact, in many cases, e.g., in political contacts, manifestations, political self-confidence and the power to appeal decisions, they are more active.

The 1987 Commission on Power in Democracy (Makturedningen) revealed a similar pattern (Pettersson, Westholm & Blomberg 1989). Thus it appears this is not a temporary trend associated to a number of specific generations or groups of children born to immigrants, but rather a relation that persists over time. Neither does it make a difference if just one or both of the parents of the child is of foreign descent. When we look at youths, the pattern is similar, with one exception – voting. Here, youths show a lower degree of political participation than children of native Swedes. This link between younger age groups and low voter participation can, however, also be seen with native Swedes.

Why don't immigrants participate?

Why then do immigrants participate less in political activities than native Swedes? Researchers gladly look for answers to this in the availability of resources. In political sociology, they found what has been concluded earlier – that differences in social factors have an effect on a person's political activity. People with higher education, higher status jobs, higher income, etc., exercise their right to influence society more than others. Differences in socioeconomic status are therefore presumed to be reflected in differences relating to resources of various types.

The resources looked at by Adman and Strömblad are: time, money, and civic skills. The latter includes education and language skills (here – proficiency in Swedish), as well as the opportunities one has to practise these skills, e.g., through written communication, preparing for meetings, giving presentations, etc. It is, however, not sufficient to merely partake, one must also want to partake. The chances of a person wanting to participate politically increase if

he/she has been encouraged to do so. Thus, if we find lower involvement among immigrants, we can presume that it is because, as a group, immigrants generally do not have the same resources, are less interested, and are less frequently encouraged to participate in politics.

Resources not equal

Here the analysis shows, and not surprisingly so, that immigrants have poorer skills in Swedish, fewer opportunities to practise their civic skills, a poorer overall level of civic education, and receive fewer requests to participate in politics. They also have lower incomes. Access to free time, on the other hand, is in equally scarce supply for immigrants it is for native Swedes. Surprisingly enough, the groups do not demonstrate differences in political interest or interest in society. Immigrants are just as interested as native Swedes. Differences in political participation and political self-confidence can thus not be explained by a difference in interest.

When we look at various factors related to resources, it becomes obvious that differing levels of political involvement between immigrants and native Swedes can only to a very limited extent be explained by differences in income. Other resources can, however, explain some of the inequality. What Adman and Strömblad note here is the importance of proficiency in Swedish for one's political self-confidence and the ability to appeal decisions. If we look at the difference between Swedish-speaking immigrants and native Swedes, it is very small. Further, practising civic skills appears a key factor when explaining the difference between immigrants and native Swedes with respect to political party activities and political contacts. Immigrants who do have opportunities to practise the skills used in political involvement, via work, studies or belonging to an association, also show involvement levels more in line with those of native Swedes.

One exception to this, where access to the resources measured does not appear to have much of an effect on involvement, is voter participation itself. Here as well, proficiency in Swedish does play a part, but we must look elsewhere in order to explain the falling rate of voter participation.

When we then look at the overall importance of differing knowledge of the Swedish language, practise of civic skills, general civic knowledge and political recruitment, we find that the difference between immigrants and native Swedes is considerably smaller, with respect to political party activities, contacts, manifestations, political self-confidence and

the power to appeal decisions. The lower rate of immigrant involvement in politics can thus be attributed, entirely, to their subordinate position in areas such as proficiency in Swedish, opportunities to practise civic skills, general civic knowledge, and the probability of being recruited to partake in political activities, though even here with the exception of voter participation. Even when we take into consideration the imbalance of these resources, there remains a significant difference between immigrants and native Swedes with respect to voter participation.

How do we explain the lack of voter participation?

What is it then that lies behind the low level of voter participation? As mentioned above, in Commission for Democracy (Demokratiutredningen) reports, several researchers offer the explanation that voter participation increases when an individual identifies, or becomes involved with a political party and/or when an individual views voter participation as his/her civic duty. Both factors could help to explain differences between immigrants and native Swedes. Adman and Strömblad's analyses reject this assumption. Granted, immigrants identify themselves to a somewhat lesser degree with a political party, and neither are they carriers of the voting norm to the same degree as native Swedes. But the differences here are small and insufficient to explain low immigrant voter participation.

The question is then: Do immigrants, as previous researchers have suggested, generally view municipal elections as less important? Here, further study is needed to explore whether the differing interest itself, in municipal issues, can explain the difference in participation in municipal elections.

Another question is how one feels about not having the right to vote in federal elections. For example, is there a difference in voter participation between immigrants who have the right to vote in federal elections, i.e., those who become naturalized, and those who retain their foreign nationality? The relation between immigrants and low voter participation has been shown to be markedly weaker, though it does not disappear altogether, when we take into account the immigrant's official citizenship. That is, there remains an obvious negative effect – even immigrants who have become Swedish nationals vote less than native Swedes.

How do we explain the imbalance in resources?

Adman and Strömblad also state that because immigrants tend to be less proficient in Swedish, get less practise with civic skills, have poorer general civic knowledge and are less frequently recruited to political activities, they also tend to display a higher level of political passivity and lower level of political self-confidence.

Thus immigrants appear to have less resource capital, which has a negative impact on their participation in the democratic process. What are the underlying reasons for this uneven distribution of resources? And why do immigrants have less access to these resources than native Swedes?

We have already identified a positive relation between social status and participation in politics. Those who belong to the middle class, with better means, are usually more politically active than members of the working class. People with higher education usually find themselves in a stronger political position than the less highly educated. Socioeconomic status is normally measured on the basis of education, income and class. As shown by Adman and Strömblad, education and income has only a limited role in explaining the differences here. The question is what part class membership plays in this particular context.

Other studies show that the social divisions of the Swedish labor market are still reflected in differences with respect to opportunities to gain influence in society. Blue-collar workers are less active in politics than their white-collar counterparts, and also state having less confidence in their ability to make a difference. If it is then the case that immigrants often wind up in blue-collar occupations, an individual's position in the professional hierarchy can be the missing link in our explanation. The nation's financial crisis and economic transformation of the 1990s brought with it rising unemployment, emphasizing the line between those who had work and those who did not.

We know that many immigrants were hit hard by the financial crisis, especially groups who arrived in Sweden relatively recently. But it is not only the lack of work that has had a negative effect on political participation. We can also assume that the acquisition of political resources is also facilitated by active involvement in working life. People who are jobless enjoy fewer opportunities to practise their civic skills, they miss out on the social contact of the workplace, as well as opportunities of being recruited to political activities. Active involvement in an association could compensate for the lack

of employment here – getting involved in an association being a possible road to integration. For someone outside both the workplace and association life, however, opportunities of participating in Swedish society become considerably fewer. Here, Adman and Strömblad do not mention the role of immigrant organizations, or whether participation of this type is of equal importance as participation in more “Swedish” associations. We return to this discussion when we look at the case study of Örebro. (*Utanför demokratin? del 7, Politiskt deltagande i Örebro kommun, Excluded from Democracy? Part 7, Political participation in Örebro.*)

Immigrants more often at society’s margin

Being an immigrant has been shown to be linked to class membership, employment situation, and even involvement in clubs or associations. As a group, immigrants are considered to have a weaker position in all of these respects. We see them less often in white-collar professions, they are hit harder by unemployment, and they are less active in associations than native Swedes. We find that all of these underlying factors play a part in the negative relations between immigrantship and having poorer access to resources.

This becomes most evident when we examine the relation between immigrantship and the practise of civic skills. We already knew that, on average, immigrants have fewer opportunities to practise civic skills due to their work in blue-collar occupations, higher unemployment rate, and lower activity in associations. The latter also has an effect on political recruiting, since associations serve as an important channel for this.

With respect to other resources, the underlying factors are of less importance. Even unemployed persons are asked to participate in political activities. Neither can unemployment explain the immigrant’s lower general knowledge of civics. The interpretation Adman and Strömblad make here is that unemployed persons, immigrants or native Swedes, have only slightly lower knowledge on politics than those with paying jobs. Even class membership and association activities play only a marginal part in this respect. The most difficult thing to explain is the difference in proficiency in Swedish. Here, the underlying factors do not appear to offer any explanation at all. An immigrant’s proficiency in Swedish does not appear to determine the position that immigrant has in the labor market, nor is it affected by that immigrant’s failure to participate in association life.

The causal chain Adman and Strömblad find shows that immigrants are more poorly equipped when it comes to certain socioeconomic and individual resources, which in turn affects their possibility of participating in political life. The negative relation between immigrants and political involvement is primarily indirect. People who have immigrated are less active in political parties, initiate fewer political contacts, participate in fewer manifestations, state having lower political self-confidence, and feel they are less competent to appeal the decisions made by government authorities. This is due to their having less access to four key resources: proficiency in Swedish, opportunities to practise civic skills and be recruited to politics, and a general knowledge of civics. The imbalance in conditions here can be traced, in part, to an inequality with respect to underlying factors. Political involvement is indirectly promoted by a more favorable position in the labor market and participation in association activities. Immigrants have a harder time achieving these favorable positions, which, in extension, affects their participation in the democratic process.

This weaker propensity of immigrants to participate in elections can, however, not be explained by the uneven distribution of resources in society. Instead, Adman and Strömblad believe that official citizenship is of importance here. Those who have become naturalized vote more in municipal elections. That is, more than – but still not as much as – native Swedes. They conclude that the participation of immigrants does not benefit from resources in the same way as other forms of political involvement – something they see as logical in that voting is likely the least resource-demanding form of political participation.

A growing difference – but...

As earlier noted, the differences in political involvement between immigrants and native Swedes have grown in the 1990s. Comparing the development from the citizenship survey in 1987 to the one in 1997, Adman and Strömblad conclude that, for almost all forms of political involvement, the difference between immigrants and native Swedes is growing. This includes: political contacts, political self-confidence, the power to appeal decisions, and, above all, voting. The growing differences are not dramatic but worth noting. As concerns manifestations, the difference between immigrants and native Swedes seems to have remained the same. In political party activity, we see a hint of a decrease in the

difference, with the party activity of native Swedes having fallen more than that of immigrants.

Native Swedes have pulled ahead

In their search for explanations, Adman and Strömblad note the dramatic increase in unemployment during the 1990s, especially among immigrants. When they examine background factors such as age, gender and education, they find that education plays an important part in this context. In the figures from both 1987 and 1997, education demonstrates a distinctly positive effect on the political involvement of immigrants and native Swedes. What has happened here is that the education level of native Swedes has increased substantially between the two studies, while that of immigrants has remained unchanged. This can explain most of the increase in differences related to political contacts, manifestations and political self-confidence. When we look, on the other hand, at involvement in party activities, the difference between immigrants and native Swedes has decreased. Here, the political interest of immigrants has risen between the studies of 1987 and 1997, while that of native Swedes has remained unchanged. This had led to native Swedes being only slightly more interested in politics than immigrants. It is thus primarily the increase in education level of native Swedes that explains the growing differences in political involvement.

Political integration grows – gradually

Adman and Strömblad's conclusion is that political involvement is unevenly distributed; immigrants to Sweden are less politically active and are less confident in their ability to influence politics than are their native Swedish counterparts. These findings support earlier research. They also show, however, that political integration can nevertheless be achieved. The longer an immigrant has been in the country, the more politically involved he/she tends to be. The involvement of immigrants who have lived in Sweden the longest, approaches that of native Swedes. Children of immigrants have in fact caught up and demonstrate more involvement.

Thus, political integration is possible, but takes time. And not unexpectedly, it is a process that benefits from resources such as proficiency in Swedish and political knowledge. These resources are in no way unchangeable over time, nor are they determined by an individual's background. They are resour-

ces that can be acquired – though this is a process that may take time.

Despite this, the fact that immigrants as a group are less well-represented among the politically active can be a democratic problem, if it means that their opinions are not being expressed to the same degree as that of other residents. Adman and Strömblad therefor compared the answers to a number of central political questions and found that, as a group, immigrants did not differ greatly from native Swedes, with the reservation that a difference can be found if the immigrant collective is broken down into smaller groups, e.g., according to nationality. Inequality leads to fewer resources that enable one to participate in politics. But we still have no explanation to the decline in voter participation by immigrants who have the right to vote.

