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Banal Nationalism in Civic Orientation Courses for Newly Arrived Adult Migrants in Sweden

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ABSTRACT: *Civic orientation has become one of the dominant immigrant integration policies in western Europe, with the aim of transmitting knowledge, norms, and values, thereby furthering "integration" into the new country. However, there is a not much research regarding how the educational content is communicated and negotiated in civic orientation courses in practice. This article aims to bring more empirically based knowledge in this field. The case study discussed in this article explores one specific module, entitled "nature and environment", in civic orientation courses for newly arrived adults in Sweden. This is done through participatory observations in the courses, both in classrooms in real life and on the internet and exploring in detail the negotiations between the civic orientation communicators and the course participants. The analyses show how a real "success story" of Sweden and its citizens is constructed through an overall discourse of Swedes high awareness of the environment and nature, not least through comparisons between geographical spaces in the world. The analyses also reveal antagonistic voices about the content, although these are not particularly strong. We suggest that there is an urgent need to critically reflect on the aim, content, and teaching practices of civic orientation courses for newly arrived migrants, as these more seem to contribute to the Swedish nation's reproduction of "banal nationalism".*

KEYWORDS: *Civic orientation courses; newly arrived adult migrants; environment; banal nationalism; Sweden*

The starting point for this paper is UNESCO's Futures of Education[1] initiative to "rethink education and shape the future", with a focus on migration and education for newly arrived adult migrants in Sweden. The UNESCO initiative is intended to catalyze "a global debate on how knowledge, education and learning need to be reimagined in a world of increasing complexity, uncertainty, and precarity". The issues of migration and education have a place in such an

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[1] UNESCO – The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. For the initiative Futures of Education – Learning to Become, see: https://en.unesco.org/futuresofeducation/.

initiative. The current global estimate is that there were around 272 million international migrants in the world in 2019, which equates to 3.5 per cent of the global population (UN World Migration Report, 2020[2]; cf. De Haas, Castles & Miller, 2019).

Accordingly, global migration forces many actors, including nation-states, to re-examine and reinvent ways in which diverse groups of people can be educated for citizenship and civic engagement, and this applies to both young students and adult migrants.

At least since mass education was introduced (cf. Boli, Ramirez & Meyer, 1985), education has played a crucial role in the standardization of knowledge and helped to socialize humans into encompassing national memories thereby trying to construct a singular national foundation of society. In the book *The Invention of Tradition* Ranger and Hobsbawm (1983/2012) wrote extensively on education and claimed that "in particular, state education, transformed people into citizens of a specific country" (2012, p. 264); they also emphasized the view that education is a way of consolidating national identity. Therefore, one of the central questions for nation-states is how education can be organized in order for migrants to attain the knowledge, values, and skills that are considered necessary to become fully participatory citizens in a new country.

In modern times, education, and not the least civic education for adult migrants, which is our interest in this paper, has become a key policy objective of significant public discussions in Europe (Goodman 2010; Gutmann & Ben-Porath, 2014; Joppke 2017). In this regard, the Council of Europe (CoE) has been a strong policy actor, supporting governments to implement various recommendations (2010a, 2010b). While there are policies directed to education for young students (Arbués, 2014), much policy work is also formulated in relation to newly adult migrants' education, where establishing "integration programmes" are recommended (CoE 2017). The Council of Europe wrote:

8. The Assembly therefore recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

iv. call on member states to:

b. establish integration programmes for those immigrants who have recently arrived. Such programmes should: - be accessible on a voluntary basis;

[…]

- be tailor-made to the individual needs of each beneficiary; - include language tuition, information on the way of life and customs of the host society, including access to basic services such as health, housing and legal advice

- provide for financial inducements to encourage participation;

f. encourage the active involvement of immigrant women in all aspects of the host society, including political life, as well as their access to education, vocational training and the labour market. (CoE, 2017, p. 17)

Thus, integration programs for adult migrants are recommended to be organized with content that provides language tuition and "information on the way of life and customs of the host society, including access to basic services such as health, housing and legal advice".

