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REPORTS FROM THE MASTER'S PROGRAMME IN ETHNIC & MIGRATION STUDIES



MIGRATION AND DEMOCRACY

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INTRODUCTION

This report is made by students at the International Master's Programme in Ethnic and Migration Studies (EMS), Campus Norrköping, Linköping University (LiU). At the end of the first year of the Programme, students take the course "Critical Cases in Ethnic and Migration Studies" with Erik Berggren as Course Coordinator. In this course the students apply their knowledge and experiences in Ethnic and Migration studies to produce their own articles on a given theme.

This year's theme is "Migration and Democracy" sparked by recent moves towards more restrictive and punitive migration policies around the world, including Sweden. This development gives reasons to look into questions of democracy in connection to migration policy, at migrants (immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers) inclusion or exclusion from different realms of society, and, not least, if migrants, and immigrants, are seen as rights-bearing subjects or not.

The articles engage with different aspects of migrant experiences, and democratic, social, and educational exclusions or inclusions. Many texts go beyond Sweden and Europe and look to South America. Some seek the voices of migrants themselves. Other articles deal with anti-immigrant policies and rhetoric, their structure and how they are rationalised.

The International Master's Programme in Ethnic and Migration Studies is a part of the Institute for Research in Migration, Ethnicity and Society (REMESO), at the Department Culture and Society (IKOS) at LiU. Programme Director is Professor Claudia Tatzreiter. REMESO is an international institute that pursues research and education. The REMS report is one of the ways in which we, as students, are trained to identify and analyse problems related to migration, integration, and diversity and to make research and education accessible to a wider audience.

The first-year students of EMS, 2023.



Collectif Des Sans Papiers Du 17ème, demonstration in Paris, March 2022.

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RESTRICTIVE IMMIGRATION POLICIES AND DEMOCRACY

By Ionelia Eidergren, Obinna Kanu, Grace Akaba, Bana Desalegn

During the autumn of 2015, more than 900 000 refugees arrived on European shores, fleeing war-torn nations and natural calamities. Despite facing one of the biggest challenges in their history, the European countries displayed an initial willingness to assist. Stefan Löfven, Sweden's then-prime minister, delivered a stirring speech during this trying time. His words emphasized Sweden's enduring dedication to humanitarianism and solidarity in times of adversity, as he declared: "My Europe does not build walls, we help each other when there is a great need".

Stefan Löfven's speech in 2015 emphasized the value of creating an open and inclusive Europe while rejecting the idea of erecting barriers and reinforcing borders. It also recognized that migration is a complicated issue with many contributing factors that call for an all-encompassing solution that goes beyond simple limitation or exclusion. The implication of Löfven's speech is that nations should cooperate, share duties, and tackle migration's underlying causes in order to protect individuals who are fleeing for their lives.

Stefan Löfven's speech also emphasized that overcoming the difficulties brought on by migration necessitates not just immediate assistance but also long-term planning, initiatives that facilitate integration, and laws that encourage social cohesion.

Sweden's attitude towards immigrants has garnered a reputation of tolerance and friendliness, with comparatively liberal asylum laws. People escaping violence and persecution have looked to Sweden as a safe haven, and it has frequently been recognized for its efforts to help and integrate immigrants.

However, as the number of refugees increased, Sweden, like many other European nations, started to rethink its immigration regulations. The nation's resources, infrastructure, and public opinion were allegedly put under too much strain to accommodate and integrate newcomers. As a result, attention turned already in late 2015 to addressing worries about how immigration will affect Sweden's democratic principles and social cohesion.

In recent years, the nation has experienced difficulties managing and integrating a sizable migrant pop-

ulation, which has sparked discussions and altered the nation's strategy. The Swedish government has put in place measures to lower the number of asylum applicants and tighten eligibility requirements after realizing the necessity for a more regulated immigration system.

Several causes lie behind these developments, including worries about social integration, the alleged burden on public resources, and the increase of anti-immigration sentiments in the nation. Right wing political groups, populist parties as well as most of the established parties, with the exception of the Environmental party "Miljöpartiet" and the left wing party "Vänsterpartiet", have all come advocated more stringent immigration laws.

So, now, in 2023, it does not at all sound as compassionate as Stefan Löfven made it sound in the summer of 2015. The current Swedish government is making it clear that they want to set the bar as low as possible when it comes to migration policy. Sweden's migration minister, Maria Malmer Stenergard, admits that Sweden aims to undergo a paradigm shift. In April 2022, the Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson stated, "Our single biggest Swedish economic and social problem is due to large immigration combined with failed integration and hundreds of people's exclusion and dependency on benefits".

Ulf Kristersson's statement makes it clear that the current social and economic climate of the nation are considered to be heavily influenced by too much migration and a lack of integration.

The direction in which Sweden's migration policy is heading is somewhat contradictory to what is expressed in the 1951 Refugee Convention (UNHCR), which Sweden signed in 1954.

According to the Convention, "a refugee should not be returned to a country where they face serious threats to their life or freedom". Will Sweden's new migration policy then mean that they violate the Refugee Convention? And what will the consequences of such strict restrictions on people's rights be?

Currently, the government has, in the Tidö Agreement sent out a series of signals of their attentions. This regards, among other measures, stricter border controls and entrance limitations, a more severe policy on detention and deportation of unauthorized migrants and more restricted asylum regulations. This entails limiting access to social welfare benefits for asylum seekers and tightening the criteria for eligibility for asylum.



2015 Manifestation at Medborgarplatsen

While the new immigration policies under way in Sweden tighten the borders for refugees, the EU citizens already living in Sweden also have reasons to worry about their future.

To understand the impact of these planned and announced restrictive immigrations policies, as to the economic, social and psychological effects for people, we conducted interviews among a group of immigrants. Anca a 47 year old doctor and radiologist from Romania who now lives in Gotheburg told us parts of her story.

– I have been living in Gothenburg for 2 years. I was a doctor, and a radiologist, in Romania for 20 years. Here, I could barely get a job as a nurse's aide. I understand that I have to finish my language studies, but the whole process is so long, after two years, I am still studying. After I finish, I can apply to get my medical license here, so I can be able to do the job I'm qualified for. Until then, I take care of old people for 130 SEK per hour, before taxes. There is no shame in that, it is part of my job, but I could put my education and experience as a doctor to better use for the Swedish society. The government argues that their goal is to help and encourage the integration of highly skilled immigrants, but, in reality, they make it so difficult

Dominik, a teacher from Poland, who moved to Linköping with her family 4 years ago, shares a her experiences.

– When I moved here, we felt at home immediately. I cannot complain. Everybody was nice and tried to help, with information, advice, and tips, at least. We had savings to support ourselves, and my husband found work very easy as a driver, even if he is a psychologist... but that is a different story.

I started studying Swedish, so I can apply to Skolverket to get my Swedish teacher's license. Everything was ok, until the new government came into power with their politics regarding immigrants. Last November, I felt the change and the discrimination on my own skin, when I applied for a job at the Linköpings kommun. Until I became a qualified teacher here, I wanted to have some work experience as a vikarie/a substitute teacher. I passed the interview in Swedish and for the reference check, I sent all the documents requested. Then, after 5 months, I was told that they needed my work permit or my visa. I tried to explain that Poland is an EU country, and that I do not need a visa. I even brought them a document from Skatteverket (the Swedish Tax Agency). Without a work permit, they cannot hire me, because there are new rules now! That was the final answer! So, I gave up hope about a fair recruiting process!

Most of the stories from regular citizens with a foreign background living here, studying or working in Sweden, are similar: The integration process takes a long time. People are often forced to accept lower-paid jobs, just to survive, even if they are highly skilled. They want to be seen as human beings who want to be part of Swedish society and not like "aliens from another planet who want to take their jobs", as one of our interviewees phrase it. They all agree that, while it is a good idea to have strict rules and regulations, they should not be labeled and discriminated against. Many express the simple rationality in making use of the level of education and skills, even if acquired in another country, among many immigrants and refugees. To take advantage of this would benefit the Swedish society and economy.

THE "PARADIGM SHIFT"

– AND HUMAN RIGHTS

By Esther Bohman, Mohammad Rabinur Islam,
Ann-Charlotte Hartmann and Fouzia Khan

The 2015 headline from Die Zeit's web edition catches our attention, "Help for refugees: our country surprises itself". The story featured a photo of volunteers distributing supplies to newly arrived refugees in Munich, Germany. Many European countries, including Sweden, responded at first to the 2015-2016 refugee crisis by showing compassion and solidarity with the refugees. Volunteers addressing the needs of those in crisis acted with a sense of purpose and fulfilment. However, since 2015, the narrative has shifted from "Help the refugees" to the perception that Europe is no longer a haven for refugees. In Sweden, this shift has culminated in the signing of the Tidö Agreement.

In a highly debated move, the coalition partners behind the Swedish government has worked out the Tidö Agreement, signalling a significant shift in the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers. The agreement, forged by conservative parties in the Swedish Government, including the Sweden Democrats, Moderate Party, Christian Democrats, and Liberals, aimed to appoint Ulf Kristersson as Prime Minister following the 2022 Swedish general election. Negotiations took place at Tidö Castle, resulting in the formation of the Kristersson Cabinet.