Who isn't voting?

Henry Pettersson shows that the voter participation of foreign nationals in the municipality of Örebro has fallen more than the national average, to 32.5 percent (*Utanför demokratin? del 7, Politiskt deltagande i Örebro kommun, Excluded from Democracy? Part 7, Political participation in Örebro*). We may begin to look for an explanation in the fact that the immigrant group has changed. Some foreign nationals have naturalized and become Swedish citizens, and new refugee groups – that can be less inclined to vote – have moved in, in their place. But the question is still naturally: Why? As we have seen above, the time a person has been in Sweden can play a role. Political integration takes time. Previous experiences from one's homeland can have a negative influence on one's will to vote in Swedish local elections. The Swedish political parties themselves also have a big part here, as well as the content of the politics, one could well imagine.

Disadvantaged areas and low voter participation

Pettersson, who in the first place made a statistical presentation of the municipality of Örebro, found a clear relation between areas with relatively high immigrant populations (in Örebro, however, this was at most 25 percent of the population as a whole) and a fall in voter participation. His findings are in line with the election results from the disadvantaged areas of Sweden's larger cities.

The table shows that, even at the local level, the percentage of foreign residents in an area has a relation to voter participation. In Pettersson's study, the municipal districts of Vivalla-Lundby and Mikael show the lowest participation in all three elections. It is also here that the decline in the 1998 election is most marked. The district of Haga, on the other hand, despite a relatively high density of immigrants, shows fairly high voter participation, while Vasa, with a low proportion of foreign residents has a low voter participation. Thus the picture is more complex. In the case of Haga, according to Pettersson, the explanation may be that there is segregation within the district, e.g., the immigrant-dense rental housing of Oxhagen, and the Björkhaga area, where there is a blend of privately owned, tenant-owned and rental complexes with fewer seniors, immigrants or persons with social problems. Haga has a history of several electoral districts with a high number of social democratic voters and generally high voter participation, i.e., traditional social democratic mobilization. The low voter participation of Vasa can

Percentage of immigrant residents in 1998, and voter participation for 1991, 1994 and 1998 in municipal elections by municipal district (in percent)

Municipal district	Percentage of immigrants residents 1998	Voter participation 1991	Voter participation 1994	Voter participation 1998
Östernärke	3,4	83,8	84,1	81,7
Glanshammar	3,8	86,3	86,2	83,1
Tysslinge	4,0	88,8	89,2	85,2
Adolfsberg-Mosjö	5,0	90,1	90,2	86,2
Axberg	5,5	89,7	89,1	84,6
Olaus Petri	8,3	84,4	84,7	78,5
Almby Norrbyås	8,9	86,3	87,6	82,4
Vasa	9,5	82,2	82,9	75,9
Nikolai	9,7	83,9	83,6	78,2
Haga	15,1	86,3	87,0	80,8
Varberga-Kil	17,2	82,5	83,6	76,6
Brickebacken-Gällersta	18,3	80,5	83,3	76,8
Mikael	20,8	80,0	82,7	73,2
Vivalla-Lundby	24,4	79,7	80,3	70,6
Örebro total	11,2	85,3	85,8	79,8

Source: SCB 1992, SCB 1995, SCB 1999a, SCB 1999f and Nicklasson 1999

likely be explained by its high percentage of unmarried and young residents, groups noted in election research to demonstrate low voter participation. The four rural districts and Adolfsberg-Mosjö show high voter participation. The majority of immigrants found here are from other Nordic countries.

The relation becomes even more evident when we examine the statistics at the electoral district level.

Of the ten electoral districts, eight were among those with the highest decline in voter participation in 1998. Two of the electoral districts differ, Alby 86 and Alby 87. Here, we find the area of Brickebacken of which parts include student housing, i.e., a higher level of education, lower unemployment, etc. Nevertheless, even these two districts showed a greater decline than the municipal average, Pettersson points out.

The three electoral districts with the highest percentage of foreign nationals in 1998, Långbro 45 (Oxhagen), Mikael 68 (Baronbackarna) and Mikael 74 (Markbacken), also had the biggest influx of foreign nationals between the years of 1994 and 1998. In contrast to Brickebacken, e.g., these areas have seen a steady stream of new refugee groups. For the 1998 elections, the ten electoral districts had just over 10,000 registered voters, approx. 11 percent of the total. Foreign nationals represented slightly more than 1,800 of these people, corresponding to 46 percent of all of the legal voters with foreign nationality in the municipality – showing the high concentration of foreign nationals in these particular areas.

With only one exception, the municipality's eleven electoral districts with the highest voter participation remained the same throughout the three elections of the 1990s studied. Here, the percentage of foreign nationals remained consistently low during this period, between 0.5-2.6 percent, compared with the municipal average of 4.3 percent. It is also here that the decline for 1998 is less than that of the municipal average, with voter participation actually rising in more than one of the districts.

The percentage of foreign nationals in the electoral districts with low voter participation does not exceed 22 percent for the 1998 election. Even when taking into consideration foreign background, residents of native Swedish background form a clear majority in the electoral districts. Pettersson concludes that the low voter participation must therefore above all be seen as a general problem related to lower education, lower income, unemployment, low social status, social exclusion, etc., and not one of ethnicity.

The figures from the federal elections in the electoral districts agree closely with those of the municipal elections, suggesting that the percentage of immigrants living in an area plays a certain part, but that other factors are also of importance.

Failure to vote – An active protest

A questionnaire addressed to legal voters who did not vote in Vivalla, one of the areas studied, indicated that their reasons for not voting were often a sense of distrust for politicians, or a protest against society (40 percent). An equally large group was simply “not interested” or thought there was “no point in voting”. Pettersson wonders whether the dwellers of these big municipal rental complexes are primarily underprivileged groups. In addition to native Swedish working class members, with characteristically low incomes and lower level of education than the average and who moved to the areas when they were first built and still remain, many of what Pettersson refers to as the “problem children and marginalized groups of Social Sweden” have wound up in these neighborhoods – for the same reasons as the refugee immigrants. They lack the financial resources for housing options

Voter participation and the number of foreign nationals in the 10 electoral districts with the lowest voter participation and highest density of foreign nationals. Figures for 1991, 1994 and 1998 (in percent)

Electoral district	Voter participation	Foreign nationals	Voter participation	Foreign nationals	Voter participation	Foreign nationals
	1998	1998	1994	1994	1991	1991
Mikael 74	55,9	20,9	69,3	11,5	64,7	10,4
Långbro 43	59,1	17,9	70,3	12,6	67,1	14,6
Mikael 64	60,6	17,7	72,3	12,0	73,1	7,7
Långbro 42	61,2	15,8	71,9	14,4	69,4	12,6
Långbro 45	61,8	21,8	76,2	10,0	76,4	8,7
Mikael 62	62,3	13,4	74,9	9,4	72,7	10,4
Mikael 63	62,6	11,3	75,4	12,0	73,1	8,9
Mikael 68	62,6	21,7	78,1	8,3	74,9	6,5
Almby 86	69,0	14,8	76,3	14,0	72,5	13,0
Almby 87	69,7	11,8	78,4	10,2	73,5	11,0
Municipal average	85,3	2,9	85,8	3,0	79,8	4,3

Source: Nicklasson 1999

other than renting, and private property owners are less inclined to accept them as tenants.

The areas are characterized by a Swedish majority with an overrepresentation of social problems and exclusion, and by relatively new refugee groups, many from Bosnia, the former Yugoslavia, Somalia and Turkey (comprising Assyrians/Syrians, many of whom have become naturalized Swedish citizens, and Kurds). Earlier studies show a clear relation between the time one has been in Sweden and participation in politics. For example, Statistics Sweden's study showed that former Yugoslavia nationals voted much less.

Why don't people in disadvantaged areas vote?

Through interviews and meeting with people individually and in focal groups, Magnus Dahlstedt has surveyed the experience of people with foreign backgrounds who are themselves *political actors* in the broad sense of the term (i.e., representatives of political parties, civil servants, civilians), gained through their own attempts or those of others to take part in politics (*Utanför demokratin, del 5, Margi-*

Voter participation in municipal (M)- and federal (F) elections in the 10 electoral districts with the lowest voter participation in municipal elections. Figures for 1994 and 1998 (in percent).

Electoral district	Voter participation	Voter participation	Voter participation	Voter participation
	98 M	98 F	94 M	94 F
Mikael 74	55,9	62,7	69,3	74,2
Långbro 43	59,1	63,4	70,3	76,5
Mikael 64	60,6	66,8	72,3	77,2
Långbro 42	61,2	67,7	71,9	77,2
Långbro 45	61,8	70,5	76,2	80,9
Mikael 62	62,3	67,6	74,9	80,1
Mikael 63	62,6	67,2	75,4	79,6
Mikael 68	62,6	70,5	78,1	80,8
Almby 86	69,0	73,5	76,3	81,5
Almby 87	69,7	75,7	78,4	82,8
Municipal average	79,8	81,9	85,8	87,2

Source: Nicklasson 1999

naliserings politiska konsekvenser, Excluded from democracy? Part 5, The political impact of marginalization). Dahlstedt comments that even though many people openly criticized much of what goes on in politics, and though many distrusted the political machine, they nevertheless gave the impression of having a fighting spirit and faith in the future, rather than a sense of resignation and hopelessness. This can be explained in part by the fact that the people he spoke with were, after all, not the most marginalized of society.

Integration – A new perspective

Dahlstedt reminds us that political perspectives have changed. We speak today of integration, as a mutual and dynamic process with active participation of representatives of society's majority as well as ethnic minorities and other smaller groups. It is no longer a one-sided assimilation on the part of the immigrant. In contrast to the singling out and taking charge of ethnically different groups said to have characterized earlier immigration policy, the emphasis is now put on the importance of long-term, of holistic approaches and promoting the participation and joint responsibility of all members of society.

Participation and empowerment

In many areas today, democratic reform is advocated; citizen participation is said to be a requirement for social revitalization. Urban regeneration projects are attempting to reduce segregation and passivity, and to strengthen citizen influence, e.g., in municipal government. *Citizens* (here in the sense of "a member of society" and not the strict legal meaning relating to official nationality) shall be empowered to control their own lives. Today's rhetoric reflects a shift from a *top-down* to a *bottom-up* perspective. "A notion that would appear to lie especially close to this swing in integration- and urban policy and local democracy, is that democracy, in some sense of the word, is synonymous with dialogue between citizens," writes Dahlstedt. We find this also in the Commission for Democracy's (Demokratiutredningen) report, which states that it is in the dialogue between free and equal people, that isolated clients, users and voters come of age – become citizens – with the right to decide on the distribution of resources and other societal matters of import.

Nice words but a not-so-nice reality

In his conversations with different focal groups, Dahlstedt met a skepticism of government authorities and politicians. The experience of the people interviewed suggests widespread exclusion and a strong feeling of uncertainty about whether or not one belongs in society, whether one actually has been invited to partake. In many aspects, the democratic society is viewed as rhetorical one – wrapped in nice words but a very different reality. Many people have thought it difficult as an immigrant to become involved in organized political parties and associations. A number of people even compared the Swedish democratic system to the political systems of the dictatorships that they had earlier fled in terror.

Most had personal or close experience of marginalization and discrimination from all spheres of society: the workplace, the media, political parties, government authorities, schools and day-cares, and the neighborhood where they lived. Somebody asks why it is primarily black Africans who are singled out and stigmatized – why not Europeans? As if the color of one's skin sentences one to permanent stigmatization. Why is it harder for some groups to escape persecution? The perceptions of the majority and the concrete discriminatory actions through which they are expressed are not due to some vague "immigrant quality", but rather, above all, to being black.

Immigrants = problems

As an "immigrant", one is stamped as being of less value. If you do manage to get a job, it is not certain you will be happy there. Crime, as well as a series of other social problems, are commonly associated with immigrants, say many of the interviewees. How can you enjoy work, when your workmates are continually linking you to every imaginable problem and weakness? Headlines like "Muslim honor killing", "Gang rape", etc., that are tied to "immigrants", are a hard cross to bear. As an immigrant, one feels partly responsible. One of the interviewees said that a mass media description of honor killing had made him feel as if he had been singled out and branded – an accomplice to something he had had nothing whatsoever to do with. This is a clear example of how someone can develop a negative perception of oneself from the perceptions around him/her in society and reflected in the media.