In Sweden, courses with the mentioned content are organized under the heading of civic orientation courses and the education in such courses is the main issue for this paper. We focus on the civic orientation courses for newly arrived adult migrants in Sweden through

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[2]   As stated in the UN *World Migration Report* (2020), migration is the most problematic of the population variables and the measurement depends upon how migration is defined in time and across space (2020, p.5).

exploring the theme "nature and environment", which is one specific module in the civic orientation. More specifically, we follow the civic orientation courses and negotiations in educational discussion between the civic orientation communicator and the participants in the civic orientation courses to investigate how arguments, norms, and values in the courses are constructed out from a lens of the nation. This is done analytically from work by Billig (1995) on "banal nationalism" and "everyday nationalism", supplemented with work by Bhabha (1990), Skey and Antonsich (2017), and Sörlin (2001, 2015). Furthermore, we want to empirically explore and discuss Larin's argument that civic orientation courses are "essentially civic nationalist ideology applied to migrants" and therefore better understood as "migration control" (Larin, 2020, p. 127). Larin made the argument that "civic integration, as an expression of civic nationalism, reflects the self-representation of majority groups more than anything else, and is inadequate and indeed pernicious as a policy prescription, and is both politically and ontologically problematic" (Larin, 2020, p. 127–128).

We agree with the perception that civic orientation courses are based on civic nationalism in its construction, and civic nationalism is defined here in the simplest way as a sense of belonging through citizenship and political equality. However, 'civic nationalism' also comes in many forms and varieties (Sörlin, 2001; 2015), and we want to bring in more empirical evidence on how this can play out in practice through observations in civic orientation courses *in-situ* and with empirical data to qualify the statement.

Sustainability – Nature and Environment

For this paper, we focus on the content area of sustainability, which is one of the areas covered in the civic orientation course under the heading of "Nature and environment". Sustainability is chosen, not surprisingly, because it is highly topical, challenging, and vital for all, not only in "educational efforts" for the newly arrived adult migrants. The concept of sustainability refers to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly on September 25, 2015.[3] Sustainability is composed of three pillars – the economic, the environmental, and the social – that are also known informally as profits, planet, and people. The development goals are a continuation and development of the millennium goals that the UN adopted in 2000 and which should have been achieved by 2015, but this goal was unfortunately not achieved. Education concerning sustainable development is nothing new and is currently integrated in civic orientation courses in Sweden.

This paper explores the following questions:

> How is sustainability as a topic presented in civic orientation courses for newly arrived adult migrants?
> What narratives are constructed in negotiations between the course leaders and the participants in civic orientation courses on "nature and environment" in relation to sustainability?

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: In the first section, we give a brief background to Sweden as a Nordic welfare state concerning migration, the implementation of a "multicultural" policy, and the current dismantling of that policy within the neoliberal reorganizing of the society. We then introduce and describe civic orientation courses, which are the empirical case study for this paper. The following section is based on our ethnographic

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[3]   See: *The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. United Nations https://sdgs.un.org/goals.

fieldwork, with examples taken from the theme on "nature and the environment", which is, as earlier mentioned, one of the modules in civic orientation courses. We end with a discussion based on our analyses, problematizing whether the civic orientation courses can be viewed as "migration control", as argued by Larin (2020), and a reflection on the call and the rhetoric to "rethink education and shape the future".

Sweden as the "multicultural flagship"

Sweden has often been described in the literature as a "flagship of multiculturalism", although this can be debated, as argued by Borevi, depending on the perspective taken (Borevi, 2012, pp. 89–90). The Swedish welfare state was built, from its start in the 1920 and 1930s, on ideas of integration and promotion of cohesion and solidarity. After World War II, workers were needed as the industry was undamaged and booming, and migration into Sweden therefore increased. As a way of strengthening and integrating migrants in Sweden, a multicultural policy was established in 1974 (SOU 1974: 69). Sweden became one of the first countries in the West, along with Canada and Australia, to formally adopt the idea of multiculturalism as a basis for the political management of immigrant settlement (Wickström, 2013; Ålund & Schierup, 1991). The new policy from the 1970s was summarized with the three goals of equality, freedom, and cooperation, and one of its main principles was that the ethnic, religious, cultural, and social community lives of minorities should be promoted in Swedish society and were formulated in accordance with a *universal welfare model* (Borevi, 2012, p. 28). Therefore, a change from the earlier policy was that migrant and minority groups were entitled to affirmative action, which was more than international law required at that time. Consequently, the 1974 policy has been widely regarded as pioneering. Since the time when Sweden proclaimed itself a "multicultural nation", political decisions have been made that both accentuate and downplay the multicultural strategy (Borevi, 2013; Milani et al., 2021, p. 4; Wiesbrock, 2011).