Unveiled on October 14, 2022, the Tidö Agreement serves as a cooperative pact between the minority government and the Sweden Democrats – a right-wing populist party. The agreement outlines Sweden's political direction for the subsequent four years and has a strong focus on migration and integration policies. The Tidö Agreement marks what has been called a "paradigm shift" by the parties behind it, in terms of receiving asylum. An important point should be that protection for those fleeing a conflict or crisis should be offered *temporary* protection, but that permanent residency shall be very restricted. According to the Agreement, Sweden should not aim for a more generous migration policy than what is demanded by EU law or other legally binding international treaties.

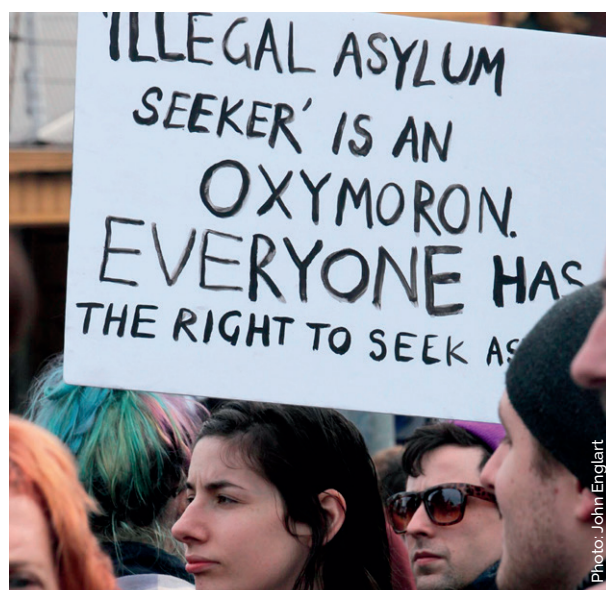
To gain a better understanding of the the Tidö Agreement and its implications, we interviewed two professors at Linköping University, Professor Stefan Jonsson and Professor Anders Neergaard at the Insti-

tute for Research on Migration, Ethnicity and Society (REMESO).

Stefan Jonsson begins by emphasizing the divisive effect of the agreement.

– The Tidö Agreement rely heavily on the division between "them" and "us," which has long been deep rooted in Swedish society. This division creates a sense of Swedish identity and appeals to the right-wing faction, such as the Swedish Democrats, by framing conflicts between the Swedish "we" and the perceived threatening "others." By inventing and protecting this Swedish "we," the Tidö Agreement perpetuate conflicts between "us" and "them," an artificial construct rather than a genuine societal division.

A significant aspect of the Agreement is the issue of accessing social welfare. Individuals must have worked and paid taxes in Sweden in order to qualify for welfare benefits, including housing grants, parental benefits, assistance allowance, and other forms of financial assistance. Jonsson says that these conditions even more perpetuates and establish an ethnic marker that distinguishes between the ethnically Swedish population and asylum seekers and other migrants. Consequently, it becomes more challenging for the latter group to obtain the same social welfare benefits, further reinforcing the division between "us" and "them." He also raises concerns about the lack of equality of citizenship rights and its impact on the concept of universal human rights.



Refugee Action protest 27 July 2013 Melbourne.



Professor Stefan Jonsson REMESO, LiU

– The treaty contains concepts that give individuals different rights based on race and culture, which run counter to the principles of equal treatment and non-discrimination. The restrictive asylum policies outlined in the Tidö agreement make it extremely difficult for individuals to seek and obtain asylum in Sweden. This, in turn, raises questions about the government's adherence to human rights principles, as seeking asylum is recognized as a fundamental human right.

– There is no longer any equality of citizenship. You have different rights depending on which ethnicity and culture you are. Therefore, it goes against the idea of universal human rights. It also goes against the idea of human rights in that it restricts asylum, and makes it almost impossible to get asylum in Sweden.

The Swedish government has recently launched a “campaign” aimed at discouraging refugees from seeking asylum here, and the government has also issued instructions to the Swedish Migration Agency to reduce the number of quota refugees. The intention is to decrease the quota of refugees, from the 5,000 selected by the UNHCR for resettlement in third countries to just 900. The minister has emphasised that “Sweden should not have a more generous asylum view than what is mandated by EU legislation and other legally binding treaties”.

When Anders Neergaard comments on these developments he also expresses concerns for asylum seekers and how this government is going against the principles of human rights.

– The idea behind the international campaign the government has put forth is to tell the world that Sweden don't want refugees and migrants in the country. They are trying to change their legislation to what's in UK has been called a hostile environment to migrants and refugees. So basically, that's what they are trying to do. But so far, they've mainly done it through symbolic politics because it takes time to make reforms in the parliament. However, they don't really want a sustainable migration, refugee or asylum policy. They just want to investigate the possibility of returning migrants to their country of origin.

Regarding the violation of human rights and its impact on European Union legislation and conventions, Anders Neergaard acknowledges that Sweden has undergone a neoliberal restructuring since the late 1980s, leading to growing inequalities.

– The perception of Sweden as a welfare state with high equality still exists, but the reality has shifted. It takes time for people to understand this reality, particularly in terms of income differences and welfare rights.

In their article, titled, “Is there a Repressive turn in Swedish Migration and Welfare Policy?”, Anders Neergaard and Magnus Dahlstedt, also professor at LiU, provide an analysis of this situation. They argue that there is a crisis in “Swedish exceptionalism” and that this cannot be solely attributed to migrants coming here or to extreme right-wing xenophobia. Swedish exceptionalism (i.e. the view of Sweden as having a uniquely generous and egalitarian welfare state) has been partly replaced by neoliberalism and ethno-nationalism. The perception of migrants as a threat contributes to the crisis, as xenophobia influences the acceptance of exclusionary policies and human rights violations. The Tidö Agreement reflects and potentially reinforces the xenophobic sentiments in Swedish society, focusing on temporary protection and aligning asylum policies with a minimal level interpretation of EU law and international treaties. The intention is claimed to be to meet concerns about migration's potentially negative impact on national identity and social cohesion.

The Tidö Agreement and the Swedish government's asylum policies have drawn criticism from organisations and experts. The Swedish Refugee Law Centre and Civil Rights Defenders raise concerns about the agreement's impact on asylum seekers, civil rights, and democratic principles. They argue that restrictions on asylum seekers' rights, including limitations on humanitarian grounds and family reunification, are seen as violations of international conventions. The National Council of Refugee Groups, which is called *Flyktinggruppernas riksråd* (FARR) is an umbrella organisation advocating for refugee policy. FARR opposes the agreement's range of restrictive measures and accuses the government of undermining human rights. The organisation highlights potential conflicts between the Tidö Agreement and EU laws and international conventions.

The development of the Tidö Agreement in Sweden reflects a significant shift in the treatment of asylum seekers and has sparked intense debate. Critics argue that the agreement's emphasis on temporary protection, divisions between “them” and “us,” and restrictions on access to welfare, violate human rights principles and perpetuate inequality. Generally, the debates surrounding the Tidö Agreement highlight the complexities and challenges of addressing migration within a changing European context while upholding democratic values and human rights.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS: BALANCING ACADEMIC DREAMS AND BANK ACCOUNTS

By Veronica Omo Peters, Hasan Alshihawi, Elham Alinazhadbiabani and Mehdi Fathieh

The allure of studying in Sweden has drawn in many thousands of students, each harbouring dreams of acquiring empowering knowledge and experiencing a new culture. However, for non-EU/EEA/Swiss students, the path to fulfilling these aspirations is often fraught with financial hardships and obstacles that can affect their mental well-being and impede their academic journeys.

Within the realm of international education, a multitude of students face the task of navigating financial barriers in pursuit of their dreams. We have interviewed an alumna who embarked on an academic voyage in Sweden a few years ago. She has chosen to be anonymous. She shares the trials and tribulations of her journey.

Driven by a sense of purpose, she enrolled in a two-year master's program in Ethnic and Migration Studies at Linköping University, envisioning a future dedicated to fostering positive change in marginalised groups. To her, coming from a Middle Eastern country, she saw women's empowerment as a necessity.

– I realised that my education held the power to not only shape my own personal growth but also contribute to the empowerment of other women in my country.

Strongly committed, she approached her studies with determination and embraced life on campus and participated in extracurricular activities and forged connections that expanded her horizons.

– I aimed to create a holistic educational experience that extended beyond the confines of the classroom.

However, the initial happiness about her academic pursuits collided with an economic crisis that hit her family's ability to continue supporting her financially.

She soon realised that finding alternative means to finance her education and sustain herself in Sweden was imperative to be able to continue her academic journey. But she was determined to overcome this challenge.

Resourcefulness and resilience became her guiding principles as she pursued scholarships and part-time work opportunities to support herself. When she applied for a scholarship, her hopes soared high, yet only to be followed by disappointment, as the financial assistance she anticipated was not granted.

– It was disheartening, yet I refused to allow it to define my path.

The university tuition fees (SEK 160,000 over two years) and the soaring cost of living in Sweden became an immense burden. So to make ends meet, she juggled a part-time job alongside her full-time studies.