Integration – A question of power

Integration, as a mutual process, is questioned by the participants in the interviews. We are back at the implicit question of whether the members of the majority in power really are prepared to share, to relinquish some of their privileges. The members of one women's association claimed that the basic problem was that they were still not permitted to enter society, and that it was the majority's responsibility to open the door. Another of the interviewees claimed the opposite, that "Swedes" would never hand over any power voluntarily, but that immigrants themselves must step up and take it, for which some measure of collective organization is required.

Several people thought that the political swing from immigrant- to integration policy had not led to any concrete changes in their lives – that pretty words like "ethnic diversity" and "integration" had little to do with reality. They believe it is still a matter of them as "immigrants" and "integration problems". It is them and not Swedes who must be tailored to fit an otherwise unchanged society.

Strong criticism was also directed at Sweden having "created a huge machine, a multi-million machine... to integrate these creatures into Swedish society" – into what one perceives as a bureaucratic, disciplinary and controlling society. Some of the interviewees claim that various integration policy efforts, aimed specifically at outlying suburbs of the large cities, may have led to these areas becoming further marked as per their description – "disadvantaged", and in constant need of extra resources. They would therefore like to see 50 million spent on "Swedish" areas, in an attempt instead to integrate them with the "immigrant" areas.

Politics too far from everyday life

Integration and winning formulations about participation and empowerment abound during election campaigns. Then – suddenly – the political parties show an interest. Political representatives say one thing and do another, say the people in Dahlstedt's study. In practice, they make things worse for non-profit organizations, cut back on grants to associations, and make it difficult for groups to find suitable places to meet. Several people thought it was more important now, more than ever, to bring politics closer to people's everyday lives.

Political parties should do more than run short-sighted campaigns for impending elections. One gets the feeling

that “nothing happens” in politics, which in turn leads to non-participation and growing distrust. In Dahlstedt’s group meetings, this is seen as one of several reasons why the population as a whole, and people of foreign descent in particular, do not become active in political- or other affairs. Not least in the regeneration projects conducted in metropolitan areas, there is much talk of the importance of immigrant participation, of gaining local support. Many of the interviewees contest the existence of such local support. It is largely government authorities and civil servants who plan, formulate and implement the measures. “One speaks of a strive for politics to come from the grassroots, but that’s not how it works. When the grassroots do try to take the initiative, they are met by any number of objections,” says one civil servant. In his opinion, the entire bureaucracy in charge of integration issues serves mainly to obstruct people’s involvement.

Civil servant control

In reality, the Urban regeneration (Storstadsarbetet) program’s many projects have been run by civil servants, not area residents or local associations. One of the people interviewed believes that while civil servants may often pretend there are plenty of opportunities, e.g., for non-profit associations, to exercise influence over local politics and that decisions have local support, it is in fact a matter of the positions and interests of the civil servants.

Association representatives interviewed in the study state that there are also other problems that make their participation in politics difficult. As volunteers, they lack both the time and the resources to participate, and when they do try, they often have trouble making themselves heard. Another problem for associations in immigrant areas can be that unemployment and exclusion leads to associations being more oriented to identity issues rather than societal issues.

Who represents whom?

Political representation is an important dimension with respect to power and integration. The political representation of persons of foreign descent in Swedish decision-making bodies is poor. Where it does exist, there arises the question of who represents whom. Many representatives of foreign descent are namely well-integrated after having lived in Sweden a long time. The ability of these people to immediately represent new immigrants who are not integrated is proble-

matic, say those in Dahlstedt's study. Many representatives lack local connection to those living in the area. "They don't know what it's like to live here. So they can't know how it feels the first time your child goes off to the city on his own. And there you are, pacing back and forth in your apartment – worrying. Maybe he'll get beat up, maybe this, maybe that. Maybe some bouncers will have a go at him and he'll be paralyzed from the neck down."

It becomes a question of what type of representation is needed. One opinion is that the representation of opinions, most often cited in the democratic system, is not enough, and must be complemented with some kind of presence and group representation. The political participation of people of foreign descent would increase if more representatives shared their background. The need for role models comes into question – that immigrants must also be given the chance to show they know how – that they can get things done. This type of representation would help to offset the negative perceptions of the majority population and help curb the stigmatization of persons with foreign backgrounds.

Regarding the willingness of political parties to accept such representatives, the views of the interviewees differed. Some saw the parties as good role models and initiative-takers in efforts that promoted integration. This indicates that the parties are willing to let immigrants in. Others believe the parties to be a place where competition for the limited political space is stiff, and where representatives of the disadvantaged areas have a hard time asserting themselves. If they do gain entry to a party, they are likely to fasten in the hierarchy.

Marginalization also within political parties?

More than a handful of representatives are needed to enable marginalized members of society to gain influence. Many told of people of foreign descent being permitted to act within political parties as long as they posed no threat to the existing order – and, above all, did not threaten the party's upper echelon. More than one person points out that, as a rule, these representatives do not occupy positions of any real power, but are found instead on the party's margin, and thus, in elections, usually wind up in positions that hold little chance of getting them elected.

A number of the interviewees also claim that, in contrast to their role as representative, as *immigrant politicians*, they

automatically, voluntarily or by default, become spokespeople for *immigrants*, since otherwise there is no-one to advocate the integration perspective. As representatives for immigrants, these people are expected to know everything there is to know about immigrants, regardless of who they are or where they come from. In the words of one of the interviewees: “You become a representative for the rest of the world.”

Immigrants in politics become immigrant politicians

This is something that is substantiated by politicians of foreign descent in an interview study conducted by Paula Rodrigo Blomqvist in 1999 (*Utanför demokratin, del 4: Personvalets betydelse för valdeltagandet, Excluded from democracy? Part 4, The importance of personal elections for voter participation*). Most of the 20 or so people interviewed in Blomqvist’s study came to Sweden as refugees in the 1980s from a non-European country. All expressed a strong will to work for the immigrant group. Even if other motives for their political involvement are mentioned, the desire to improve conditions for immigrants was the biggest driving force. The persons interviewed here also spoke of immigrants as a group, a collective, not about different ethnic groups.

When discussing social representativity, some people believe that this group is far too heterogeneous to have common interests, and that one’s point of departure should instead be different ethnic groups. But this is not what Rodrigo Blomqvist found in her interviews. Among her interviewees, there were persons who appeared to be well-integrated in Swedish society and others who found themselves more on the fringe. But regardless of this factor, and regardless ethnic background, they did express having some common needs and interests to pursue in politics. Rodrigo Blomqvist suggests that this collective awareness is rooted in the marginalization they feel in Swedish society – in the feeling of not being a part.

Politics – A show for the galleries

Those who participated in Dahlstedt’s focal group sessions also observe the problem of getting their bearings in the Swedish political landscape. They perceive no great differences between the parties, and find none of the parties want

to raise integration issues. One of the politicians among the interviewees, suggests that a determining factor to the widespread discontent and distrust of government authorities and party politics is linked to the political content, and its ideological leaning to the right. "If you compare today's social democracy with the 1970s, they were much more radical then. I mean, in all fairness, it was among others them – the social democrats – who actually built up this welfare. And now they're tearing it down again, slowly but surely ...". Another politician in the group makes reference to the fact that those in power in nation states have in fact lost much of their former basis for power, through today's advancing global economy. Even politicians are controlled by the market. People tire of this and distance themselves from politics, which more and more become a mere play for the galleries.

Blame the victim

In trying to explain marginalization of members of society, the most frequently cited factors are those that refer specifically to the people marginalized, says Dahlstedt. It is they who somehow "deviate" or have "failed" and bear the blame for not succeeding in society. A variation of this can be a reference to the immigrant or refugee's heritage from the homeland. Others are references to segregated living conditions and a linguistic handicap, or to cultures and traditions that deviate from the Swedish norm. Some believe such references harbor more or less racial undertones, under which are hidden structures and practices that become normalized and must later be faced by immigrants in Swedish society. For example, what social structures cause us to immediately problematize "immigrants", citing individual factors or differing cultures?

A baggage of bad experiences

Dahlstedt suggests that, despite this, his interviews elicited examples of how experience of other cultures can serve to explain exclusion and political marginalization. This applied, for the most part, to one's political heritage, for people from societies that were not democratic and where their experience of politics was a consistently bad one. Corruption and fixed elections in the homeland leave many leery of taking part in politics here as well. In other cases, people may have fled the homeland for political reasons, people who are politically aware, but who are excluded here and do not have the

energy to go on. The groups Dahlstedt interviewed questioned the association between non-participant and political awareness. Non-participation need not be a sign of a lack of knowledge or awareness. On the contrary, it can be a stand taken – a conscious stand – to not participate.

A reaction to exclusion

Among the interviewees, there was strong opposition to a one-sided search for “immigrant-specific” causes for marginalization of people with foreign backgrounds. They defend themselves against the culturalization and ethnicization of social problems – not least in the media. They viewed the falling voter participation of the metropolitan areas as an obvious reaction to being excluded. Considering the social conditions one was forced to live under in these areas, it is difficult to feel any kind of solidarity with the rest of society. The isolation leads instead to distrust and passivity. Here, they referred to the lack of work and ability to support oneself as one of the most crucial issues. People must be permitted to stand on their own two feet – only then can they become more active in their spare time.

For the people being marginalized, an obvious strategy is for them to isolate themselves in their “own” associations. Surrounding oneself by countrymen who find themselves in the same situation offers a sense of security. When marginalized, one is not respected by society – so why participate? In order to participate and be a part, one must belong. Why should people who have systematically been excluded identify with the system that is shutting them out?

The mechanisms of marginalization

Dahlstedt summarizes that, in most of his focal groups, he found a tangible skepticism of government authorities and politicians – though both civil servants and politicians were also represented in the groups. Many of the experiences related in the group interviews corresponded closely to the findings in other studies on marginalized groups. He emphasizes the great need for closer study of the mechanisms that set these groups in politically marginal positions. A number of these political processes can include ethnic exclusion, such as stigmatization, or ethnic discrimination at the workplace or in political parties.

Marginalization is part of a structure of dependency relations, Dahlstedt points out. Some groups end up in the mar-

gin, more as a result of the way societal structure works than as a result of their own inadequacies or lack of ability. The over-ranking societal positions of other groups are thus intimately linked to the presence of these subordinate, marginalized groups.

Dahlstedt also refers to Robert Miles and his concept of “racialization”, i.e., stigmatizing based on ethnic, cultural, religious or racial belonging (Miles 1993). Many researchers who study racism now claim that earlier biologically-based racism, is now being replaced by considerably more subtle, culturally-oriented forms of racism. From this perspective, racialization is comprised of conceptions and practices that help to categorize, divide and discriminate against individual groups in the population. These conceptions are widely established and have infiltrated everyday life – an everyday racism of sorts. Dahlstedt exemplifies this with the fact that it has become almost unavoidable to speak of societal problems such as unemployment, crime and dependency on public assistance, without also mentioning, in the same breath, immigrants, ethnicity, culture or race. What is it then that renders the state of being an immigrant such a determining factor in a person’s ability to succeed in society?

Most of the people who participated in the groups interviews had personal- or at least close experience of racialization from all areas of society: the workplace, the media, political parties, government authorities, schools and day-cares, and the neighborhood in which they lived. Some spoke openly of the occurrence of a widespread and everyday form of racism in Swedish society. Several of the interviewees wondered why they should participate in society’s politics if they were not respected as members of society.

The immigrant associations – Political or marginal?

Marianne Freyne-Lindhagen takes up the opportunities immigrant associations have to be a part of the political process, as well as to serve as an inroad to politics for the association’s individual members (*Utanför demokratin, del 7, Politiskt deltagande i Örebro kommun, Excluded from democracy? Part 7, Political participation in Örebro*). According to the small amount of research done in this area, the immigrant association has primarily had the task of being a kind of “ethnic institution” or “social club”. Such associations have only infrequently been able to serve as political pressure groups.