The "multicultural model", adopted during the 1970s in Sweden, has attracted strong criticism for promoting "essentialism", reifying the identities and practices of minority groups. As Phillips argued, multiculturalism "exaggerates the internal unity of cultures, solidifies differences that are currently more fluid, and makes people from other cultures seem more exotic and distinct than they really are" (Phillips, 2007, p. 14; cf. Kymlicka, 2014).

After the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, the critique made the multicultural policy model more or less obsolete, discussed as either dead or "rebalanced" (Meer & Modood, 2009; Vertovec & Wessendorf, 2010). Currently, a general trend towards civic integration requirements and stricter policies is seen in many migrant-receiving societies through citizenship acquisition rules, integration programs, and education policies, discussed as the "civic turn" (Borevi, Kriegbaum Jensen & Mouritsen, 2017; Goodman, 2010, 2014; Kriegbaum Jensen, Fernández & Brochmann, 2017; Mouritsen, Jensen & Larin, 2019; Joppke, 2004, 2007; Phillips, 2007). This is also the case in Sweden, where stricter laws and policies concerning immigration have been introduced, and a new migration policy was announced in April 2021. The aim of this policy, as formulated in the press release, is to "get a better balance between rights and obligations and to formulate long-term sustainable migration policies but maintain the right to asylum".[4] Another argument that has been mentioned is that the regulatory framework should "not differ significantly from those in other EU countries" (Swedish

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[4]   Swedish Government, April 2021. https://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2021/04/andrade-regler-i-utlanningslagen/. See also: Government Bill 2020/21:191.

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Government, 2021). The new laws mean that everyone who receives asylum in Sweden must get a temporary residence permit, and there will be stricter rules for obtaining one. Even though a multicultural policy model has been upheld since the 1970s in Sweden, it is true when it comes to migration and integration, that Swedish policies have *also* always had the ambition of making people adapt to common national norms (Borevi, 2012, p. 27). Thus, the Swedish welfare state has been ambiguous in its nature and has since the year 2016 moved from adopting one of the most generous policies to now complying with the minimum EU-level (Hudson et al., 2021, p. 11).

Civic orientation courses for newly arrived adult migrants in Sweden

In Sweden, civic orientation and language courses have been organized since the 1960s (Carlson, 2002, p. 21). In 1965, the government started to finance tuition in the Swedish language on a preliminary basis, and the learning of Swedish was considered a fundamental prerequisite for the successful settlement of new arrivals (Lindberg & Sandwall, 2007, p. 81; cf. Milani et al., 2021). In 1972, in line with ideas of a multicultural policy, a new law stated that employers had to pay for language courses in Swedish for their employees (Byström & Frohnert, 2013, p. 21). However, a general trend towards civic integration requirements and stricter policies is currently seen in many migrant-receiving societies, as mentioned.

A new integration reform was implemented in Sweden in 2010, where responsibility for the integration of newly arrived refugees was transferred from the municipalities to the Swedish Public Employment Service. This government agency runs an "establishment program" for migrants who are newly arrived in Sweden, where activities and education are provided. The goal of this program, as stated on the agency's homepage[5], is "for you to learn Swedish as quickly as possible, find a job and manage your own livelihood". The government agency has the obligation to produce a personal introduction plan together with newly arrived migrants. This plan should be based on the individual's previous education and work experience, and always contains courses in Swedish language, civic orientation, and employment preparation activities (Prop. 2009/10:60; cf. Borevi, 2012, p. 85). In line with this, civic orientation courses for newly arrived adult migrants were implemented in its current form in Swedish municipalities in 2010 (SOU 2010:16). The civic orientation courses are publicly regulated and a mandatory initiative for newly arrived refugees and their relatives once a residence permit has been granted (SFS: 2010: 1138; Abdulla & Risenfors, 2013, p. 119).