– To afford the expenses of my education and life in Sweden, I worked 75% as a janitor at a hotel. I would commence work at 5 o'clock in the evening to ensure I could attend my classes during the day. Although the late-night work left me fatigued, it was necessary to sustain my studies.

She hopes that her experience can be an inspiration to others.





– I want students like me to know that they are not alone, she states to those who are also struggling with adversities.

In a narrative that echoes the experiences of many fee-paying students, Iman's journey from Iran to Sweden was also marked by adversity and a difficult choice. Faced with the weight of high tuition fees and living costs, he found himself forced to abandon his studies. Iman had managed to cover the cost of the initial two terms of his master's studies at Linköping University, believing he was on the path to success. However, the financial obligations that loomed ahead proved too high. Depleted savings and the need for stability left him with no alternative but to seek full-time employment in a distant corner of Sweden, which made further studies impossible.

– It is very unfair having to pay a lot of money for my studies while my European peers enjoy free education, he says.

His disappointment with the system is clear. He likened this situation to the hukou system in China, where villagers in the city bear heavier financial burdens compared to those with urban hukou, ultimately hindering social mobility and perpetuating inequality. What he regards as an unjust punishment solely based on place of birth left him disheartened and questioning the foundations of educational equality and justice in Sweden.

Iman's story is an example of the difficult choices and sacrifices that some fee-paying students in Sweden are forced to make. Their dreams of studying abroad are crushed by financial burdens and the constant struggle for stability.

Mohammad is another international student in Norrköping, a student at the master's level at Linköping University. Balancing demanding studies with a part-time job as a newspaper distributor, working from 2:00 to 5:00 in the morning leaves him exhausted. The reality of expenses for housing, food, transportation, and other essentials has forced him to prioritize making ends meet, limiting his ability to embrace fully the opportunities

around him. Yet, Mohammad is determined to continue. He takes comfort in the peaceful moments of his early morning shifts, firmly believing that his sacrifices will eventually pay off.

It is clear that such financial difficulties have had a substantial impact on both their mental well-being and academic achievements. The pressure of balancing work and studies, gives rise to stress and anxiety and has a very detrimental effect on their educational achievements. Moreover, the lack of time for personal and social activities results in isolation and lack of friends and this, in turn, has further negative impact on their educational experience.

Yet, the students we have talked to have also thought of ways to alleviate the problem with the detrimental effects of financial challenges on fee-paying students. Iman suggests a more equitable distribution of costs between all students, irrespective of their citizenship.

– By sharing the financial contributions more evenly, the education funding system can become fairer and better aligned with the promised values of equality and social justice in Sweden.

Iman's suggestion is to have all students pay tuition, not just the approximately 200 who now pay tuition. He explains his idea by referring to LiUs annual report, 2022. It states the university received 36.9 million SEK in revenues from international fee-paying students. Iman's point is that if this amount were divided equally among all students, each would pay a tuition fee of 1,952 SEK per year.

Another solution from the alumna we talked to is to expand scholarships specifically tailored for students from less-privileged backgrounds or low-income families. She emphasized the need to increase the number and value of scholarships to provide more substantial financial support.

– The LiU International Scholarship is an example of a scholarship that offers a limited number of tuition fee waivers, typically covering around 50% of the total amount. However, to truly address the financial barriers that deserving students face, these scholarships should be expanded beyond these limited waivers.

HOUSING CHALLENGES FOR NON-EU MIGRANTS

By Kaniz Fatema and Sharmin Akter

Non-EU migrants in Sweden often face significant housing challenges when they look for a place to stay. This leads to precarious living conditions and makes them vulnerable to exploitation by unscrupulous landlords and employers, with profound implications for their well-being and integration into Swedish society.

According to Adam Tyrcha, Head of Research at Newsec, the largest real estate consultancy in the Nordics and Baltics, Sweden has been an attractive destination for migrants throughout history. He explains that Sweden has had a population growth of about 1 million people between 2004 and 2015. Looking at Stockholm in particular, he describes that its population growth was 44.5% from surplus births and 12.0% growth from Swedish internal migration. In contrast, international migration contributed about 43.5% of Stockholm's population growth alone. Adam Tyrcha further describes that owner-occupied house prices have more than doubled since 2004, and areas like Stockholm have seen prices almost triple. The housing market consists of private housing: cooperatives constitute 41% of the housing market, and the rental market constitutes 59%. There is a lack of housing to meet the increasing demand caused by population growth and migration.

Henrik Emilsson, a researcher in International Migration and Ethnic relations at Malmö University and Klara Öberg, a Cultural Anthropologist at Halmstad University, used data from Statistics Sweden to create a graph comparing population growth to housing growth from 1990 to the mid-2000s. It shows that the number of new housing units started to decline in the early 1990s, and since the mid-2000s, there has been a significant lag between the number of new housing units and population growth.

Kritika Rana, a Research Officer at the School of Computer, Data and Mathematical Sciences at Western Sydney University, along with colleagues, investigated the housing crisis and its negative impact on migrant and refugee communities in high-income countries. They highlight that adequate housing is considered a fundamental human right, but many high-income countries are currently experiencing housing affordability issues. This results in socioeconomically disadvantaged groups, including migrants and refugees, disproportionately facing housing inequalities. These popula-

tions often encounter barriers in accessing appropriate, affordable, and secure housing - leading to stress, mental health issues, and potential homelessness.

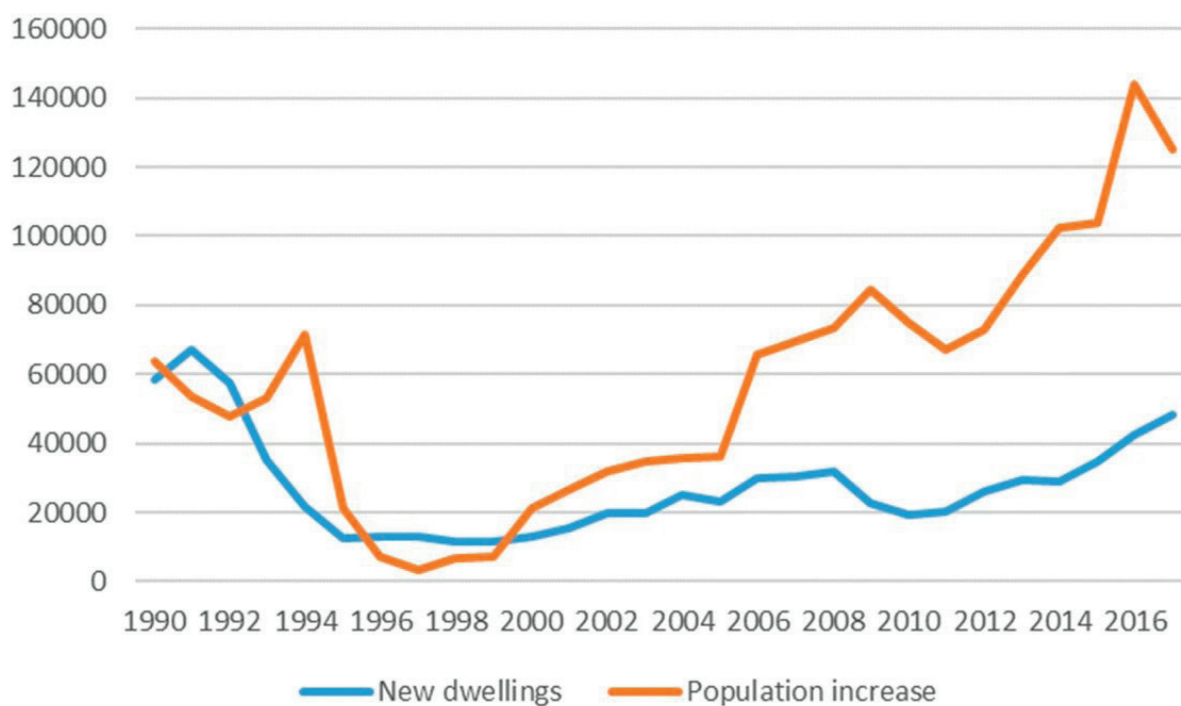
THE IMPORTANCE OF ACCESS TO HOUSING

Democratic exclusion refers to the systemic barriers and practices that limit the political participation and rights of individuals within a democratic society. While democratic principles emphasize equality, inclusivity, and the protection of individual rights, certain groups, such as non-European Union migrants, often face various forms of exclusion and marginalization within democratic systems.

Ratul (not his real name), a Bangladeshi student living in Stockholm, described to us the kind of problems he faced while looking for housing.



Friends playing on a pull bar.



Source: Statistics Sweden and own adaptations.
By Henrik Emlisson and Klara Öberg.

New dwellings and population increase 1990–2016.

– First of all, being in a big city, it is very difficult to get (accommodation) in student corridors. And because of this, while trying to rent a house, I came to know that it is not possible to get a first-hand contract as a migrant student. Those who wait for a long time and get a house in their own name, they start using this matter as a means of earning money. According to the rules of the company, all these landlords can take 15% extra money from the tenant for this house. And by showing this rule, they charge extra rent.