In Örebro, Freyne-Lindhagen interviewed groups of leaders from eleven of the biggest immigrant associations. The conditions for association activities varied greatly, as did the size and stability of the organizations – not least due to the length of time the group had lived in the municipality. As in other types of associations, the degree of activity here relied heavily on the time, energy and will of a handful of people who run the association. Limiting factors such as lack of financial resources, difficulty finding meeting places, and in some cases political opposition within the ethnic (nationality) group, also played a part.

Hard to find a place to meet

The criticism and dissatisfaction expressed in many of the interviews relate most often to financial problems, lack of personnel, and lack of suitable premises for the activities one wants to operate. Some associations have no permanent meeting place and go back and forth between temporary rented space. The interviewees have, however, a positive outlook on the role of the immigrant association as such. They feel it is important for the group and important as a partner in relation to the municipality. The association serves as both a “homeland” and a learning center for its members.

From protector of identity to political spokesperson

For new groups like the Kosovo-Albanians, associations are still most involved in problems in the former homeland. Others such as the large Syrian group who have been in Örebro for more than 20 years, also have a well-established role as a platform for the homeland, especially for older members of the group and unemployed males, but their role as externally-oriented spokesperson to the majority has also become increasingly important. With a past of being stateless, this group has no ideas of returning to the “homeland” – something that can occupy the thoughts of many other groups. The Syrian group has the entire time been prepared to stay in Sweden, and during their time in Sweden, the association has gone from being an ethnic association to being both a preserver of ethnic identity and a more politically active and externally-oriented, participatory association, concludes Freyne-Lindhagen.

Negative treatment

The associations have been received very differently by the surrounding community. The immigration of more recent decades has brought relatively large groups of Muslims to Örebro. While there are several explicitly Islamic organizations in the municipality, there are also other associations with many members who share the Islamic faith. Among these, can be found differences in attitudes toward the Swedish surroundings and integration. There can also be found negative attitudes and political opposition toward the Islamic groups in Christian groups in the majority. For more than 10 years, the Islamic Culture Center has wanted to build a mosque in the municipality, but the errand has been delayed. Opposition has also targeted plans to open Islamic private schools. As concerns the construction of the Syrian Orthodox Maria Church (Mariakyrkan), however, debate was relatively limited and the errand passed fairly quickly through the municipal permit approval process.

Willing to cooperate

The interviews show that the leaders of the immigrant associations want to work together with Swedish associations. There has been some collaboration from time to time, but it would appear difficult to attain any continuity in the work. Immigrant associations are also often weighed down by formal demands on bookkeeping etc., and lack of premises where cooperation with other organizations can take place.

On questions concerning the association leaders' views on political party involvement and voter participation, the most common response was that they lack information. Direct contacts between the parties and the associations leading up to the last elections appear to have been limited and in some cases non-existent. "The parties just send their written material ..." Association leaders would like to see a more personal, direct contact with the parties – that is, if the politicians really view the immigrant groups as desirable and active voters. More established associations are well-versed in Swedish elections and the party system and have, in some cases, invited the parties to visit them prior to the elections. At the same time, many associations express the need to also receive information in their own languages, both oral and written, in connection with elections.

Little opportunity to influence

During the 1990s, there has been increasingly more talk about voluntary organizations as playing a possible role in refugee reception and democratic processes. In the late 1980s, when the Commission on Power in Democracy (Maktutredningen) looked at how immigrant organizations perceived their ability to act and influence, they found immigrants to be at a clear disadvantage. Those who had immigrated saw themselves as having little opportunity to influence their own situation. Their children, on the other hand, outscored native Swedes with respect to how they perceived their own administrative competence and external, political formation of public opinion, Freyne-Lindhagen points out.

Now, more than a decade later, it seems little has happened in this area. Freyne-Lindhagen concludes that, despite a presence in many local contexts and projects, immigrants do not appear to exercise much influence at the municipal level via their associations. The interviews indicate considerable dissatisfaction and inertia in communication with surrounding society. The associations feel they are not really being heard by either government authorities or politicians – above all on the topic of resources that are important to them. As Freyne-Lindhagen points out, the explanation for this may lie in cutbacks that have hit all organizations, immigrant and native Swedish, in the non-profit sector. If indeed we do believe that the immigrant associations have a key role in forming a bridge with Swedish society, then it goes to reason that opportunities to do so must be given priority.

Another question that Freyne-Lindhagen asks is what opportunities for immigrant voices to be heard would present themselves if associations were to make a shift toward trans-ethnicity. Could this minimize the risk of them becoming isolated (marginalized) cultural reserves and help them instead to serve as a springboard into Swedish society for their members?

Political parties – not interested?

Freyne-Lindhagen also interviewed leading representatives for the political parties in Örebro regarding the steps they had taken in connection with the previous elections to increase cultural diversity in their parties and increase voter participation, as well as what contacts they maintain with different immigrant groups between elections and their views on the immigrant association as a platform for political participa-

tion. There seemed to be agreement within the parties concerning the importance of the immigrant groups as a part of democratic processes and their representation in the parties. In the last election, 1998, all of the parties had expended more energy than earlier to reach the immigrant groups, though many of them felt their efforts were still not sufficient or had not been successful. At the same time, the commission, the “faithful servant of democracy”, found that fewer municipal organizations within the parties had taken special measures or arranged special events for immigrants in the 1998 municipal elections than they had in 1979 (SOU 1999:130).

Difficulty reaching immigrant groups

Freyne-Lindhagen’s interviews showed that party representatives perceived a number of difficulties in reaching the different immigrant groups. They had sent invitations to the immigrant associations but received little response. They speak here of the immigrants’ difficulty with the Swedish language. The parties feel they lack the financial and human resources necessary to translate their political content or to provide satisfactory amounts of oral information. Other explanations to the lack of contact, given by the interviewees, are that many immigrants bear with them a fear of politics stemming from previous experience from their homelands, or that immigrants are more involved in the politics of the homeland than in Swedish politics. They also mention the possibility of difficulties related to learning the culture, codes and bureaucratic aspects of Swedish politics. The parties themselves have had trouble finding methods to reach these groups.

Several of the people interviewed point out that this is a general problem, when dealing with subordinate groups in society. They also emphasize Swedish society’s lack of meeting places outside the workplace, meaning a scarcity of arenas for informal political debate. Even the party representatives noted the political consequences of marginalization – how exclusion, in the form of segregated labor and housing markets, lack of education, limited contact with the native Swedish population, and lack of civic information, etc., can constitute fundamental obstacles that hinder political activity and awareness – something that applies to other marginalized groups of society, immigrant or native, as well.

Political values a crucial factor

The parties have differing views on the ability of the immigrant association to serve as a link to political participation. The representative of the Left Party believed it more the political schooling of the homeland that determined how involved one became in politics and what party one chose in Sweden. The liberal representative, himself a Syrian, thought the Syrian association could be its own political force. He also believed, however, that Syrians integrated better through direct involvement in the existing political parties. The social democrats, who have a history of separate organization of immigrants, doubted there was any connection between immigrant association activities and party membership. The Social Democratic Party has, among others, a separate Bosnian group, but most of this group's members are not active in the Bosnian-Islamic immigrant association.

The representative for the Green Party, of Iranian descent, explains the lack of political participation noting the exclusion of immigrant groups. When excluded, one has no sense of belonging and simply does not bother to participate or vote in the elections. The attempts of the Center Party included a couple of letters sent to immigrant associations before the last election. In this party, they are hesitant about the associations' request for premises, suggesting that this could counteract integration and lead to further isolation. They feel integration purposes would be better served by different associations, Swedish and immigrant, sharing the same spaces.

The Christian democrats have an established and increasingly stable relation with the Christian Syrian group. The party makes regular visits to the Syrian association and women from the party and the Syrian group meet in the parish hall of the Syrian church. The Christian democratic representative views the situations of different immigrant groups as very distinct, with more recently arrived groups busy getting themselves established. Weighed down by the experiences of war, they are unable to become involved in Swedish politics.

The representatives of the Center Party and the Christian Democratic Party each told of a case where they had failed to provide the necessary support and knowledge regarding the responsibility and the role a political assignment entails. In both cases, an "immigrant resource" had gone unspent.

In summary, Freyne-Lindhagen says that the parties obviously perceive considerable obstacles with respect to their ability to reach immigrant groups – though they were aware

of the importance of reaching these new voters and making immigrant candidates more visible. The parties had different views on how to mobilize immigrants, ranging from the need for special measures to the need for everyone to be treated equally.

Are there immigrants in the political parties?

If immigrant residents are to achieve influence in the political parties, they must first be represented in the membership of these parties. One measure of this influence can then be the percentage of a party's elected representatives who are immigrants. Because no party lists its members according to whether or not they have immigrated, or according to ethnic background, these numbers can only be estimated.

With the reservation that the figures are only approximate, Freyne-Lindhagen found the percentage of immigrants in the Christian Democratic and Left parties to be relatively high, not least in relation to the overall immigrant population in Örebro. The immigrant membership of the Center Party is very small, though their youth organization shows a higher number of immigrants in its membership base and on the board of the local branch. The Social Democratic Party, a large party in the municipality, has the most immigrants in absolute numbers, but in percent the figures are closer to the relative average. The Green Party is very small in Örebro, with a membership so low that interested immigrants have been given political assignments.

Freyne-Lindhagen thus found that there is not only underrepresentation of immigrants with respect to public assignments, but that this likely also applies to membership numbers and assignments within the party organizations. Only the leftists and Christian democrats appeared to have an immigrant representation in their parties that equalled or was higher than the corresponding average in the municipality. All parties stated having difficulty reaching the immigrant groups.

In Freyne-Lindhagen's opinion, the parties are poor channels for immigrant groups. They do not fulfill their recruiting responsibilities and are not good at advancing the interests of immigrants. This means that immigrants remain invisible and political issues that concern them do not find their way onto the political agenda.

She wonders why the parties do not do more – and offers the explanation that there can be an inherent sluggishness in

the parties and their quest for voters. To exemplify this, she notes that most of the parties have wanted to engage Christian voters. There are, however, some 5000 residents of the municipality who are of the Islamic faith. She wonders what interest Örebro's political parties have in these potential voters and members.

Only in cases of exception, and then most often via material sent out centrally by the parties, have these groups received information in languages other than Swedish. The immigrant collective comprises a large number of linguistic groups and this is seen as too resource-consuming. Only groups that are large in numbers, at the national level – Finns, and in Örebro – Assyrians/Syrians, appear to have spurred the interest of the parties. The immigrants now found in the political parties appear to become involved without passing through the immigrant associations. Thus these organizations appear seldom to serve as platforms for political involvement. The exceptions here are the Syrian and El Salvadorean associations, which maintain close contact with the Christian Democratic and Left parties, respectively.

In the municipality of Örebro, the parties have rallied around a special immigration program for integration (Immigration policy program – A program for integration). There are, however, no programs aimed at individual immigrant groups based on their individual needs. (The integration program is also somewhat controversial for both the parties and immigrant representatives.)

The parties in Örebro whose efforts with respect to immigrants have been more successful, have weathered the decline in voter participation better than others. Perhaps the crisis of the unsuccessful parties is in part due to their having concentrated, to a much larger degree, on the middle class, whose social and political needs are limited. New Swedish citizens, on the other hand, have strong motives for becoming party members, believes Freyne-Lindhagen, and there is every reason for the parties to take note of this need – both in Örebro and at the national level.

Efforts to increase participation in politics

Do personal elections hold new possibilities?

In one of the sub-studies of this project, Paula Rodrigo Blomqvist brings up the significance of the personal election with respect to the voter participation of foreign nationals (*Utanför demokratin? del 4, Personvalets betydelse för valdeltagandet, Excluded from Democracy? Part 4, The importance of personal elections for voter participation*). The Swedish variation of this was introduced in the 1998 elections, however, was a minor step toward personal elections in comparison to Denmark whose system went the entire way. The party election system still remains, though it has been made easier for voters to mark the ballot for a particular candidate that they would like to elect.