Currently, the course on civic integration for newly arrived adult migrants encompasses 100 hours, is free of charge, and the municipalities are responsible for providing the course (SFS 2010: 1138, 5§). The civic orientation courses are organized in the migrant's mother tongue and are led by employees called civic orientation communicators, who are employed based on their language skills, are established and know Swedish society, and have experience of migration (SOU 2010: 16, p. 16). In our case study, a university degree was required to work as a communicator. Focus on the civic orientation courses should be placed on the practical aspect of living in Sweden as well as gender equality and human rights, echoing the Council of Europe's writings on integration, which state that:

13. […] integration does imply a degree of involvement in the society as a whole, including knowledge of the language(s) of the country of residence and respect for the constitutional

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values in that country, in particular respect for the principles of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Easy access and motivation for language learning should be provided to migrant women. Cultural and educational policies should be developed to raise migrant women's awareness of constitutional values and the principles of human rights." (CoE, 2017, p. 19)

Human rights, democracy, and the rule of law are underlined and should be the focus in the civic orientation courses, and especially migrant women are considered important subjects to reach through the courses. The content of the civic orientation courses in Sweden was specified into eight content areas, in 2010:

(1) To come to Sweden, (2) to live in Sweden, (3) to support oneself and develop in Sweden, (4) the rights and obligations of the individual, (5) to start a family and live with children in Sweden, (6) to influence in Sweden, (7) to take care of one's health in Sweden, and (8) to age in Sweden (SFS 2010: 1138, 3 §).

The content areas are broad and require subject knowledge, but also pedagogical strategies and knowledge of the participants' backgrounds and experiences in order to become a real learning situation (cf. Abdullah & Risenfors, 2013; Vesterlind, 2015, 2016; Åberg, 2020a, 2020b). The eight content areas are supplemented with the information that "the emphasis should be on the practical aspect of living in Sweden", that the courses should provide clear information, and space for dialogue and reflection (SFS: 2010: 1138, p. 72–74). A dialogical form of teaching is motivated as follows:

… the form of dialogue – properly implemented – is a way of treating people with the respect they have an obvious right to and which is extra important as the civic orientation includes values and standards. (SFS 2010: 16, p. 73: own translation)

Also, the possibility for the course participants to "influence, participate and take responsibility" is underlined as this is a right for all students. Such a right should also apply to the participants in civic orientation courses, the inquiry states (SOU 2010: 16, p. 73). Three dimensions should be built-in into all the nine content areas, namely norms, the welfare state and working life (2010:16, p. 13; cf. Abdulla & Risenfors, 2013, p. 119).

Generally, it is stated that the aim of the civic orientation course is to shape democratic citizens who play an active part in society. This is expressed in the public inquiry as follows:

The civic orientation should be an educational effort, where the participants' knowledge of and understanding of Swedish society is developed in order to facilitate their participation in society. (SOU, 2010: 16, p. 69: own translation).

Similar civic orientation courses – or "educational efforts", which is the terminology used in the policy in Sweden – have been established in many countries in the Western world, often mentioned as citizenship education for adult migrants (see, e.g., Joshee & Derwing, 2005; Osler, 2009; Shah, 2019). Such course initiatives often end with a citizenship test, which is not (yet) the case in Sweden.

However, an inquiry recently proposed that the act on Swedish citizenship should set requirements for knowledge in Swedish and social studies to acquire Swedish citizenship (SOU 2021: 2). Also, a requirement of an approved exam in the civic orientation course is on the political agenda (see e. g. Kristersson & Svantesson, 2021).

Civic Orientation Courses – "an educational effort"

The civic courses in Sweden for adult migrants are named civic *orientation* courses, so the concept of education is not used. In the public inquiry, it is explained that the civic orientation courses are not regulated by a formal syllabus within the education system, which then probably motivates the concept of orientation. Thus, it is underlined that the courses are "an educational effort – but not a form of schooling" (SOU 2010:16, p. 72), which seems like playing with words. However, the concept of orientation might refer to an initial introduction and no specific educational goals other than the very overarching goals to "develop and facilitate their [the migrants] participation in society" that are formulated for the courses (SOU, 2010: 16, p. 69). It might also refer to the fact that there are no formal teacher education requirements for the civic orientation communicators. Initiatives to strengthen the communicators' role and teaching practice have been taken, but nothing has yet been decided (see MILSA training platform for social and health communicators6). As mentioned earlier, there are no tests related to the "educational effort" of civic orientation, but a certificate is given upon completion of the course. However, the content is planned among several actors and three different types of instructional material have been developed to generate equivalence between how the municipalities gave effort and ensure that the content of the information was correct. The material consists of preparation material, the book entitled "About Sweden", and PowerPoint material. The material was produced by a reference group consisting of representatives from five occupational categories: a representative from the county administrative board, experts from authorities/universities and coordinators, a unit manager, and social communicators from a municipal integration unit. The standardization of the eight content areas was based on various goals: to achieve the "scientifically correct", the "politically neutral" and the "relevant from the outside the needs of new arrivals". An additional action aimed to reach an educational content that was easy to understand (Åberg, 2020a, p. 79). These goals are intriguing because they relate to our interest in exploring the constructions in relation to the nation and of "banal nationalism" as these actors represents a perspective from above, the state and a top-down perspective on the decided content. On the other hand, communications between the course participants can be viewed analytically as "everyday nationalism", as these utterances and negotiations come from a bottom-up perspective. The theoretical framework connected to these concepts will be presented in the next section.