He further expresses how he got into trouble due to not being able to find affordable and legal housing. Because he was unable to find a legal place to live, he could not register a residential address with the Swedish Tax Agency. Subsequently, he was forced to ‘rent’ a separate address where he could be registered as living.

– Also, when I was looking for a house, I had a hard time getting a house with an address because they asked me for 5000kr per month just for the address. As I need the address very much, I convinced them to take 4000kr. Even though the landlord agreed, after 2 months he cancelled the contract of my house without informing me. I then got into a lot of trouble. Later I bought the address from another person. I live in one house and use another house’s address. I am applying to the company for housing. But now I am having a lot of trouble with these things.

Another Bangladeshi student came to Sweden in 2018 with her husband to study at Linköping University. They did not know Sweden’s housing system and because of that they experienced a set of barriers and difficulties. Talking to them, we learned that they were

exploited by a restaurant owner for not having a home. For this article we will call her Nabila.

– I stay in a hotel sharing with some students for some days. But the money brought from the country ran out very quickly. One day when we were looking for work, a restaurant owner wanted to give us work and let us live in his house. I thought it was a very good offer. I agree to his offer. But he (the restaurant owner) doesn’t pay us any salary. He treated us very badly. I went to university and worked the rest of the time and my husband worked full time in his restaurant. One day when he misbehaved with me very badly and my husband forbade him (from verbally abusing her). After this he threw out all our things and also us. Later, with the help of social support, I got a place to live. But I complained to the police so that what happened to me does not happen to anyone else and we were able to win the case.

These voices tell us that when people do not have access to proper housing or do not have the information about available options, there is a higher risk of meeting people who might not have the best intentions. Here they risk being harassed, abused, and exploited without knowing what to do about it. They end up in situations which increase their vulnerabilities and makes it difficult for them to participate and integrate into society. Ensuring equal access to suitable and affordable housing for non-EU migrants is not only a matter of social justice but is also important for democratic inclusion and the successful integration of migrants into Swedish society.

THE TIDÖ AGREEMENT

– SWEDISH APARTHEID?

By Laus D. Jørgensen and Victor Ugwoegbu

Crime and violence committed by immigrants and non-nationals, is a continuous political talking point in Sweden as well as in many other European countries. The debate, which is connected to the Swedish Government's Tidö Agreement, links migrants and 'foreigners' to crime and criminality. Through this association, the migrant are seen as inherently criminal, and thereby inherently incompatible with Swedish society.

In 2022, the Swedish government was a coalition made up of the Moderates, the Christian Democrats, the Liberals, and their support party the Sweden Democrats. Shortly after their election victory, this coalition wrote up the Tidö Agreement – a document that sets the legislative tone for their time in office. The Tidö Agreement covers several political topics, though most relevant to this article is its focus on criminality, migration, and integration. It should be noted that the agreement is not a legal document – nor does it promise that all elements will be enacted. Rather, the Tidö Agreement shows the intentions of the parties that have entered the agreement.

Among other things, the Tidö Agreement includes the following proposals: “Determine the possibility to deport foreign nationals based on *“bristande vandel”* (bad behaviour).

The agreement does not specify or define what constitutes ‘bad behaviour’. It only gives examples such as a lack of “compliance with the rules, association with a criminal organisation, network or clan, prostitution, substance abuse...” as well as association with organisations that “... threaten basic Swedish values...”.

This is combined with an implicit desire to deport more non-citizens: “A new commission shall be appointed with the task to further tightening the regulations on deportation for criminal offences”.

Civil Rights Defenders, a politically independent human rights organisation, comments in their review of the Tidö Agreement, that this would make it “possible to deport foreign nationals who have not committed criminal acts or who have not been convicted of a crime”. Furthermore, the Civil Rights Defenders questions what ‘Swedish values’ entails: “What constitutes Swedish values is unclear, and the exemption leaves much room for arbitrariness”.

The Tidö Agreement also includes proposals about transgressions against the law, but they have been placed in the section on migration and integration: “Increase the penalty and tighten the rules against child marriage, forced marriage, polygamy, and marriage of convenience”. Civil Rights Defenders criticise this, because by doing so “[t]he agreement links migration with crime...”, and “[i]t also raises a high risk of discrimination, such as ethnic and racial profiling”, they argue. What they suggest is that this linking of crime with migration, which runs through the agreement, is a clear indication of a general will to deport people, but above all, to make non-citizens easier to deport. Hence, as the Civil Rights Defenders implies, what the agreement really wants, much more than preventing crime, is to criminalise migration itself.

CITIZENS, CRIME, AND PUNISHMENT

Looking at the content of the agreement as a whole, Civil Rights Defenders comments in their review:

“We see [in the Tidö Agreement] a focus on imprisonment, including that of children and young people, harsher punishments, increased opportunities to monitor and deport people, as well as measures that undermine the rule of law and human rights.”

The Civil Rights Defenders further suggest that the proposals in the Tidö Agreement are less motivated by their potential impact on crime-reduction, and more motivated by their populist appeal.

There is furthermore few alternative social and political measures suggested to prevent crime. Randi Hjalmarsson, a Professor of Economics at the University of Gothenburg, explains that in trial studies in the US, it has been shown that measures such as providing summer jobs to youth at risk of falling into criminality can reduce crime by up to 40% amongst the demographic. This effect extended beyond just the participants’ time in such summer jobs. Hjalmarsson further notes that this is a practice that has gained very little traction in Swedish municipalities, despite its great promise. She is not saying that police and higher punishment is not a part of crime-reduction, but that it needs to be combined with social and political initiatives that currently go overlooked in Sweden and other countries.

Focusing on punishment, rather than rehabilitation and other social-political initiatives, creates the view of the criminal as someone who cannot be re-habilitated

or return to society. Svenolov Svensson, who has worked professionally with education in Swedish prisons, speaks of this dynamic back in 1996 as portraying prisoners as either 'citizens in prison' or simply as 'prisoners'. The difference is when one is seen as a citizen, they are punished for their transgressions and are expected to return to society after serving their punishment. If they are only thought of as prisoners, punishment tends to

be increased, which Svenolov Svensson argues causes the criminal to only become locked into criminality. Back when he was writing, Svenolov Svensson argued that prisoners in Sweden were seen as 'citizens in prison' based upon the many steps taken to educate and rehabilitate the individual. In the Tidö Agreement, however, the focus appears to be on punishment rather than education and rehabilitation.



Party leaders Ulf Kristersson, Jimmie Åkesson, Johan Pehrson and Ebba Busch before on press conference on Tidö Agreement.

THE CRIMINALISATION OF MIGRANTS

By connecting migrants and ‘foreigners’ to crime, they become seen as hopeless criminal. This extends to people who have been born and who have grown up in Sweden, but who are still deemed as foreign because of their cultural and ethnic makeup. Because of this, they are then also treated as foreign elements as discussed by Magnus Dahlstedt and his colleagues. Dahlstedt is a professor at Linköping University who has written extensively on the topic of citizenship. Dahlstedt and his colleagues argue that the exclusion of migrants and ethnic minorities is justified by connecting them to certain qualities which “... prevent them from integrating into the majority community”. In this case, migrants are connected with being culturally incompatible with Swedish society and being inherently criminal.

Stefan Jonsson and Alireza Behtoui, both experts in topics of racism and migration from Linköping University and Södertörn University respectively, explain that: “In order to justify this exclusion, the ‘deviant’ ones are portrayed as carrying particular qualities of a cultural or racial character, which prevent them from integrating into the majority community”.

Swedish politicians, as illustrated by the Tidö Agreement, often reference Denmark as the leading country when it comes to harsh immigration policies. Looking at examples from Denmark, it can be seen where this rhetoric might lead. In Denmark, both experts and politicians have verbalised this connection between foreign culture, specifically between Islamic culture, and criminality. Mehmet Necef, Professor in Cultural Sociology at University of Southern Denmark, said to *Kristeligt Dagblad* (30 November 2017) how, it is difficult to deny that cultural differences play a huge part in the overrepresentation of immigrants from non-Western countries in Danish crime statistics. He explains:

“You can also see it in relation to serious crime such as violence and rape, where more people from Middle Eastern countries have been convicted. This suggests that there are different attitudes towards violence and the use of violence as a means of communication among non-Western citizens and the population as a whole.”

This is also a sentiment shared by some politicians, such as Pernille Vermund, the party leader for the Danish New Right party (*Nye Borgerlige*). In 2018, prior to being elected to parliament in 2019, Vermund tweeted:

“Citizenship shall not be granted to immigrants or descendants from countries, who are overrepresented in crime statistics, who are based in Islamic culture, and thereby represents a security risk...”

This is a position she continues to hold and which she has expressed on multiple occasions, including in front of Parliament, where she has stated that the problem is not immigration as such, rather “the problem is Islam”. Though not stated in law, this sentiment is carried out in practice. In the Danish Citizenship Committee, a group of politicians vote to permit people to continue their progress towards citizenship in cases where they do not fulfil all requirements. Here, Marie Krarup, a then member of the Danish Peoples’ Party as well as the then chairwoman of the Danish Citizenship Committee, admitted to DR Detektor (25 November 2021), a Danish investigative program, that she had voted no to (accepting) people based on their country of origin rather than on their individual merits:

“I vote no to people who come from Islamic countries, because I presume that they carry that culture with them. But I do want to vote yes for Christians from those countries.”