What has been under debate, is whether groups who are underrepresented in politics have a better or worse chance of being heard through increased use of personal elections. There is some misgiving that it will be the names on the ballot that are already familiar that will benefit, and that it will be even more difficult for less well-known newcomers, e.g., immigrant candidates. Others claim the opposite, that many immigrants come from countries where personal elections are more common and that they would therefore find this a more natural system. Expanding the personal election system also offers groups more opportunity to influence, by concentrating their vote on a single candidate, as Togeby shows to be the case in Denmark (Togeby 1999). If, as an immigrant voter, one believes he/she will be better represented by a candidate with an immigrant background, such a reform should increase the incentive to vote.

Of all those entitled to vote, 79 percent participated in 1998 municipal elections. Of the foreign nationals with the right to vote in local elections, 35 percent participated. Rodrigo Blomqvist shows that even as elected representatives, immigrants are poorly represented. Following the election of 1998, the figures for immigrant candidates elected to muni-

cipal councils total about half of their relative overall numbers (in percent) in the population, i.e., 5.4 percent representation and 10 percent of the population, respectively.

More immigrants in personal election campaigns

Rodrigo Blomqvist's survey of nominated foreign-born candidates in Stockholm, Göteborg, Malmö and Botkyrka, show that 19 percent of the candidates with immigrant backgrounds (foreign-born) state that they ran personal election campaigns in the 1998 elections. According to a study conducted by Bäck & Soininen, this figure is also consistent with figures outside the large urban centers (Bäck & Soininen, 1999). Bäck and Soininen's study showed it to be somewhat more common for immigrant candidates than for native Swedish candidates to run a personal election campaign in the municipal elections. The opposite was true for parliamentary elections, where slightly more native Swedish candidates took advantage of this form of campaigning.

In her questionnaire, Rodrigo Blomqvist asks whether the candidates who ran personal election campaigns directed them to specific voter groups. The response to this showed that immigrant candidates had to a large extent directed their campaigns to the immigrant group. Half of them had done this in one or more languages other than Swedish, and in that sense also targeted specific ethnic groups.

More candidates – more voters

Did the increased element of personal elections have any effect on the voter participation of foreign nationals? A comparison of the number of candidates that ran personal election campaigns and the voter participation in the larger urban centers, shows Malmö to be the municipality where voter participation by foreign nationals fell the most, i.e., 9 percentage points, and where the number of candidates, 29 persons, was lowest. In Stockholm, where voter participation fell the least, i.e., 2 percent percentage points, the number of candidates was highest, at 86 persons. When we look at Örebro, the object of another of our sub-studies, we conclude that this is where the biggest decline is seen, 12 percentage points, and also where the lowest number of immigrant candidates is found.

Differences between ethnic groups

Does voter participation differ in different ethnic groups? Rodrigo Blomqvist studies the voter groups in the sample that have a minimum of 200 persons in the two elections studied, the 1994 and 1998 elections. In Stockholm, she finds groups from The UK, USA, Chile, Finland, Iraq, Iran, Poland and Turkey that meet these criteria; in Malmö, groups from the former Yugoslavia and Poland; and in Göteborg, a group from Iran. Botkyrka is not included in her analysis, since none of the ethnic groups in the sample meet the 200-person criterion.

Rodrigo Blomqvist also excludes The UK and the US, arguing that these cases are “different” in that these groups are unlikely to be affected by marginalization and do not have the same needs with respect to ethnic group and identity as other immigrant groups.

Rodrigo Blomqvist’s analysis of the voter participation of different ethnic groups shows that the Yugoslavians (Malmö) have the lowest number of candidates, two persons. This group also shows the biggest change in voter participation, having fallen an entire 16 percentage points. The same is basically true for the Polish group (Stockholm), also with only two candidates, where voter participation has fallen 15 percentage points. The Finnish group (Stockholm) has the highest number of candidates, 12 persons, and their voter participation has fallen, “only” 8 percentage points, much less. The Turkish group (Stockholm) does not fit the pattern, with only 7 immigrant candidates but a voter participation whose decline is small, at only 3 percentage points.

Have the personal elections had no impact?

Is it thus the personal election campaigns of the immigrant candidates that has affected voter participation? Personal election campaigns should have made the candidates more visible, which should have had a positive impact on voting, especially if the candidates to a large degree concentrated their campaigns on immigrant voters. Rodrigo Blomqvist says, however, that the personal election campaigns in Sweden have hardly had an impact on voter participation. The more candidates an ethnic group had, the smaller the drop in voter participation. But whether or not these candidates ran personal election campaigns does not appear to have made any difference. She draws the conclusion that there is a certain element of ethnic voting, i.e., voters who vote for can-

didates that belong to their own ethnic group. This suggests that social representation is important for voting, which is consistent with Togeby's comparison of ethnic groups in Danish elections. Togeby's thesis also suggests that it is the possibility of voting for a particular person that has led to higher voter participation in Denmark – and that, despite marginalization and a lack of individual resources, a collective mobilization of the groups occurs to elect candidates from their own ethnic group.

More information for the uninformed immigrants?

Erik Olsson examines a number of efforts in Stockholm, Göteborg, Trollhättan and Umeå intended to increase voter participation in the 1998 elections (*Utanför demokratin? del 5, Strategi för demokrati. Excluded from Democracy? Part 5, A strategy for democracy*). All of these projects and measures have held up the image of the “immigrant” before them. Olsson's first question is therefore whether immigrants really are a sufficiently homogeneous category to serve as a target group for such efforts? He believes it is difficult to capture the diversity encompassed by such broad categories such as country of origin, language, religion or ethnic belonging, or the number of years one has been in Sweden. Underlying the democratic efforts in Göteborg, was a perception that the goal was to integrate immigrants in some sense. One of the purposes of the project was to “increase voter participation by immigrants and strengthen their participation in society.” The target group was thus *immigrants*, not the *politically weak* or other underrepresented categories in general. The emphasis was on different ethnic groups having different requirements when they came to Sweden. Olsson's view is that Göteborg's democratic efforts were to a large degree aimed at an assumed lack of knowledge – that the reason for low voter participation was to be found in the potential voters' ignorance. He found a similar point of departure used in Trollhättan. “It is a question of civic knowledge.”

Can education fill the democracy deficit?

In Göteborg, democracy project efforts were made in collaboration with adult education programs. This orientation suggests that, there, they had seen that the problem was, at least in part, one of missing information and/or knowledge.

A central thought in many democracy projects has been that it should be possible to educate away parts of the democratic deficit. Those who failed to vote, the passive immigrants, would be given the chance to learn about the Swedish democratic system by way of study groups and courses.

An overview of what has been done in different areas of Stockholm shows that even there, they have firmly directed efforts at filling assumed gaps in knowledge – by informing immigrants on who could vote, how the political process worked, what areas one could have influence in and a general how-to on voting. All of these efforts were characterized by a confidence in the information used, i.e., billboards, brochures, information distributed via the media, etc.

That is not to say that those involved and responsible for these efforts were not aware that it takes more than information to change development. But the deciding factor has nevertheless been the measures at hand, more than the actual problems that lay beneath the lack of political involvement. In Olsson's opinion, this type of information can be of use, but that it does not identify the reasons for the lack of participation in the first place.

Civil society take over

In Husby, in Stockholm, civil society took the initiative to further democratic efforts by forming a reference group, made up of area project leaders and associations, where plans could be discussed and new ideas and initiatives could come from the local civil society. Another example of the civil society input was Göteborg's *Etikdepå*, where they created an extensive network of people with experience in the area and promoted a relaxed, informal dialogue between these groups and others, and where knowledge, views and ideas could be collected and exchanged.

Dialogue and reconsideration

Olsson concludes that these efforts were, as a rule, based on the target group being "immigrants", and on the conception that low voter participation had to do with a lack of knowledge on the part of these immigrants. With this as a starting point, there was a consistent concentration on informing and explaining. Olsson notes that efforts that leave no room for dialogue and reevaluation risk fastening in their strategy that focuses on immigrants and knowledge. Measures that allowed room for critical reflection, dialogue and reevaluation,

as in Husby, have a much greater chance of modifying the definition of the problem and correcting the course of a project in terms of target groups and actions to be taken.

Olsson says that the terrain should determine what the map looks like and not vice versa. This does not mean that we should go forth with no plan or strategy at all. Indeed, he advocates quite the opposite – substantial investment in and the testing of different ideas and ways of implementing things before a project is scaled up – and that opportunities for reevaluation are also included in the planning.

Supported by the research, Olsson states that we know that Sweden is heading toward political segregation, where many residents of foreign descent (and to a certain extent also their children) risk winding up on the side of society whose influence in predominating political structures is inadequate or lacking. It is possible that new immigrants do not know how to vote or why they should, but the right to vote is connected to a minimum of 3 years of permanent residency in Sweden. Thus the question is: What knowledge is lacking in the many categories of people being squeezed into the group called “immigrants” and preventing immigrants from voting? Olsson tells us that experience shows that it is hardly knowledge of the system in Sweden or the political debate that keeps people from participating.

Marginalized and resource-poor

According to Olsson, the figures for both categories, *foreign nationals* and *immigrant-dense areas*, refer to the same thing – a marginalization of certain groups of the population who have nothing in common other than that they can be identified as lacking resources. It is among such groups that the biggest decline in voter participation in federal elections was noted (for Swedish nationals), i.e., people with low incomes, low levels of education, no work, etc. It is possible that immigrants to Sweden come to experience this social marginalization faster than others. Basically, it is a question of how democracy works in relation to the processes that lead to people of foreign descent, as well as the working class and other groups, winding up on the periphery of power.

Strategies to increase voter participation would have been different had they simply been aimed at people with poor resources rather than, as is now the case, aimed at a particular, and very heterogeneous, sub-category, namely *immigrants*. Neither has there been any success with attempts to mobilize these people to turn the falling trend around. In

fact, the opposite is true, the figures for foreign nationals and immigrant-dense electoral districts continued to fall.

Olsson claims that the democratic deficit has to do with poor resources and thereby employment, with equal opportunity in the labor market, the housing market, education and many other areas. It is a matter of breaking the current marginalization of persons of foreign descent – especially those of non-European origin – as well as creating the conditions necessary for increased political representation of resource-poor members of society. It is a question of increasing the influence of those who are unable to make their voices heard within the framework of democratically elected structures.

Representation of resource-poor groups

Olsson says that the change being sought is connected to power, influence and political structures. Before any changes take place in other areas, resource-poor groups must be represented in democracy. He uses the example of Umeå and the democracy project organized by SIUM, a group responsible for coordinating a number of local ethnic associations. In Umeå, politicians were invited to attend meetings and conferences, and attempts were made to gain influence through letters to the editor, debate articles and other exposure in the media. Instead of trying to enlighten uninformed immigrants, the goal was to discuss problems with established politicians and members of civilian society. The initiative was somewhat controversial, and a number of parties reacted strongly to the public opinion the project was trying to bring about. At the same time as attempting this upward approach, initiatives were also aimed at the grassroots, in the form of association meetings, study groups, etc., in an attempt to stimulate the involvement of more foreign-born citizens. In Umeå, there was a conscious concentration on representation. As we have seen in the efforts made in Stockholm, for example, the problem may be related to how a publicly-financed organization can do this work without taking a political stand. The projects had to ensure there was no association with activities that could be construed as being involved in party politics. The ultimate question, says Olsson, is thus who should organize the resource-poor groups.

However, some progress has been made in this area. Umeå was quite successful in achieving representation of persons with immigrant backgrounds in the parties. Lärjedalen in

Göteborg, and Kronogården in Trollhättan, two immigrant-dense areas, also have many immigrant residents who have assumed a place in the political structure. A Swede of Chilean origin, Luciano Astudillo, also came very close to becoming the chairperson of the social democratic youth organization, SSU.

Astudillo claims that the key factor today is that politicians lack personal experience of the issues that concern immigrants and resource-poor groups. There is a tendency for elitism to be strengthened through politics, and for the marginalized groups to lose power, as those who already have power gain more. It is a matter of finding interfaces between the people represented and the people who represent them, by addressing marginalization issues in politics. The goal should be to bring politics and politicians closer to the reality of the resource-poor groups.

