

‘Mobilities, Knowledges, Politics’

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***Citizenship and social mobility,
an example from Sweden***

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Citizenship and social mobility, an example from Sweden

The recent debates concerning "honor-killing" and "forced marriage" have set an important focus on Scandinavian immigration politics. The debates show parts of a complex picture of relations between minority and majority. I would like to emphasize other aspects of this picture, which should not be overlooked in the "heat of the battle". The observation of everyday life in social relations, housing-queues and labour-market reveals different forms of interaction between majority and minority. The normative content of citizenship, integration and segregation are being challenged by the new multi-cultural reality.

European nations, in contrast to Canada and the US for example do not consider themselves to be migration countries, this despite the fact that in the nineties, Western Europe had as many foreign inhabitants as the US and Canada together (Suhrke 1995). In Europe, and especially in Scandinavia, there is a strong focus on the contents of immigration and refugee politics, on individuals' rights and duties and on social belonging and participation, e.g., integration (Brochmann 2002). Integration is hard to achieve, however without different forms of societal participation.

According to Baldwin "... *In discussions of the welfare state, northern Europe and especially Sweden represented the pinnacle of welfare evolution.*" (1997:95) Sweden has also acquired a reputation for successful implementation of integration policy in Europe. This view is seriously challenged by segregation and marginalization today. The Swedish integration minister Mona Sahlin has herself stated that the immigration policy of Sweden "*has failed miserably*" (Aftenposten 2003). Rosengård in Malmö is an example of how political intentions of integration have ended up as strong and lasting marginalization.

Rosengård (pop. 21 000) emerged through the so-called "Million Program" where in the period 1967-74 dense colonies of tall buildings were built on the fringes of large cities such as Malmö, Stockholm and Gothenburg in a government attempt to realize the functionalistic welfare vision of the sixties (Stigendal 1999, Arntsberg 1997) In these suburbs people of the working- and lower middle class were to have their leisure paradise, and thus the state banned private entrepreneurship and industry. The intention of the massive concrete buildings was a modern, functional and socially equalizing offer to the "svenska folkhemmet", but the development has gone in quite another direction. In the seventies and eighties social

segregation developed, as the privileged citizens left the suburbs whereas the less privileged stayed behind. During the nineties the borders gained another dimension as this social *otherness* was reinforced by ethnic *otherness*. Today it is the foreigners that inhabit the suburbs of the “Million project”.

As the social dimension has worsened dramatically segregation has created a social and an ethnic border between the suburbs and the rest of Sweden (Ristilammi 2000, Stigendal 1999). During my fieldwork in Rosengård (January-March 2002) an Arabic woman stated the general feeling of isolation when she said that she came from the third world, “*but now we in Rosengård live in a fourth world*”. Another woman expresses herself similarly when saying that she has lived 25 years in Sweden “*but I almost can’t speak any Swedish, because the Swedes never talk to me!*” As 90% of the population in Rosengård is of foreign origin, living in Rosengård is perceived as living *beside* Sweden rather than *in* Sweden. The intention of leisure and recreation within the “Million projects” has also constrained the possibility of private entrepreneurship (at least *legal* entrepreneurship). The unemployment rate in Rosengård is 90%, but parts of this are reported as *lack of activity*. The reason is that parts of the population in Rosengård are not even registered as seeking employment. The inhabitants are thus not only unemployed but also without relation to the labour market. The housing market, both private and public, has introduced employment proofs as the entrance ticket to accommodation outside Rosengård, something most Rosengårders cannot produce and thereby the weak mobility these groups experience is consolidated. Societal *otherness* is a gateway to normative dissolution, and problems such as crime, violence and vandalism is widespread in Rosengård. Good intentions of welfare for all have thus slowly through social exclusion and economic structures such as labor- and housing- markets developed into what is better termed as resolute marginalization with the welfare-gap this subsequently generates. This has led to diminishing trust in governmental actions against segregation. It also reveals a *lack of social will* to effect integration.

Numerous integration projects have been carried out in Rosengård. Several unsuccessful projects have constituted feelings of hopelessness both among people who live there (immigrants) and people who work there (“Swedes”, mostly administrative employees). The latest project is part of the government’s “big city initiative”, termed “National Example”. The goal is to form the big city “ghettos” in to dynamic, attractive arias, integrated into the

society as a whole. This project was partly the focus of my fieldwork and thesis with regards to how everyday life is or in this case is *not* influenced by integration projects.

Interestingly “National Example” shows how lack of social relations and thereby social mobility also determines the means and goals of integration projects. It seems as though the intention is to change the “damaged” society and make it commensurable with the wider national society. Since the projects are, in Rosengård at least, carried out within the boundaries of marginalization, this leads to the effect that only the marginalized and not the marginalizers are the focus of attention. At the same time it helps the nation (welfare state) to increase its knowledge of the marginalized groups, but not necessarily the marginalized groups to increase their knowledge of the nation (welfare state) (Pettersen 2000).

Regarding the social will to achieve integration, when segregation occurs, different strategies develop both “inside“ and “outside” the borders. Politicians maintained in a public meeting addressing the low voter participation in Rosengård, that although the public expressed goal is integration one has to realize that many Swedish citizens do not wish to have integration projects. They are happy with maintaining strong borders. Segregation is also met with different strategies “inside”: those who challenge the weak social mobility, and those who have “settled” passively or actively in this “fourth world freedom within”.

In Norway, Manuela Ramin-Osmundsen (Deputy Director General in the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, UDI) states that some immigrant groups are in danger of becoming a new lower class (NRK 13.03.03). The last investigation of living conditions (REF) shows that certain immigrant groups are having problems in the housing and labour markets in Norway. This in turn leads to weaker strings to the labour market and due rights. The situation in Rosengård shows the value of being proactive with measures to prevent the development of a new lower immigrant class in Norway. If immigrants are marginalized through social “ambivalence” and societal structures such as labour-and housing markets, traditional actions do not seem to be able to change this. In relation to citizenship and the debate concerning political participation and the *social dimension* of citizenship, these immigrants have political rights (to some extent) but they do not acquire a *social membership* in the Swedish society.

The political and social participation that constitutes the social dimension of citizenship creates new everyday life borders between “us” and “them” where the welfare state seems to decrease its function as social “glue”. In Sweden one can see the development of Rosengård-citizens as opposed to citizens of Sweden. The focus of attention is often on the minorities’ participation in majority arenas (Kymlicka 2001). The situation in Rosengård points to the need for accounting for the swiftly developing isolation of many minority areas. Here the marginalization more clearly reveals the need for majority participation as well as liberal majority arenas for minority participation. This shows that the challenge is no longer merely the participation of immigrants in majority arenas; the problem is whether the national welfare state manages to create socially participating citizens at all?

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