For a particular case where a man from Pakistan had admitted to stealing alcohol at the age of 18, Krarup commented that her decision was not based upon him stealing alcohol: “But when there comes a case, where there is an opportunity to prevent that someone from an Islamic country obtaining citizenship, then I have to seize that opportunity.”

This creation of a hierarchy based upon legal status and racialisation bears connections to what Étienne Balibar, a major French philosophical and political thinker, calls “European apartheid”. This concept attempts to encapsulate how people of non-European migrant origin are treated as second class citizens and disproportionately denied citizenship. Furthermore, it implies that migrants and those deemed as foreigners are systemically pushed out into vulnerable areas and are thereby disconnected from the wider population.

When the state increasingly focuses on crime punishment and increased sentences, it sends the signal that criminals are not people who can change their ways and be rehabilitated into society. By connecting these qualities to migrant, religious, and ethnic groups, as done in the Tidö Agreement, the perception of those people as inherently incompatible with Swedish society is reinforced. In this way, documents such as the Tidö Agreement can be used to justify the exclusion, deportation, and general (mis)treatment of these groups.



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SOLIDARITY IN STRIKE

– AMONG UNDOCUMENTED WORKERS IN FRANCE

By Chloé Correia and Aina Stelnykova

For the past 18 months, 70 undocumented workers connected to the French public postal service have been participating in strikes. Since November 15, 2021, they have been protesting against the exploitative labour conditions provided by the DPD Group, the delivery service based in Coudray-Montceaux, France, which is a subsidiary company from the French public postal service. The workers have been holding picket lines day and night in front of their place of work, in order to achieve visibility in the public sphere.

Their claim is rooted in the contestation of extremely precarious and exploitative work conditions, since their work contracts are extremely short and they face longer working hours, unpaid overtime, and the risk of being dismissed in case of work incapacity or illness. Soon enough, undocumented workers from RSI Interim, a temporary placement work company, and Chronopost, a delivery service company, decided to unite, and together they started their own movements. The three strikes share similar objectives and therefore the workers agreed to show each other solidarity by sharing information and tools of action.

Although these strikes remained separate, they share a common demand: the regularisation of their legal status through work and official employment contracts. These three companies, two of which are affiliated with the French public service, have knowingly used undocumented labour for the labour flexibility it offers them. According to workers' testimonies, many of them got hired while using the exact same identity documentation as each other - such as passports or work permits. This information would have been impossible for the companies' human resources services to miss. This implies that the companies would have been aware that they were hiring undocumented labour.

Undocumented migrants are denied many basic rights in comparison to French citizens as they do not possess citizenship. The latter could be understood as a "system of rules that function to distribute rights to members of national communities" according to Walter J Nicholls. Consequently, they are considered 'illegal', risk deportation and are excluded from the democratic public sphere. This implies that undocumented workers would lack the legitimacy to claim rights and organise themselves politically. To be able to do so, they

would need to demonstrate their compliance with the norms and moral values of the community composed of national citizens. This is particularly obvious during the DPD/RSI/Chronopost movement which uses traditional workers' organisation tools. In addition to holding picket lines, they have organised protests two to three times a week for a year in front of the prefectures concerned. Some of the workers have not been working since the beginning of the strike, as they have been fully dedicated to advocacy work and the ongoing strike, while some others have had to take a few temporary contracts to sustain themselves.

The movement started within the framework of the Undocumented Workers' Collective of Vitry (CTSPV) which is run by and for undocumented migrants. These collectives are extremely active in France and have branches in most cities with high migrant concentration. They represent a unique form of political organisation as they are entirely focused on the rights of undocumented migrants advocating for regularisation and rights achievement. Documented persons and traditional political actors only have a support role in the movement, but all strategies and actions are decided by undocumented migrants themselves.

This strike is supported by the workers' unions called *Solidaires*, United, and *CGT*, the General Confederation of Labour. Furthermore, the strike has the support of citizens, documented workers from their companies, the UCIJ collective, the collective United against disposable immigration, gathering about 800 associations, political parties and unions.

The main purpose of such protests is to spread awareness on the issues faced by 'illegal' migrants, and to make it part of a public debate, as explained by researchers Pierre Monforte and Pascale Dufour. That is, in the national context, undocumented migrants are trying to achieve the beginning of liberation from oppression by the state.

Although such protests can take radical forms, the protesters usually want to attract the authorities' attention through non-violent means provided by the legal framework of the country they live in. Thus, they contribute to the increased visibility of 'illegal' migrants in the public sphere. The protests are part of a set of strategies aiming to challenge the power structures through cultural transformations, such as changes in the understanding of problems by society. When applied to undocumented migrants, such collective actions can be

seen as “acts of emancipation”, both for those involved and for undocumented migrants in general.

The simplest, but most apparent question: What is the purpose of marching or protesting in a broader sense?

Political organisation, using the national and democratic tools of the host country, allows undocumented migrants to regain power over their own situations, thereby publicly conveying the message, they can “be political.” By acting collectively in public space, illegal migrants break out of social isolation and create solidarity.

This mobilisation is not unprecedented and comes within the scope of a strike tradition of undocumented workers in these companies. maybe rephrasing? Three years before the start of this protest in November 2021, workers at Chronopost led a seven-month strike for the same reasons in Alfortville, which resulted in their regularization.

Another example of undocumented migrant workers’ protest in France was the mobilization against UberEats, a food delivery company. It began in 2022 when several employees learned that their accounts had been deactivated, thus erasing years of work experience overnight. At the time, an Uber spokesperson commented on the situation as follows: “As part of our commitment to fight document fraud and illegal work, we conducted a thorough audit of the accounts of UberEats couriers in

France.” Employees whose accounts have been deactivated wondered why their accounts were blocked after two years without any warning. Unions got highly mobilized as workers were not notified that their accounts could one day be blocked. It was not the first time Uber Eats has been accused of labour abuse. In 2020, prosecutors placed Uber Italy under special administration after it was found that its Uber Eats business in the country was exploiting vulnerable immigrant workers through third-party brokers known as gang-masters. The same investigation accused the company of creating an “uncontrolled avalanche of recruitment” during the pandemic.

To properly address the issue, unions and demonstrators in Paris called for the “gig economy” to be included in France’s “regularisation” process. Under such a regularisation process, workers who could prove they had been in France for three years and that they had 24 monthly payment records could apply for permanent residency. The multiple protests and political movements induced by undocumented workers are therefore the proof of the existent solidarity between ‘invisible’ members of a democratic community but also between them and traditional political actors such as citizens and unions. The merging of social struggles despite the legislative status of the workers allows them to reduce the boundaries created by democratic states and their conception of citizenship.



PARTICIPATION, ADVOCACY, AND COLLECTIVE ACTION

– THE VENEZUELAN DIASPORA

By Kyriaki Variti, Angie Lorena Quintero Salazar,
Christopher Cowell-Desante and Nelly Hölter.

In recent years, Venezuela has faced a significant dispersion of its population in to other countries. Political, social, and financial instabilities has forced a an historically unprecedented large share of the population to leave the country. This massive emigration has led to a rapid formation of diaspora groups throughout the world, with a geographical concentration in Latin America.

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the mass emigration of Venezuelans is considered the second-largest external displacement crisis in the world, after the Syrian displacement. The Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V) provides information on the precise number of people affected. As of this year, this migration flow has left more than 7.2 million people displaced, of which 5.3 million are considered people in need. More than 6 million of them remain in Latin America and the Caribbean. The five countries that have received the most migrants from Venezuela are Colombia (2.5 million), Peru (1.5 million), the United States (545200 K), Ecuador (502200), and Chile (444400). (Source: R4V)

This emigration flow is a consequence of decades of political instability and economic mismanagement. A resulting social, economic, and political crisis in the country has led, among others, to hyperinflation, food shortage, and a lacking healthcare system which forced millions of people to flee the country. The crisis has persisted since the late 1990s, when Hugo Chávez, the country's former president, took power. With the seizure of the presidency by Nicolás Maduro following Chávez's death in 2013, the situation intensified. The ongoing economic mismanagement, the crisis of democracy, human rights violations, and political instability continue not only to affect those in Venezuela but also those who have had to leave the country.

As mentioned above, most Venezuelan migrants remain in Latin America and the Caribbean, which, according to Amnesty International, is the most unequal region in the world. These countries often deal with adverse situations that make it more challenging to

respond to the needs of the migrant population. Those circumstances include, among others, increasing unemployment rates, internal (armed) conflicts, gender-based violence, post-Covid-19 pandemic problems, and the lack of government capacity to address humanitarian crises.

THE DIASPORA RESPONSE

In this context, civil society organizations became fundamental in supporting the response to the humanitarian crisis. The Venezuelan diaspora, composed of migrants and refugees dispersed around the world, quickly consolidated itself, demonstrating a rapid capacity for organizing during a relatively new migratory breakdown.