Perhaps the creation of ethnic networks is one way to do this, as Chilean politicians have done. The political establishment in Sweden has established codes. Gaining entry to influential circles can be problematic for someone who does not know these codes. Immigrants should therefore take advantage of their background and experience, and launch their own codes. Olsson suggests that new political arenas and experience exchange can offer opportunities to correct the course chosen. Perhaps this can lead, in dialogue with established Swedish politicians and, above all, people whose experience must be given voice, to better representation of resource-poor groups, says Olsson.

Closing discussion

Sweden has been a forerunner when it comes to extending the right to vote in local elections to include also foreign nationals. Since the first year this was in effect, 1976, to 1998, when voter participation by foreign nationals had fallen by almost one half, from 60 percent to 35 percent, however, development shows that participation in politics is not only connected to the formal right to vote. The trend witnessed for Sweden's foreign residents coincides with a general decline in voter participation in the population as a whole, although this decline is more highly accentuated in the immigrant population. The question is where we should look for explanations to this, which explanations are common to both voter groups and which can be attributed specifically to non-Swedish nationals.

Since 1976 when the right to vote was expanded, the earlier predominantly workforce-related immigration has been replaced by an influx of refugees and people immigrating for family reasons. For many of the groups and individuals who have immigrated, incentives to become a Swedish citizen or to participate in politics may have been limited. For the individual, this can be a simple matter of whether to participate or to not participate. In our form of democracy, one is under no formal obligation to vote. What is determinant, is whether the individual really has that choice or not – whether there are hindrances to his/her participation and, if so, what these hindrances might be.

Because the expanded right to vote in municipal and county council elections applies to foreign nationals and not some diffuse category of *immigrants*, it is these foreign nationals we refer to in connection to voter participation. Immigrants who have become Swedish citizens have full voting rights, including federal elections, and even if a look at these people's voter participation would also be interesting, we know that it is generally higher than that of foreign nationals, if not equally high as native Swedes.

The percentage of immigrants who apply for Swedish citizenship has varied greatly over the years. In the 1980s, it rose, with over 40 percent of the foreign nationals in the country in 1987 seeking Swedish citizenship. The propensity to naturalize also varies between nationality groups; nationals

of countries that it is easy to return to opt to keep their original citizenship to a greater extent than nationals of countries where it is harder to go back, e.g., Iran, Iraq and a number of African countries. Other Nordic nationals have little reason to change citizenship since, via a common labor market and passport union, they already enjoy many of the advantages changing citizenship would yield.

Are the reasons for the decline in voter participation of foreign nationals the same as those that explain the drop in participation of the majority, or should we be looking for reasons that relate to the migration itself? Do the reasons have to do with the incentives and requirements for integration of the individual? That is, with the length of one's stay in Sweden, proficiency in the Swedish language, or one's access to Swedish contacts? Or do they relate to the immigrant's background in another political system – a system with perhaps no tradition of democracy? Or should we be seeking explanations in Swedish society – how new immigrants are received, and whether or not they are permitted entry to the Swedish political arena? Or do they have to do with environment? The decline in voter participation has, after all, been more obvious in disadvantaged areas outlying the large urban centers.

As shown in the introduction, an important piece of the puzzle with respect to these areas is that the turnover of disadvantaged area-dwellers is extremely high. In the first half of the 1990s, half of those residing in these areas moved from them (Andersson 2000). A principle that applies to many in these areas is that as soon as people are financially able, i.e., have work, they move to an area with a better reputation, i.e., to areas less characterized by unemployment and social disadvantage, and away from schools where Swedish is a minority language. Many new immigrants and refugees have ended up in these same disadvantaged areas because it is here there are empty rental apartments to be found. In many cases, they are referred here by refugee reception services or housing agents.

Earlier research supports the conclusion that the composition and mobility of these voter groups has a negative effect on the voter participation of these areas. The most active residents of the areas, the ones who are most apt to vote, are also the first to move from there. As earlier election research statistics have shown, there is a strong relation between income and voter participation – the higher the income, the higher the voter participation. People with less education and lower income vote less. Thus, a number of factors indicate that people who live in disadvantaged areas vote less

than people in other areas. The exact reasons for this, however, we do not know. One could think that these people in particular have good reason to try to influence politics.

Swedish society and the conditions for new residents have changed since expansion of the right to vote in 1976. In the 1970s, Sweden was a society with stable economic growth and development in welfare; during the 1990s, there was high unemployment and austerity in the public sector. This is something that not least has affected the immigrant part of the population – in particular large refugee groups that arrived in the early 1990s.

In comparison with earlier decades, and even compared to the beginning of 2000, the conditions during the 1990s were unique and extreme. A very large number of the foreign nationals who had the right to vote in the 1998 elections came to Sweden as refugees in 1991–1994, a period during which Sweden received an unusually large number of refugees. These people came from nations wrought with civil conflict, such as Somalia, Bosnia, the former Yugoslavia, Kurdistan in Iraq, and southern Iraq and the uprisings against Saddam Hussein following the Gulf War. There were often inner conflicts within the groups about politics of the homeland and a life of exile. In addition to these exceptional conditions, in 1994, we had also introduced new legislation on asylum-seekers (*Lagen om mottagande av asylsökande*, LMA) which radically changed the terms regarding the reception of refugees. According to this law, even asylum-seekers were permitted to arrange their own housing during the time their applications for asylum and resident permits were being processed. This led to an increasing number of immigrants arranging their own housing and increasingly more arranging it in disadvantaged metropolitan areas. During this time, the disadvantaged areas saw a big influx of new immigrants. Many of these people are thus included in the category of foreign nationals with the right to vote in the 1998 elections, which is worth remembering when we look at the extremely low voter participation figures for these areas.

That is to say, the situation that prevailed for the 1998 elections was an extremely unique one, with a large number of relatively new refugees from nations with civil strife. On the other hand, even from the first “immigrant election” in 1976, there has been a trend toward decreasing voter participation. When we look at voter participation in Sweden as a whole over the last 50 years, we see that the 1970s show markedly high levels of voter participation. Perhaps the question we should instead be asking is why voter participation

was so high during this period. Another question is how voter participation of foreign nationals in Sweden compares to that seen in other countries.

The voter participation of foreign nationals proves to be generally low in local elections in countries that have introduced this type of limited political voting right. The variation between different ethnic groups is however large, from mere fractions to levels that exceed that of native-born voters. Comparison with a number of countries close to Sweden shows that participation in Sweden is higher than in Norway and the Netherlands, but lower than in Denmark. But even here, there appears to be big differences between ethnic groups.

Are there mechanisms in the election system that favor or disfavor mobilization with respect to the common interests created by background and migration? In Denmark, personal elections appear to have made it easier for groups to gain influence, and one can also observe an ethnic element in voting. Whether this is desirable or whether it bears with it the risk of carrying ethnicization and culturalization into the political arena, something we are otherwise critical of with respect to our view of societal problems as a whole, is another question.

On the other hand, when groups like the Turkish groups of a number of Danish cities mobilize, it is perhaps not primarily for reasons of ethnic belonging but rather because they share common societal needs, social and economic.

The fact that voter participation by foreign nationals in the municipal elections of 1976 constituted 2/3 of that of Swedish nationals in the federal elections for the same year, may be associated with particular mobilization efforts made in conjunction with the new right to vote – as well as with the fact that voter participation in Sweden was in general very high during this period. The number of nationality- and ethnic groups in Sweden was also considerably smaller than today. Of the refugee groups of that time, those from Chile were noted as showing a relatively high degree of mobilization in these elections.

The fact that the voter participation of foreign nationals later fell to more normal levels in comparison with other countries, can be related to the general downward trend and that the immigrant collective has become much more heterogeneous, with more groups stemming from societal systems distinctive from the Swedish system. We may then accept that, in part, integration takes time and that, in part, the voter participation of immigrants with the right to vote may never reach the same levels as native-born citizens.

Democracy presupposes the participation of the people, at the same time as the liberal form we recognize does not carry with it any obligation to participate. Thus when people choose to not partake, it is not entirely clear whether this should be interpreted as a dilemma for the democratic system – that some people have been excluded and can not participate, or whether their non-participation is an active protest – that they are interested but see their participation as meaningless because they can not change anything anyway. Or perhaps it is a sign that all is as it should be – that “no news is good news.” People are satisfied; the system is working.

Does the decline in the voter participation of foreign nationals have its roots in a lack of interest or lack of knowledge on the part of these individuals with the right to vote? Our sub-studies show that foreign nationals are generally less interested in Swedish politics than Swedish nationals, something that can be related to how long one has lived in Sweden. When it comes to knowledge of the political system, it is fairly evenly distributed between foreign- and Swedish nationals, with the exception of a familiarity with the political candidates, where studies from the 1990s show this knowledge to be considerably higher for Swedish nationals than for foreign nationals.

Confidence in politicians and civil servants also drops more sharply up to the last elections in 1998 for foreign nationals than for Swedes, and the number of attempts made by foreign nationals to influence municipal decisions also falls drastically during the same period. That is, a decreasing number of people believe they have a good picture of what the political parties represent. Despite the increased element of personal elections, few people know the candidates, and would-be voters have little faith in politicians and are doubtful that it really matters which party is in power.

As concerns political involvement, in the form of voter participation, party activities, political contacts, manifestations, political self-confidence and the ability to appeal decisions, levels are consistently lower for immigrants with the right to vote than for native Swedes.

The greatest indicator of whether a foreign national will vote or not is whether he/she belongs to a political party. Dwindling membership figures for the political parties may therefore be highly significant when looking at this particular category of legal voters. This is also supported by Grahn Strömbom's interviews. Among the motivations given by both immigrants and native Swedes for having chosen to abstain from voting, were: “limited political interest”, “par-

ties too similar”, “don’t identify with any party”, “distrust of politicians”, “politicians’ abuse of power”, and “disappointment with the cutbacks in the public sector”. The response here reflects reactions to current politics – manifested, in part, in an active choice to not vote. It is thus not a question of a lack of knowledge.

Levels of political involvement also differ within the immigrant collective, depending on where an immigrant comes from and how long he/she has been in Sweden. People who immigrated from the neighboring Nordic countries show a higher level of involvement, while those from other countries in Europe, including Yugoslavia, Poland, Bosnia and Estonia show extremely low levels of interest. And here, a comparison of the different groups shows a particularly steep drop-off in the voter participation of Yugoslav and Polish nationals.

Some of the change in voter participation is likely related to changes in the composition of the groups. For example, changes in the “Yugoslav national” group are considerably more tangible. Many Yugoslavian nationals came to Sweden as migrant workers during the 1960s and 1970s. Many of these people retained their Yugoslavian citizenship for a long time, the plan being to work in Sweden for a few years and then return home. Retaining citizenship was also necessary if they owned property in the homeland. During the Balkan wars, the former Yugoslavia was divided, as were the immigrant groups that came from there. This meant that the Yugoslav national group in Sweden shrank, since some members of this group became naturalized Swedish citizens, and were replaced instead by new refugees, for the most part from Kosovo. Conflicts from the homeland followed these refugees to Sweden, resulting in great polarization within the group. Many of the earlier migrant workers from the former country were also highly critical of the position taken by the West, including Sweden, in the Balkan wars. That is to say, there are many factors that may have influenced both those who were still Yugoslav nationals and former Yugoslav nationals who had naturalized, with respect to their motivation to participate in Swedish elections.

Changes in immigration patterns have thus significantly affected groups like the Yugoslavian group. Groups who came as migrant workers have met new refugee groups from areas plagued by violent civil conflicts. And because the problems in the old country are unsettled, it can be difficult to let go of one’s concern and involvement in those problems and begin a new political life here in Sweden, as shown by the Örebro study. There is, however, no concrete evidence

of this. The composition and backgrounds of the groups can in all likelihood play a part in participation in Swedish politics, but in order for us to make this claim with any decisiveness, studies must be done of the individuals of these groups, which we were unable to do in this context.