Banal nationalism and everyday nationalism

For this paper, we draw theoretically on Billig's well-known work *Banal Nationalism* (1995), which refers to the ideological habits and discourses that help reproduce societies through everyday practices. According to Billig, nationalism becomes absorbed into the nations' environment, and symbols of nationhood like coins, banknotes, and stamps become part of our daily lives, constructing the background space into a "national space" (Billig, 1995, p. 41). Thus, the nation often operates "just beneath the surface, underpinning the social order without requiring, or even permitting much tinkering" (Fox, 2017, p. 26). It is also here where stereotypes come in and distinguish "them" from "us", where "we" stand for the normal and the "standard", connected to a specific geographic space, the "homeland" (Billig, 1995, p. 83; see,

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e. g. Özkirimli, 2017, pp. 183–187). Billig specifically underlined the "small words" that remind us that we live in a nation. He wrote:

> Small words rather than grand and important memorable phrases make our national identity unforgettable. To explore such matters, we should not only pay attention to words like "people" or "society" but also become linguistically microscopic", since the secret of banal nationalism lies in tiny words such as "we", "this" and "here". (Billig, 1995, pp. 93–94)

Therefore, according to Billig (1995), language is an essential part of the construction of the nation. We pay specific attention to language in our work as educational talk and communicative negotiations in civic orientation courses are our empirical data.

The concept of "banal nationalism" is often extended with the concept of "everyday nationalism", as the concept of "banal nationalism" is sometimes critiqued for overlooking human agency (Skey & Antonsich 2017, p. 5; Knott, 2016, pp. 1–2, Knott, 2017). "Everyday nationalism" is about what "ordinary people are doing when doing ordinary things", which places more focus on human agency and the meaning and experiences of nationhood from the perspective of those on the ground, while "banal nationalism" explores the state-centric top-down conception of nationhood (Skey & Antonsich, 2017, p. 5). Researchers have argued that there is a need to bridge the two concepts when studying nationalism (Hearn & Antonsich, 2018). In the present paper, our interest is primarily on "banal nationalism" as we are interested in the civic orientation communicators talk and negotiations between the communicator and the participants in the courses. However, "everyday nationalism" might also be articulated by the course participants in negotiations on the course content.

The essay entitled "DissemiNation: Time, narrative and the margins of the modern nation" by Bhabha (1990) also enriches our work, especially as Bhabha critiqued the inappropriate "essentialist" readings of nationhood that falsely define and ensure the subordinate status of "Third World" nations. Bhabha argued that nations and cultures must be understood as "narrative" constructions that arise from the "hybrid" interaction between national and different cultural spaces. Consequently, Bhabha underlined that a nation consists of unstable and competing temporalities including the colonial, postcolonial, native, and modern, which underlines a nation's constantly shifting construction (Bhabha, 1990).

This study is based on ethnographic fieldwork in three larger cities in Sweden, and some of this data material will be explored in this paper.[7] The courses have been followed both in Arabic and English by six different researchers with a production of 551 pages of fieldnotes. Several of the researchers in the team speak Arabic, so there was no need for external translators.

All of the researchers took fieldnotes by hand and we mainly took the position of observers as participants. All informants gave their informed consent, and our roles as researchers were clear and overt, following the ethical rules from the Swedish Research Council (2017).[8] However, we occasionally took part in group discussions when being asked, but tried to interfere as little as possible during sessions (cf. Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2017, p. 543). The study was undertaken in the spring of 2020 and started in real classroom contexts, although it had to be conducted in April through Skype due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This meant that data from two-thirds of our research were produced during classes on Skype. The arrangements worked overall well, but the physical separation in distance education created new challenges

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[7] Research from the same civic orientation courses and the same research team has also been reported in the article by Milani et.al. (2021) in *Citizenship Studies*, https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2021.1968698.