Hundreds of Venezuelan diaspora organizations, sharing geographical and cultural ties, organize themselves to work with, and for, the Venezuelan migrant population and to promote integration and development in host societies.

One of the examples of the rapid diaspora development is the *Coalición por Venezuela* (“*Coalition for Venezuela*”). In an interview, Ana María Díez, president of the federation, shares insights about the organization's experience and the progress achieved since its inception in 2019:

– The Coalition is a federation that brings together 98 Venezuelan civil society organizations working in diverse areas such as humanitarian assistance, socio-economic inclusion, development projects with migrants and refugees, promotion of cultural ties, and advocacy for civil and political rights. We are present in 22 countries, 17 in Latin America and five in Europe. *Coalición por Venezuela* was born as an initiative intended to be a meeting point for diaspora organizations and to strengthen the voices of organizations by generating collaborative work.

– We are attending on the ground to a crisis which is unprecedented in Latin America in the last 50 years. This emergency is the largest for displaced people in the Americas, and we are working on the ground at the forefront of the action.

Concerning the thematic areas in which the organizations are active, as well as in their size and scope, the member organizations vary significantly. They



Ana María Diez. President Coalición por Venezuela.

range from community to national organizations. The federation promotes diverse collaboration processes and facilitates knowledge-sharing among its members.

– Regarding advocacy, we aim to broaden their voices but not to replace their individual actions. The voices of 98 dispersed organizations are not as wide-ranging as 98 federated organizations with collective messages, purposes, planning, strategies, and shared regulations under the same federation.

Given the violations of human, civil and political rights within Venezuela and sometimes in the host communities, the organizations do local and international advocacy work to increase the visibility of these situations, to mobilize actors and to encourage dialogues.

– Our actions include meaningful participation in civil, political, and human rights, specifically the involvement of the Venezuelan diaspora in the election processes of the authorities in Venezuela. Particularly in the participation in presidential elections, considering all Venezuelans have the right to participate in free, democratic, and transparent elections even if we are outside the country. This right is protected by Venezuela's National Constitution. That we carry these rights with us are critical and one of our strengths as our population have experienced numerous violations and limitations

to accessing documentation, entering formal registries, having a passport, and registering a child born abroad, among others.

The member organizations of the Coalition play a fundamental role, both in promoting integration processes with the host communities, and in keeping the historical and cultural memory of the Venezuelan diaspora alive. For the latter, they are especially attentive to children and families.

– It is, therefore, vital to be a safe home for migrants and refugees, where they can go when they want to listen to someone with the same accent, culture, and words; where, in general, people feel understood, Diez explains.

However, as they touch on critical issues of democracy and advocacy concerning the Venezuelan political situation, member organizations of the coalition face challenges, especially in terms of security. Diez explains that some members suffer from persecution and criminalization, have been blacklisted, reported to Interpol, denied asylum, accused of being partisan politicians, and have even been denied entry into different countries that have resumed diplomatic relations with Venezuela. Threats also exist in the local context of the host communities, considering that in some of these countries,

the participation of activists is considered high risk. Yet, although there are challenges, the coalition also highlights several achievements as a federation.

– The greatest achievement is to be able to work in coordination as a network, but also to improve the capacities of the organizations and generate training and implementation tools to improve the intervention. This means the professionalization of the Venezuelan diaspora to serve its members and at the same time favor integration processes in the host countries.

The federation has managed in a few years to generate good organizational and democratic processes. Likewise, it has accomplished articulation with organizations such as the IOM, and, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the European Union, and diplomatic delegations in the host countries, promoting dialogues between institutions at different levels. Diez elaborates:

– The organization has achieved high-level advocacy. For example, Coalition for Venezuela is part of the UNHCR's Global Advisory Board. A body created this year of 13 organizations led by refugees or displaced persons from around the world to advise UNHCR on improving its policies and practices.

Through the insights shared by Diez, three principal aspects contributing to the success of diasporic work become evident: 1) Having clear rules, which implies transparency as well as democratic and participatory processes within the *Coalición por Venezuela*. 2) Giving space to all members of the organizations to build and contribute to solutions and strategies. 3) Collaborative work.

– Because we do nothing by learning something and keeping it to ourselves, Diez explains.

THE ONGOING CHALLENGES

In its introduction to the Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP) 2023-2024, Eduardo Stein, Joint Special Representative of UNHCR and IOM for Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants express the gravity of the situation:

Refugees and migrants from Venezuela cannot be forgotten. Many have seen their lives come to a standstill and millions are struggling to feed their families or find opportunities to rebuild their lives.

While the internal situation in Venezuela still seems uncertain, the humanitarian emergency on the continent continues to be challenging due to the mixed migratory flows from Venezuela to other countries. Organizations and national governments, hence, face great tasks in terms of humanitarian action and integration in the short and long term.

According to the R4V platform, since 2014, nearly 4.2 million residence and legal stay permits have been issued around the world. Yet, this still means that a large number of people do not have clear legal status. In relation to the growing vulnerabilities of these people, it is estimated that 73.5% of refugees and migrants require assistance and that migration flows and irregularity will continue to increase in 2023.

Thus, the involvement of organizations such as the *Coalición por Venezuela*, continues to be crucial in improving the living conditions of migrant and refugees in their host communities.

The work of the coalition is driven by an ever-present dream for the Venezuelan diaspora population, as Diez expresses:

– To be able to return home. That is our dream.



“I STRUGGLE TO CHANGE A SYSTEM THAT DOES NOT WANT TO RECOGNIZE ME”

(NON)CITIZENSHIP AS A TOOL OF EXCLUSION

By Sara Crocioni, Clara Aruanno, Anna Giacinti, Nafisa Noor

According to Italy's controversial citizenship law, citizenship acquisition is based on the old principle of *ius sanguinis* (“right of blood”) whereby citizenship acquisition depends on nationality of one's parent(s). According to data published by ISTAT (Italian National Institute of Statistics) in 2020, the total number of second-generation migrant minors in Italy is approximately 1.3 million. Of this number, 75.3 percent were born in Italy. Yet, Italy's current citizenship law leaves many people without *Italian* citizenship – despite being born in Italy or living in the country from a young age.

What does it mean to be born and raised in a country that does not recognize you as a citizen? What does it mean *not* to be able to participate in the socio-political life of the country you call home? What are the democratic consequences of institutionalizing exclusion by denying citizenship?

To answer such questions, we spoke with Deepika Salhan, a young activist and second-generation migrant who came to Italy from India when she was 9. Deepika is making waves with campaign *dallapartegiustadellastoria* (“fromtherightsideofhistory”). The campaign is part of a series of movements that gained momentum last year when the proposal to introduce the so-called *ius scholae* (“right of school”) reignited the debate surrounding Italy's controversial citizenship law and the much-anticipated reforms it desperately needs. The *ius scholae* proposal, supported by the political party Five Stars Movement, aimed at partly reforming the criteria for citizenship acquisition by laying down that any individual who arrived in Italy prior to their 12th birthday and completed a minimum of 5 years of education is entitled to apply for citizenship. However, the legislative amendments proposed by the Five Stars Movement never reached the ratification stage. The same happened when the 2008-2013 legislature proposed the introduction of the *ius soli* (“right of soil”), the principle prescribing that anyone born on Italian soil is Italian. Back then the legislative amendments were not ratified either.

Due to the failed attempts to reform the citizenship law, Italian citizenship acquisition is still based on the old principle of *ius sanguinis* (right of blood).

We asked Deepika to share her personal experience on how the *ius sanguinis* principle has affected her life. It was immediately evident that difficulties accompanied her from her early school years, when she was forced to miss days of school to renew her residence permit, right through to high school, when she was unable to participate in the school trip abroad with her classmates.

The hardships and penalties continued even during her university years.

– Now I am pursuing my master's degree and I've decided to apply for the Erasmus program. However, unlike my *Italian* peers and colleagues, being part of the program proved to be way more complicated than what I had initially anticipated. Not having citizenship also means not being as free to move around Europe: visas are required and applying for them and getting them takes time. I now have decided not to go despite being offered a spot in the program. When I think of all the other second-generation migrants who were born and raised in Italy, or moved here at a very young age, there are many stories just like mine that show the inherent limits and discriminatory ramifications of living without citizenship when it comes to enjoying rights and having access to opportunities. I have friends who could not pursue a career in the police because the first requirement to meet when applying is Italian citizenship. The same goes for any internship, or job opportunity with public institutions and organs; you either have Italian citizenship or you are barred from participating. Even when it comes to sports events, participating without having citizenship is practically impossible. I came to Italy when I was 9. I grew up here and I now consider myself culturally Italian and actively part of the Italian social fabric. I no longer have to renew my residence permit as I now qualify for the unlimited one, but still, I have no citizenship.

Besides the daily drawbacks that lacking citizenship produces, the biggest limit concerns not being able to vote, adds Deepika.

– I have not been able to exercise my right to vote on at least four occasions since I turned 18. On the one



Photo: Margherita Caprilli

Deepika Salhan at the honorary citizenship ceremony in Bologna, 2022.

hand, there is no political representation concretely willing to amend the Italian citizenship law as currently devised. On the other hand, since I am denied my right to vote, I have no possibility to *create* a new form of political representation that could advocate for actual legal changes in this respect. This leaves me feeling unheard, unseen, and unrecognized.