The Örebro study shows a strong relation between the areas where relatively newly arrived foreign nationals live, including Yugoslavs and Somalians, and low voter participation. The areas with the lowest voter participation are the same areas to which many new refugee groups were referred during the period 1994–1998.

In general, it appears that the longer one has lived in Sweden, the closer one approaches the activity patterns of native Swedes. Immigrants demonstrate a generally lower involvement than native Swedes, but the participation levels for certain forms of involvement – such as party activities, manifestations and political self-confidence – of those who have lived in Sweden the longest, lie very near those of native Swedes.

The levels of interest, involvement and knowledge of Swedish politics are thus, overall, lower among immigrants and foreign nationals. The question is whether this is due to individual factors or to obstacles that prevent them from participating in the Swedish political structure and/or Swedish society.

The Örebro study shows a strong relation between economically and socially disadvantaged areas and low voter participation. In Örebro, such areas are, however, inhabited by a population of which a large majority are Swedish nationals. Immigrants represent – at most – only a quarter of the people who live there. Studies of voters in federal elections, i.e., of Swedish nationals, show a strong relation between economic and social marginalization, lack of employment, lower incomes, etc., and low voter participation levels. It is above all these so-called *resource-poor* groups who did not vote in the 1998 elections. Researchers show that voting has become a class issue, that participation is above all becoming a middle class concern, and that the working class is withdrawing – whether in resignation or protest of the political winds and development, is not certain.

More than one of the sub-studies in this project looked at the role that environment, especially that of disadvantaged areas, can play in political involvement. The segregated metropolitan areas are distinct in a number of ways, and income is one factor that shows a clear relation to voter participation in general. The question is whether it is the concentration itself, of people who find themselves in socially and economically weaker positions, that adds to the political passivity

observed. It would not be overly presumptuous to expect political exclusion to line up with economic and social disadvantage.

As a number of the studies in the project show, it is not easy to find relations between disadvantaged metropolitan areas and voting. The exception to this was in Göteborg, where a relation was shown between average income of an area and the propensity to vote (*Utanför demokratin?, del 2, Varför röstar inte invandrarna?, Excluded from Democracy? Part 2, Why don't immigrants vote?*). In the second study, where unemployment was used as a measure of social position, housing area had no effect whatsoever on political participation or political self-confidence (*Utanför demokratin? del 3, Resurser för politisk integration, Excluded from Democracy? Part 3, Resources for political integration*). In none of the cases, could we find support for a negative effect for the voter participation of immigrants based on housing area.

The opposite was true for native Swedes. Here, clearly negative effects could be related to housing area, with voter participation falling, as well as the number of political contacts, political self-confidence and confidence in one's ability to appeal decisions, in step with the area's rate of unemployment rising. Thus for native Swedes, an area's level of disadvantage affects an individual's political participation, regardless of whether that individual him/herself is unemployed. For immigrants, the tendency is reversed – a housing area can exert a positive effect with respect to one's political self-confidence and confidence in one's ability to appeal decisions. It appears that the density itself, of immigrants in the area, has a positive effect on these participation factors.

Here, we can tie in to the tendency toward ethnic voting found in the study of personal elections – a tendency reflected in the Danish study conducted by Lise Togeby, i.e., that the concentration of members of one's "own group" can lead to political mobilization in political elections. The reasons immigrants give for living in these areas are somewhat different than those given by native Swedes living there. In the case of the immigrants, many have chosen to settle there, near their family or countrymen; many Swedes, on the other hand, live in these areas because they lack better alternatives, some whose social problems make it difficult to find housing elsewhere. The areas may therefore have a more negative clang for native Swedes than they do for some of the immigrants, for whom compensations such as closeness to family and countrymen may be factors.

According to our analyses, immigrants were less active in political parties, established fewer political contacts, partook

of fewer manifestations, expressed having lower political self-confidence, and saw themselves as less able to appeal the decisions of government authorities, than native Swedes. This was due to their having fewer resources, being less proficient in Swedish, having less opportunity to practise civic skills and to acquire general knowledge on civics, and being less often asked to take part in politics. Underlying this lack of resources and opportunity, we found a relation between their inferior position in working life and association life.

Apart from proficiency in Swedish, however, which explains some things, the lack of resources played no significant part in voter participation. Here, it was more difficult to find a relation. The absence of the right to vote in federal elections seems to have some importance, since immigrants who had become Swedish citizens voted more. But even this can not fully explain the situation.

When we compare the development over time, we see that the differences between immigrants and native Swedes, with respect to all forms of political involvement, have grown since the end of the 1980s, in particular the difference in voter participation. The increase is not dramatic, but it is there. When we look at what has happened in Swedish society during this time, we find that an economic restructuring has taken place – with high unemployment impacting immigrants in particular. We also find that native Swedes have gained some ground that the immigrants have not, i.e., a rising level of education. So although it may appear on the surface to be a question of the personal resources and involvement of individuals – whether one is proficient in Swedish and has an interest in Swedish politics – there is a deeper structure that lies beneath. Does the immigrant have a job? Does he/she belong to a (Swedish) association? Does he/she have opportunities to practise the language and acquire civic knowledge and the skills necessary in politics? We are talking about interplay, between the individual and society. Knowledge, will and motivation are required on the part of the individual. But a society that offers opportunities to acquire this knowledge, to practise these skills, and that opens the door and says “we need you” – is also necessary.

Proficiency in the Swedish language and civic skills, both of which are related to specifically Swedish conditions, can bear reference to factors related to migration. At the same time, we can assume that a person who has been politically active earlier can have acquired certain skills that may be relevant even here. But immigration also entails a sense of being divided between the old homeland and the new – the reason for immigrating in the first place. Perhaps one’s interest

is still oriented toward the former homeland. Perhaps the move or escape to Sweden is not at all so final that one is planning to stay for any length of time. On average, more than one quarter of all immigrants emigrate again within a 10-year period. Conflicts in the former homeland, family members left behind, etc., many factors make letting go of one's involvement there difficult. The politics of an immigrant's former homeland are also part of one's baggage, for better or for worse. In the best case, one bears useful knowledge and skills; in the worst – one shuns a world of danger and corruption.

Even if one was interested in politics in the old country, the difference in political systems between the countries may constitute a hinder. An immigrant may have difficulty getting his/her political bearings; there is perhaps nothing here that corresponds to the parties one knew in the homeland, and the issues on the political agenda are completely different. This is a situation that is closely related to the migration itself. Integration takes time, not least in a political context. But it can also be a question of the political content or its orientation. Many find that politics in Sweden are “trivial”, and find it difficult to distinguish between the parties. Voting can seem to hold no meaning – the politics will be virtually the same anyway. “Politics don't affect me.”

When it comes to the decrease in voter participation of the majority population, the explanation offered is that it is socially resource-poor groups whose voting is on the decline. This matches conditions in other countries. Why then, did so many Swedes vote before? This, researchers explain, is due to our having a strongly established societal norm in Sweden, that we should get out there and vote. A norm that may be rooted in earlier popular movement-based Swedish politics. For people who immigrated, such a norm can be completely foreign.

Much suggests that the voting norm is now losing ground – in the majority population as well. The question is whether this has to do with the direction politics is taking – whether resource-poor groups see politics as something that has to do with others and not them. If politics are not likely to entail any particular changes for your everyday life, then turning your back on politics is fairly logical, as well as a conscious action that could very well be what we see happening in immigrant groups. If this is the case, we have found the reason for the declining participation in the Swedish political system and in the political parties. Whose interests are these parties pursuing?

As concerns voter participation, we saw that it was above

all members in the political parties who participated. But how do things look inside the parties? Are immigrants welcome? Participants of Dahlstedt's focal groups had varying experiences here. Much suggested that the parties see the importance of involving the immigrant part of the population in politics. There are then obstacles blocking the way to influence and power. Whether or not these obstacles are bigger for immigrants than for other new groups in politics, e.g., youth etc., is hard to say. In times when party membership numbers are dwindling, there is no doubt a large risk that a small circle will monopolize the power, and make it more difficult for newcomers to assert themselves. Newcomers and immigrants are let in as long as they pose no threat to the leading echelon, as our informants tell us. This is likely a form of power logic that is hard to force. Dahlstedt also wonders whether, in addition to this, there may be mechanisms in Swedish democracy that interact with discrimination and marginalization.

The political parties witness, on their part, the difficulties of reaching new immigrant groups. And they continue to behave in traditional Swedish fashion, by sending out information letters and invitations. They feel they do not have the resources to translate the material or make personal contact, especially in times of shrinking membership numbers. The number of efforts made to reach immigrant groups were fewer in 1998 than in 1979, i.e., their ambition has seen better days.

Immigrant associations that could theoretically be used to bridge the gap between new immigrants and the democratic system, are experiencing the same problem – a big need, few active members, and a lack of resources. They are also often met by indifference and distrust. Even the immigrant associations live a life in the margin, and the number of places for immigrants to meet the majority are limited – especially for those who have no work.

The representatives of the political parties also cite difficulties related to the immigrant's abilities in Swedish. For the parties, the problem is that potential voters come from many places – translation would be needed to many different languages. One question that is not addressed in any of our sub-studies, is whether there may also be a fear of bringing the immigrants into the parties – whether one perhaps believes that the reactions of native Swedish voters might be a negative one. That is, a question of to what extent “everyday racism” also permeates the political institutions of society.

Several of our sub-studies point to reasons for the falling voter participation and participation in politics in general

that relate to the social position of many immigrants – one of exclusion on the margins of society. A lack of integration in society in general has repercussions for political participation as well – even if the connection need not be immediate. One might also imagine that exclusion could lead to people mobilizing themselves in an attempt to effect change. But this presupposes a political system that will listen. The lack of integration can be connected to an individual's motivation and orientation with respect to Sweden or the former homeland, but also to the will and ability of Swedish society to receive these people as new members. Is it exclusion mechanisms and discrimination that predominate? Or do we see newcomers as individuals who hold resources needed to develop the democratic society?

One thing mentioned by many of our political contacts of foreign descent is the history of this exclusion, the uncertainty of whether one really belongs in society or not, and whether one has really been invited, or is permitted, to participate. In their experience, democratic society is highly rhetoric in construction, and in practice leaves much to be desired. Ethnic diversity and integration had little to do with their reality. Politics is mainly pretty words spoken during election time, and otherwise something that goes on over the heads of those it concerns. Urban regeneration programs with the express requirement of gaining local support among the residents, have been largely decided upon by civil servants and government authorities. In cases where initiatives have come from the grassroots, they fasten in the great wheels of integration bureaucracy, seen by many as a hinder for public participation.

Several of the political actors told of the difficulty of gaining entry to the parties and associations, and most of them had experienced marginalization and discrimination in different areas of society. Not only in their working life, but also in their other dealings with government authorities, in the school, from neighbors, in the media and from the political parties. As an immigrant one receives the stamp of being worth less. This is also true of living in a disadvantaged area. Those who are affected are above all people with black hair and perhaps even more those with darker skin. Discrimination and racism are the most effective exclusion mechanisms, but in the end, it all leads to a negative perception of oneself and lack of confidence in one's own ability to effect change. When laws and regulations designed to protect the rights of individuals against discrimination and racism are not followed, or if breaking these laws carries no penalty, a distrust of society as a whole naturally follows.

Political representation is a determining factor in gaining power and influence – and integration. People of foreign descent, especially those who have been forced into the margin, are poorly represented in today’s democratic institutions. The gap between native Swedes and foreign-born citizens has decreased somewhat with respect to party activity, above all as a result of native Swedes’ declining participation. Activity is, however, still very low in both groups. The representation of foreign-born- and foreign nationals in political assemblies increased somewhat in the election of 1998, but is still far below their relative numbers in the population as a whole. An examination of this also shows that native Swedish politicians do not speak up on behalf of immigrants. Not even 1 percent of the politicians of native Swedish descent asked, mentioned immigrants or refugees among the groups they perceived themselves as representing (Bäck & Soininen, 1998, 1999). Furthermore, representatives in the political system with foreign backgrounds are often well-integrated after having lived in Sweden for many years and are thereby no longer in contact with the reality that many immigrants in the disadvantaged areas live in. One exceedingly relevant question is therefore: Who represents whom?