[8] Following the ethical guidelines, we secured the participants' anonymity and integrity by using names other than their real names and by carefully concealing other personal data to avoid identification. See: *Good Research Practice*, The Swedish Research Council, 2017.

for the students as well as the teachers when it was not possible to physically meet and interact. A lot of social interactions before and after classes simply fell away, and spoken conversations on Skype were sometimes difficult to hear. However, distance communication also has certain advantages in regards to the topic of this article. For example, the narratives were overall more clearly crystalized in an online setting, with most of the social context being removed. Therefore, we believe that our research has benefited from a clearer narrative being put forward by the communicators. The course participants, both men and women and of different ages, were from a number of different countries and had lived in Sweden for a few months to several years.

The study can be classified as a case study because it is tightly bounded and the unit for our analysis (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2017, pp. 375–378). The ethnographic work gave us the opportunity to study people in real educational/civic orientation sessions, to focus on the content themes and spoken interactions, and through our analytical work, to understand how such themes, practical information, and discussions fit together with abstract principles (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2017, p. 376; Denscombe, 2014, pp. 54–57), in this case with principles related to "banal nationalism" and "everyday nationalism".

Nature, the Environment, and Sustainability – a Swedish "Success Story"

The module on "Nature and the Environment" in the civic orientation courses have been placed in the latter part of the civic orientation that we took part in. In one of the sessions, the communicator started the course session by posing the question: "Why should we talk about this topic?" One of the participants answered that it is about "The natural beauty, plants and the environment", while another answered: "Recycling". The communicator agreed with both answers, but immediately appeared anxious to emphasize why the civic orientation course has this element. The communicator continued:

> Yeah, this topic is important to the Swedish country. They take care and recognize the environment. There is a political party that is environmental … There are concerns with the climate and a national agenda. It could not be a priority where there are many other problems, but as we want to integrate in this society, we want to understand this topic. It's a national agenda and everyone works on it: a sustainable society. We will talk about the ozone layer, frisk luft/healthy air, eliminating the things that affect global warming, climate, and weather. (Field notes, May 2020)[9]

In this sequence the communicator underlined that the issue of the climate is important in the "Swedish country" and used the word "they" for people living in Sweden. The communicator consequently identified with the migrant participants in the group and stated that "they care", followed by saying that "as we want to integrate in this society, we want to understand this topic". As Billig claimed, it is the "small words, rather than grand and important memorable phrases "[that] make our national identity unforgettable" (Billig, 1995, p. 93). Also, the call to observe the "linguistically microscopic" is relevant, since the secret of banal nationalism lies in tiny words such as "we", "this" and "here" (Billig, 1995, pp. 93–94). We can see from the above how "us" and "them" are constructed where the communicator herself does not identify with the country in which she lives and works. This might not be remarkable, as nations construct borders delineating what it means to identify with them and which also decide who

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9   The civic orientation communicators often mix languages when talking. Parts of the dialogues are fully reproduced in the extracts.

belongs to the nation, and who does not. The "country" and its inhabitants are further mentioned in a very homogenous way as "everyone [in Sweden] works on it" and "there is a national agenda". The reference to a national agenda underlines the reference to a top-down "banal nationalism" discourse.

The communicator continued the dialogue as follows:

Communicator: It's a national agenda and everyone works on it: a sustainable society. We will talk about the ozone layer, frisk luft/healthy air, eliminating the things that affect global warming, climate, and weather. Why do we say klimat och väder/climate and weather?

Imran: Weather is the daily weather and climate is monthly or yearly.

Communicator: Yeah, climate is for a longer period, but weather is daily. The climate affects forests, water recourses, varieties in plants, and the marine environment.

The communicator then Googles and tried to connect to the webpage for Sweden's environmental goals: sverigesmiljomal.se: http://sverigesmiljomal.se/

Communicator: Unfortunately, not in English (the communicator sighs). (Fieldnotes May 2020).