It is with anger and frustration that Deepika addresses the consequences of not being able to partake in the decision-making process that shapes the socio-political environment in which she builds and affirms her identity.

– Nobody has designed a way to make our voices heard; we were born and raised in Italy, yet we have no tool provided specifically to us while we wait to acquire citizenship to influence what happens at the political level. This is also the reason why I chose activism: I struggle to change a system that does not want to recognize me.

Deepika's account of lost opportunities and daily limitations shows the practical consequences of Law 91/1992 which constitutes the current legal framework for citizenship acquisition in Italy. The 30-year-old, never-amended law is now clearly obsolete as it has failed to keep up with the country's socio-demographic transformations. Mainly, it has failed to account for Italy's transition from a country of *emigration* to a country of *immigration*. In fact, the Italian citizenship law

as originally designed aimed at honoring the heritage of individuals of Italian descent to easily allow them to reconnect with their national roots despite having emigrated. As the Italian policy-analyst Guido Tintori maintains, the law was already out of touch with Italian socio-demographics when it was first enacted in 1992. Interestingly, the 1992 reform repealed the 1912 law with even stricter criteria for citizenship acquisition than those provided in the 110-year-old text. Back in 1912, a foreigner born in Italy could obtain citizenship if they were found to be an Italian resident at the age of 21, without any demonstration of continued residence. According to the 1992 Law, a child born in Italy to foreign parents can apply for Italian citizenship after turning 18 if they have resided legally and continuously in Italian territory until that time. This evidences a trend that witnessed the redefinition of citizenship as an exclusionary and discriminatory tool. The institution of citizenship has moved from being used to unify to instead being used to build a clear division between "citizens" and "inhabitants", between "us" and "them", and between "Italians" and "foreigners".

On this issue, the *ius scholae* proposal has been a politically divisive topic from the beginning. On the one side, center-left parties see it as an essential feature for increasingly multicultural societies. On the other side, right-wing parties have long resisted the reform by claiming that only *true Italians* must be given

citizenship, that citizenship must be “earned”, and that granting it must be restricted so as not to gift it to anyone who waters down *Italian-ness*. Giorgia Meloni, the current Italian Prime Minister and leader of Fratelli d’Italia, spoke of “easy citizenship for immigrants,” while Lega called the attempt to reform the law “unbelievable, disgraceful and disrespectful to Italians.” Right-wing parties’ stance towards citizenship is clear: it is the embodiment of *true Italian-ness*, and therefore it should only be given to those upholding true Italian values.

– Citizenship in Italy remains a concept intrinsically entangled with the idea of merit and deservingness. As of now, it is an award, the final step of a successful path of integration. That the proposed legislative amendments are a step towards a more inclusive idea of citizenship is indisputable. However, carefully reading the proposal text makes it evident that the ideology of deservingness and merit has not yet been abandoned.

In fact, the *ius scholae* proposal laid down further emphasizes thresholds and positive educational achievements for individuals to be eligible to apply for citizenship. This only goes to show that citizenship is not perceived, by any political force, as a human right, as something everyone should be entitled to, but rather as a reward for those who deserve it, as Deepika also pointed out during the interview. This despite citizenship being an “unearned privilege” for those lucky enough to be born to Italian parents.

– The *Ius Scholae* proposal was but a very tiny step forward. A true and comprehensive reform of the citizenship law is urgently needed to do away with the antiquated notions embedded within three-decade-old legislation that aimed solely at facilitating Italian

citizenship acquisition for those who, even tracing back numerous generations, could demonstrate a bloodline connection to Italian heritage. We are talking about individuals who, armed with a mere certificate, can bypass six or seven generations of separation and attain citizenship, while simultaneously denying rights and opportunities to individuals born and raised in Italy who genuinely contribute to the social fabric of this country.

All in all, when it comes to concepts such as inclusion, exclusion, citizenship, and democracy, their interconnectedness, as well as their consequences in shaping the nature and composition of societies worldwide cannot be overlooked. The quintessential concept of democracy is the principle of inclusion, at the heart of which lies, at least in theory, the equal participation of every individual in the decision-making processes that shape the society around them. Citizenship is certainly an instrument that produces such inclusion. The latter functions simultaneously as an instrument of inclusion and exclusion: it prescribes rights, freedoms and protections for some and denies these to others. More than simply granting legal recognition, citizenship also promotes a sense of belonging within a given nation-state, which means that those who do not belong to the imaginary community of people that constitutes it will automatically be marginalized and excluded. One of the inherent prerogatives of democracy is precisely to challenge the dynamics of exclusion that hinder equal participation and representation of the rights of minorities and marginalized communities. Therefore, it is only by upholding inclusive citizenship and democratic values societies can work toward a more equitable and participatory future for all.



Flashmob “Italy Say Yes!” from the campaign “From the right side of history”, 22nd of June 2022, Rome.

ALTERNATIVES TO RESTRICTIVE IMMIGRATION POLICIES: THE CASES OF BRAZIL AND ARGENTINA

By Julia Tavares and Laura Marchese

In recent years, a distinct worldwide trend is being established towards a more restrictive approach to migration. Through it, strict measures have been drafted and implemented in different parts of the world, which commonly involve various forms of limits to migrant's access to social services, such as health and education, and can go as far as encompassing immigration detention and deportation. But even though this has been a trend around the world, the efficiency of these more severe policies are questioned by many researchers and experts on the field.

Most of the countries in the world apply some kind of immigration detention regime, with the objective of avoiding absconding of irregular migrants in the country while their migratory case is being settled. Through empirical research, The International Detention Coalition has found that detention of migrants is ineffective in fulfilling its own goals, costly and often creates negative outcomes, as it does not support case resolution, and further harms the health and wellbeing of the migrant, undermining their ability to reach basic needs and exercise human rights.

Many commentators find this concerning as some countries widely apply immigration detention. The most notable of such cases is Australia, which since 1992 has stated in law that immigration detention is systematically applied to migrants without visas for an indefinite amount of time, without any individual case assessment regarding whether the detention is necessary and taking away the possibility of the person to challenge the legality of their detention. As a result, the Andrew & Renata Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law at The University of New South Wales (UNSW) in Sydney found that the numbers of detentions tend to be exorbitant, and their durations protracted. This, combined with the precarious environment of the detention centers leaves great numbers of people with psychological and physical lifelong traumas.

In some cases, the migrants may not be detained, but are not able to meet their basic needs in the community. In the case of the United Kingdom, for example,

asylum seekers are generally not allowed to work. For that reason, they are often pushed to impoverishment and precarious work conditions that represent a serious threat for their wellbeing. Access to work can be seen as one of the more sustainable ways for an individual to provide for their basic needs while also contributing to the society's development. A report published by the "Lift the Ban" campaign in 2020 suggests that a revision of this policy would, among other things, allow asylum seekers to use their skills towards their community's improvement and to tackle forced labour, exploitation, and modern forms of slavery.

Although governments in places such as the UK and Australia have adopted more restrictive policies, others find alternative solutions. Brazil, for example, has seen an increase of immigration from countries such as Haiti and Venezuela in the last decade. According to data from OBMigra, the International Migration Observatory in Brazil, the annual number of new immigrants registered increased 24,4% between 2011 and 2020.

As a result of the mobilization of civil society and political pressures, a new migration law was approved in 2017. It replaced the former *Estatuto do Estrangeiro*, a law created in 1980 during the Brazilian military dictatorship, which had a restrictive and nationalistic perspective and formed the base for Brazilian migration policy until 2017. In contrast, the new law introduced the rights of regular and irregular immigrants in terms of access to public services, such as education and health-care. It also increased the protection of immigrants against deportation and forced return and reinforced the possibilities of regularization and documentation.

When introduced, the new law was received with optimism by civil society, as well as by migrants. In 2017, Cristóvan Chait, a Chilean migrant, shared how he felt about the new law to the national news website G1: "I feel more Brazilian. Even more welcomed. So, this new law was great", commented Chait. Today, the Law is still perceived as an important tool to promote the reception and integration of migrants in the country. Letícia Carvalho, advocacy advisor at the NGO *Missão Paz*, commented on the impacts of the law in an interview to the human rights portal *Conectas*: "With the pandemic, if we still were in the context of the *Estatuto do Estrangeiro*, the situation of the most vulnerable migrants would be even more complicated", she affirmed.

In Argentina, another key country in Latin America in terms of migration flows, the current president Alberto Fernández reversed the modifications in the Migration Law implemented by the former president Mauricio Macri in 2017. These modifications had hardened the conditions of entry and for obtaining permanent residency in the country. It also introduced sanctions and expulsion of immigrants framed by criminal law. Romeu Bonk Mesquita, a researcher at University of São Paulo (USP), commented how Macri's enforcements on the law contributed to a deepened marginalization of immigrants. In an interview for *Jornal da USP*, the university's newspaper, he affirmed that "From the point of view of public opinion, they [the enforcements of the modified National Migration Law] have created a certain stigma, with the presidency relating immigration to criminality. Even if they don't go to jail, they [the migrants] feel like a victim of police abuse".