More and more of the pieces come together here. It is the residents of disadvantaged areas whose reality must make its way onto the political agenda. It is the active forces in these communities who must make their views known – not least in the “integration bureaucracy” and the political system. It is these people who must be represented in political arenas – in order that their problems be made visible and for new role models to emerge. Candidates of foreign descent would then not always be called upon to represent “integration issues”, as they now are – voluntarily or otherwise – but could instead focus on other areas of societal issues, as other political actors do, which would likely also raise their status.

In its final report, the Commission for Democracy (Demokratiutredningen) expresses strong criticism of the inability of the political parties to rejuvenate themselves, and show concern regarding political exclusion – not least of citizens with foreign backgrounds. The commission’s vision is one of development away from a democratic elite and in the direction of participatory democracy, where every individual participates and is empowered, and where civilian society’s “free associations, independent of the state” are active participants. They would like to see more room for local self-government and seek “creative, autonomous meeting places,” apart from elected representative democracy. The commission insists that local government must be empowered. This would make

municipalities a more interesting and more relevant arena for political influence. It is above all these local arenas that shall gain influence (SOU 2000:1) – in this, our global era. What are the many native Swedes, and not least society's immigrants who are more interested in national and international affairs who are not content with discussing whether or not there should be new intersection in front of the train station to do?

What if the 1998 election was indeed a break in the trend – if the extreme conditions of the labor market and refugee reception have not been completely “healed”? What if the immigrant residents of the disadvantaged areas do not integrate? If no-show integration processes are replaced by segregation? Or if an increasing number of people do find jobs in the current economic boom, but that some groups get left out permanently?

Despite democracy being a political system that does not outwardly oppress and formally exclude, there remain great differences and inequity in the positions of influence different groups hold in society, in practice. Dahlstedt says that we must conduct a closer study of how our democratic rules of play aid in the creation of ethnic segregation – contrary to the basic ideals and visions of democracy. How does Swedish democracy construct “immigrants”? In ways that presuppose stigmatization and bias? How does Swedish democracy interact with racialization and discrimination?

For example, can a technical detail such as where electoral divisions are drawn play a part here? In the Örebro study, Henry Pettersson and Marianne Freyne-Lindhagen take up the question of whether, if we were to alter the boundaries of electoral districts to follow the lines of immigrant-dense housing areas more closely, this would force parties to come up with immigrant candidates in order to get the vote in these areas. This method has been used in the US to help poorly represented groups.

There is a need to focus on marginalizing mechanisms themselves rather than on their practical consequences – how people of foreign descent become or are forced into becoming unwilling, uninformed, passive and segregated members of society. This political marginalization is not a statistical relation but the result of a power structure that is constantly changing. How, then, do we get past marginalization and social and political exclusion? Not through merely seeing the state of being an immigrant (immigrantship) as a new class marker, insists Dahlstedt, as the Commission for Democracy (Demokratiutredningen) does in its final report, as if one type of subordination – that of class, has today been

replaced by another – that of ethnicity. We must get away from unintentionally holding up of ethnicity as the ultimate explanation to societal phenomena. This means making the perspectives and experience of marginalized groups clearly visible and adapting institutions and other civic structures to our multiethnic society. Listening and talking is not enough. The majority must share its power – let the people who stand outside democratic institutions in.

Access to political rights is obviously a question of power and influence. Who stands to win? Who stands to lose? But it is also a question of political culture, about a country's history as an immigrant nation and how we view immigrants – whether we expect them to return to their original homeland, in which case there is no reason to grant them political rights, or whether we anticipate their staying on and consider political rights an important part of the integration process. Suffrage and participation in the political system may be the road to integration, even when times are tough in the labor market, as well as an important way to influence how society distributes resources.

After all, the right to vote extended to many immigrant residents of Sweden goes only halfway. Political parties have less interest in recruiting non-Swedish nationals because they do not have the right to vote in federal elections. For would-be voters, it can be difficult to get involved because much of what happens in election campaigns is focussed on federal politics. On the other hand, political activity and involvement could be a path to individual integration, as well as a way to promote different collective interests. Extending the right to vote to include also federal elections, would constitute a recognition that all members of society count when it comes to democratic decision-making, which concerns everyone's day-to-day life, regardless of the nationality we hold for one reason or another.

The Commission for Democracy (Demokratiutredningen) places no demand that suffrage for foreign nationals permanently residing in the country be extended to include federal elections. There is clearly no political majority in favor of this. This can also be seen in other countries in Europe, and is reflected in the EU's difficulty in furthering the interests of its many immigrant residents. Anti-immigrant and ultra right-wing parties are on the advance in many European countries. The reason for this can hardly be the power immigrants have – rather immigrant groups have, through their powerlessness, themselves become victims in the battle for democracy.

Because of their limited numbers, the voice of immigrants

in most countries is of limited importance to the power balance. One exception to this is Belgium, where many immigrants are expected to vote for French-speaking parties, which has in turn boosted support for Vlaams Blok, a Flemish group, and their anti-immigrant program. In order to slow the advance of right-wing extremists, the majority has therefor made voting mandatory – though, thus far, without result. In this situation, where right-wing extremism is winning ground in many countries in Europe, political parties have lain low with respect to integration efforts like expanding the right to vote. France is a clear example of this, where the Front National has stepped up its opposition, leaving the other parties more cautious in their demands for immigrant rights.

The world is changing and in many areas there is positive talk of globalization. Globalization is said to be the reason that we must accept that jobs disappear to the other side of the planet. When capital moves quicker than the eye and forces our cost of living up, the explanation offered is – globalization. But few speak of migration as an obvious result of this globalization – at least not in positive terms. Migration must naturally be one of the more important features of globalization. In the global market, people move to follow job opportunities and a better life. If civil and political rights of the future remain tied to nationality and can not follow this movement, large groups in Sweden and around the world will end up excluded from democracy.

Nationality belongs to the national state, and the national state loses meaning in *globalization* or *Europeanization*. However, the basis for democracy remains the national state. Increasing the possibility of becoming a naturalized citizen should therefor, theoretically, be a way to improve the conditions for foreign residents to participate. The Swedish Government proposal to allow dual citizenship should therefor help to increase political participation. Facilitating dual citizenship would also be a symbolic gesture – making citizenship a form of acceptance of the immigrant as a full member of society.

Making citizenship accessible is perhaps a first step in the political integration process. Western countries should hasten the introduction of this opportunity to guarantee immigrants and their children with permanent residency citizenship, insists migration researcher Stephen Castles. However, citizenship will not solve all problems. Once we have many people marginalized, and a situation where racial discrimination and violence exists, making citizenship accessible must be seen as a precondition to a solution, rather than a solution in itself.

Neither does formal citizenship imply equal access to society's resources. Castles' examples from Australia show how a "substantial" (i.e., not formal) citizenship has developed as a result of Australian postwar assimilation policy (Bauböck 1994). Cultural assimilation was seen as a precondition to becoming Australian, at the same time as the diversity among immigrants resulted in citizenship itself being redefined to include also the right to cultural dissimilarity.

There, immigrants discovered that formal equality as a citizen is, in itself, no protection against economic disadvantage, discrimination and marginalization. Neither does legal citizenship provide any direct power in large financial and political institutions. A reason for continued exclusion is above all the lack of economic resources and access to education. Another reason is that institutions base their evaluations on implicit cultural values that are exclusive and self-perpetuating. Newcomers who attempt to gain entry find that a "glass roof" hangs over them, making obstacles insurmountable because they are implicit and invisible.

For example, 25 years of access to formal citizenship has hardly helped Australia's Aboriginal population escape 150 years of oppression. Aboriginal people are still excluded from the labor market, with an unemployment rate of over 50 percent. Their social welfare is dramatically worse than that of other Australians and they are, in practice, excluded from political power. The situation of the minorities in Australia has given rise to the question of the need for institutional change in an attempt to make citizenship full and real for all members of society.

For all groups in Australia to be able to participate, are needed decisive changes in institutions and representation processes, Castles claims. This would mean a new multicultural citizenship – a citizenship that combines the principle of universality with respect to rights, with the need for differential treatment of groups with different values, interests and needs.

Integration takes time. The extreme decline in voter participation in some areas can be attributed in part to the high number of relatively new refugee groups in these areas – groups whose incentive to participate may be particularly weak. We know little about this and more research aimed at the particular groups – be these ethnic, religious, etc. – is necessary. The fact that the length of time a person has been in Sweden is an indicator, is not terribly surprising. And that children of immigrants later become more active than native Swedes increases our faith in the system. It works. But it takes time to work – a generation. Even though our studies

do agree with earlier findings, the sample is very small and we would therefore like to see follow-up studies that look at a broader base and provide the opportunity to make comparisons, e.g., between different groups. We also need to direct attention even more to the areas where people live, and also here conduct comparisons with the political participation of native Swedes.

In the 1970s, Sweden was a forerunner when it introduced the right to vote in local elections, as well as in the area of immigration policy. The shift in the 1990s to integration policy must clearly have an impact on people's reality. The falling numbers of voter participation and what can be called the crisis of the political system, with a sharp decline in membership in the political parties and popular movements, is a general problem. This is a problem that researchers show to be intimately tied to economic and social disadvantage of larger groups, groups which also include many immigrants. Migration easily carries with it lower participation in politics and civic life. There are a number of factors, related to migration, that have to do with the individual's motives and identity, and that are difficult to influence. Other factors are those related to the resources required in the new society, e.g., proficiency in the Swedish language and knowledge of Swedish society. Here, there are a number of important tasks that must be done in the introduction of new refugees and immigrants. This is work being done by National Integration Office. There is otherwise a risk that we get caught in a vicious circle – where the newcomer does not feel accepted and welcome, and thereby has difficulty motivating him/herself to expend the energy required to learn the codes of the new society.

It is again a question of access to work, the opportunity to support oneself, and a question of society's active efforts against discrimination and racism. It is also a question of opportunities to take part in political parties and organizations and to practise one's civic skills. Here, we would like to see an investigation into how recruitment to political parties occurs, including the organizations, e.g., trade unions, that make up the recruiting base for the political parties. Several of these important research tasks will in all likelihood be addressed by the new commission appointed to review power from an integration standpoint.

When women began placing demands on having a say in politics and threatened to form a special "women's party", the parties were quick to adopt the "every second a woman" approach (aimed at having women constitute half of all elected representatives). Naturally, women constitute a much

broader category, half of the population, but we believe that immigrant groups should be able to get a word or two in too – though much depends on their own mobilization. It is therefore paramount that we create the conditions necessary for them to rally around political issues.

The importance of immigrant organizations will increase if – instead of limiting themselves to an interest in the former homeland – they also assume an active role in Swedish society. This means their efforts must also be accepted and supported. The need for meeting places is great. The Commission for Democracy (Demokratiutredningen) suggests that municipalities see that there are inexpensive meeting places available for society's civilian activists. After hearing many complaints of how difficult it is to find such meeting places in the disadvantaged areas, we would like to add that this is also where these meeting places should be located.

Formal citizenship is a part of the integration process. The possibility of holding dual citizenship is a given in the development toward a global society. Formal citizenship will, however, not solve the problem of economic and social marginalization, nor will it solve problems related to discrimination and racism. Here, more active efforts are required. Existing laws must be enforced. Efforts must not stop in charming words – people must be confident in the ability of society's institutions to protect them. We also need to address the problem of everyday racism, that now sorts and files people according to different value scales.

And finally, we must ask ourselves whether an extension of the right to vote to include federal elections is not also a logical step of internationalization. This would imply that the right to vote and the ability to participate in democratic states would be attached to one's residence and not the national state's antiquated view of citizenship. Work in this area is being done centrally in the EU, work that could clearly use a thrust forward.

Integration in working life, in society, and not least in politics, is a question of immense proportions in determining the future of democracy in Europe – not least considering the emergence of right-wing extremist movements that do not accept the principle of equality between people and whose aim it is to abolish representative government.

The National Integration Office plans to invite groups from politics, research, associations and civilian groups to seminars, where we can carry on the discussion of how political integration can best be achieved.

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