Fernández revoked Macri's decree that introduced these hardenings, pointing out they were not in accord with the constitution and represented a violation to immigrants' (right to) legal support. Fernández changes were more focused on criminal matters, but affected specially migrants from neighboring countries, which rep-

resent around 60% of the immigrants in Argentina, that seek better conditions in the country. "They don't have money to pay a lawyer, don't know the legislation [and], sometimes, for having a low education level, [...] they can't deal with the bureaucratic and juridical framework that they are facing", said Mesquita to *Jornal da USP*.

Although these cases show how adopting more open and human-rights based migration policies and laws is a possible alternative to restrictive migration policies, their implementation still face some challenges. Hiordana Bustamante, researcher from the *Observatório Saúde e Migração* (a Brazilian academic platform for debating issues related to health and migration), writes in her column at *MigraMundo* website. There are still some barriers for migrants' access to public healthcare in Brazil, for example. Differences in language and culture, lack of information about the migrant population and the national healthcare system impact not only the access to medical appointments, but also the health of migrants. "This generates an increase, moreover, of a risk for more serious health issues due to the migrant population's lack of knowledge about the functioning of the *Sistema Único de Saúde* (the Brazilian public healthcare system)", she wrote.



PORTRAITS

By Imran Hekim Taskiran

I met four persons in Norrköping who call Sweden their home, despite being born elsewhere, to talk about their political engagement and participation, both in Sweden and in the countries they came from. It is with their kind consent we share their real names and photos, as they attach significance to their non-Swedish names in Sweden.

SHERAFEDIN

Muslim, Swedish-Albanian,
Family Guy, Human



– I am interested in politics, but not excessively. I try to participate in the well-being of countries and to ensure people's rights. It will never be 100%, but I follow it as much as possible because I want everyone to have equal rights.

I vote both in Kosovo and in Sweden. My expectation is for politicians to give people their rights. First and foremost, my own rights. I hold on to the principle of “alla människors lika rättigheter” (the equal rights of all people) and strive to instill it in myself and my children. I don't like any extremes, neither right nor left. All extremes are dangerous. The average is usually the best.

I am more active during election times. I observe what catches my attention, which promises are fulfilled and which are not. Promises are never fully kept. Moreover, politics has changed in the last 15 years, and all parties are closer to each other. There is no longer a clear right or left, nor a clear center. Politics has deteriorated. Everyone looks out for their own interests. I am not satisfied with any politicians, but I try to choose the best option of two bad ones.

What do I expect from political parties? First and foremost, there needs to be a system in place for people to have rights. The education system comes first, followed by healthcare, security, and justice systems. If one is missing, the governance won't work. I want it to work the same way for everyone. We are all humans. I don't consider myself “a migrant” because I have lived here for 32 years. I don't want political parties to see me that way either. I have already repaid my debt.

I chose to become a citizen because I love Sweden's system. I have never felt like a stranger among people.

Naturally, people have different opinions, but I have never felt unheard. I chose to become a citizen because it provides me with rights. I chose it and to guarantee my residency. I chose it because I love it here and wanted to be a permanent resident.

I also have Kosovar citizenship. I was born and raised in Kosovo and came here when I was 17. I kept my Kosovar citizenship for emotional or nostalgic reasons. When people ask me where I'm from, I say I'm a citizen of the world.

I came here out of necessity. The war in Yugoslavia forced us to do so. We had to escape. I was 16 years old at the time. They were conscripting 16-year-olds. My parents immediately got scared and took us out.

When I arrived, my first dream was for the war to end and to go back. But the war continued there, and life went on here. We also changed. So, I decided to stay here. When the war ended, I was 26, and everything had already changed for me.

When making political choices, I try to separate them as much as possible from my past, living standards, and my own class. Since I am satisfied with my situation, I try to think independently of those factors. I only strive to prevent the loss of our existing rights.

Because I never wanted to mix politics into my life, I also don't want to get involved in it personally. What would make me get involved? If people's rights were completely taken away, I would get actively involved to fight against it. But in the current state of affairs, I don't want to get involved no matter what promises political parties make.

TURAN

Muslim, Father, Worker, Human



– I vote both in Turkey and Sweden, but I follow Turkish politics more closely. I was able to exercise my right to vote in Sweden after 2012, before that I wasn't involved in politics much. Our homeland will always hold a special place for us, and there is always the possibility of returning there in the future. However, we don't know if we can permanently stay here.

When voting, my criteria are primarily focused on the economic system in both countries. For Turkey, my criteria are mostly economic. I haven't had a strong connection with Turkey for the past 20 years. I don't have investments or any significant ties; I only visit my family

there. However, we can't ignore the situation of others just because we are comfortable here.

In Sweden, it's not just about the economic system, our rights are also somewhat limited. We are treated as second-class citizens and the general public still discriminates against us. In Swedish politics, one side says that they will deport all immigrants if they win, while it is uncertain whether the other side will win or not. There has been a lack of trust in recent years.

I don't want to get too involved in politics. Because everyone has different opinions, I don't get involved in heated debates among friends or in the family. I don't want to fall out with anyone because of politics.

They should promise us a good future. For the whole country. I don't want any privileges for immigrants, in fact, I don't want any privileges for Swedes either. They should treat everyone equally. They shouldn't put us in second class or see themselves as superior to us. That is what I expect from politicians.

ALI

Non-Swedish, Man, Boyfriend

– My name has a role in all the interactions I have. In Sweden, you first fit into a mold with this name, and then you try to break free from that mold. It brings up being Muslim, being Turkish. I think Ali is one of the names that can make this interview meaningful.

Am I interested in politics? Yes. I particularly follow Turkish politics. I'm still connected to Turkey as if I haven't left. I lived there for 28 years. I still have friends and family there. I want it to become a better place for me, my family and friends. I'm not involved in any organizations, but I follow politics and vote. I don't intend to return in the short term.

I vote in Sweden. I have spent 15 years here. However, compared to Turkey, the minimal nuances between parties, and on certain issues reduce my interest in Swedish politics. I vote, but I'm not very involved. In Sweden, my choice is determined by immigration policies, social welfare policies, workers' rights, and working conditions.

In Turkey, I find it more acceptable to vote for the least worst candidate. I want to get rid of this terrible situation, and I think I will support the party I really want to vote for when more suitable conditions arise. I compromise more in Turkish elections.

What should the politicians offer to win me over? I'd prefer making a significant contribution to smaller issues rather than making a small contribution to major problems. Like engaging in a job where I can see the results motivates me or dealing with the integration of a newly arrived immigrant in my neighborhood.



IQBAL

Football Player, Mathematician, Dancer, Afghani



– I don't really follow politics closely. However, I'm considering going to some political parties and sharing my opinions. Some of my friends are involved, and they say they need young people like me. I might not be able to make a big difference, but I can meet new people and engage in discussions.

I mostly follow what's happening in Afghanistan through social media. I have many Afghan friends, and most of my friends in Sweden are also Afghan. Since we can speak our native language, it brings us closer.

My older brother came to Sweden illegally when he was under 18, and he was able to stay here. He then applied for family reunification. We spent two years in Pakistan after having to leave Afghanistan with my family. Then we finally arrived in Sweden.

I haven't felt at home here yet, at least not completely. When people see my name, they often make assumptions and discriminate against me. They judge me based on my name and decide whether to even grant me an interview. Even in interviews, they tend to prefer candidates with Swedish last names, even if I am qualified. My life is greatly affected by my name. I know someone who changed their name to a Swedish one and it had a significant impact, particularly on job opportunities.

I voted in the Swedish elections last year. Then I primarily considered the interests of immigrants because I am an immigrant, and my family went through the immigration process. So, I think about their welfare and choose the party I believe supports migrants. Even if I had the opportunity to vote in the election in Afghanistan, I don't think I would do it.

Why do I think I am not as interested in Swedish politics? I don't believe it's a problem with Swedish politics itself. I don't choose one over the other; Swedish politics simply doesn't appear as prominently on my feed.

What would make me interested in participating in politics? If there was an inclusive environment where everyone could meet and interact, I would be interested. Often, we only meet other refugees or immigrants in certain places. When I was in school, initially, we had a class comprised mostly of immigrants. Eventually, we started interacting with Swedish people, but since we had already formed friendships within our initial circles, we continued hanging out together. I lived in a small town for a long time, where various social, cultural, and political activities were available for everyone. However, we were unaware of these opportunities. We never received any invitations or messages about them. Starting from there, if we learn where to go and how to engage, it could create a butterfly effect leading to increased political participation.

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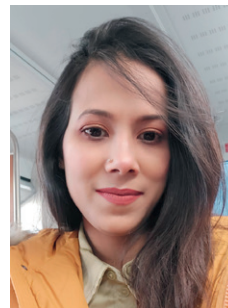
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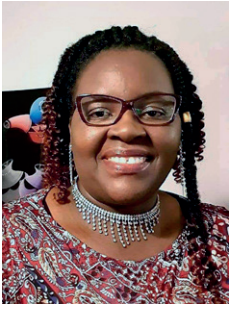
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