As the environmental goals for Sweden have not been translated into English, which is the language in the course, the communicator sighed. After checking again in October 2021, we can still not see any translations on the webpage.[10] This is strange given that Sweden is a multilingual space, with Swedish as the official and the majority language, but also English, the global lingua franca, five officially recognized indigenous minority languages, and almost 200 "immigrant" minority languages with no official status being spoken (Lindberg & Sandwall, 2007, pp. 71–72). However, as Karlsson and Karlsson argued, Swedish works as a "frozen ideology" that favors Swedish as a default language (2020). Their argument is based on research in Swedish higher institutions, but this seems to be the case in many Swedish institutions. The lack of Swedish translations in policy documents happens repeatedly when the communicator searched on the computer in the civic orientation course (in English), which of course raises questions to institutions about their willingness to communicate in languages other than Swedish and underlines Swedish as the default language.

In the civic orientation session, the communicator went on, showing a PowerPoint with the headline "Klimatförändringen"/Climate Change, and asked:

Communicator: Do you know anything about climate change and global warming?

Chika: I hear about it, but I don't know about it.

Imran: Temperature is rising, ice is melting, and the sea levels are rising. We will have problems in the future. Cars and airplanes are polluting.

Fakih: Air pollution.

Communicator: Yeah, we see symptoms of the climate change and misuse of recourses.

(Field notes, May 2020).

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10 Sverigesmiljömål.se is run by the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency in collaboration with the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning, the Swedish Maritime Administration, the Swedish Board of Agriculture, the Swedish Chemicals Agency, the Swedish Forest Agency, the Swedish Geological Survey, the Swedish Radiation Safety Authority and the county administrative boards [2021-10-17].

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The communicator listened and then went on to describe how the sun's warming rays enter the earth and how this, together with the sun's warming and pollution from machines, makes the layer in form of carbon dioxide thicker, prevents the heat from coming through, which causes the greenhouse effect and global warming. The communicator added that this is not only in Sweden, but "everyone [who] is affected, it's global and in my country it's even warmer than it used to be in Africa". The discussion continued in a mood of doom due to the climate change and environmental problems. "My country", which represented a Middle Eastern country, and Africa were brought in as comparisons, where it is really hot. In particular, Africa fulfilled the role of a stereotype for a hot place when the discussion continued:

Chika: On average [in Africa], it's above 37.

Jabarl: Two weeks ago, in [a place on the African continent is mentioned] it was 36.

Communicator: In the Middle East it's almost 45 to 50 degrees. They are almost cooking there. What are the effects?

Jabarl: It will be crisis, the bush will be very dry, it will get fire.

The conversation goes on and discusses catastrophes that are foreseen:

Communicator: It will also affect the level of the ground water. It will because the salt, there is a balance. If we play with it, it will be bad consequences. It will get dryer and there will be shortage in water and food resources and more diseases are expected to find their way, viruses, and bacteria in certain places where they weren't before. Old people, and also young people, in India there are heat waves, especially when the country …//

Imran: //Hurricanes, and they are getting stronger and stronger.

The conversation on the catastrophes rounded up when Chika, who comes from an African country, said:

Chika: I had an idea. I have come from Africa, and I have experienced … I have seen this in Africa, so I know that before, but it's the first time I hear we should work on it.

The constructed narrative in this conversation is building up a discourse on catastrophe, where especially the Middle East and Africa are mentioned as the worst-affected areas. It is also from these areas that several of the course participants have arrived and therefore made comparisons with. The participants are quite well-informed about the issues and together build an increasingly accelerated discussion about what catastrophes there will be on Earth.

Even though the whole planet will be affected, as the communicator stated and tried to bring a global perspective, the participants mentioned specific geographical areas like India and the Middle East that will probably be affected particularly badly. This part of this discussion ended when Chika, herself from Africa, explained that she knew about these issues, but had not previously heard how they could be worked on. In this narrative, Sweden as a nation stands out as an example of knowledge and on the ability to act as "there is a national agenda" and "they work on it".

The story of Sweden as an active agent in matters of sustainability comes through in the discussions several times. Below are some example fieldnotes that cover the same theme:

… the communicator explains how Sweden is "environmentally friendly". The communicator explains in detail how Sweden takes care of the environment and how it is concerned about the issue of global warming, how it is moving towards reducing petrol-based cars and replacing them

with electric ones, and how it is using waste to generate electricity. Participants reacted with humor when comparing Sweden's environmental policy with their own countries. (Fieldnotes, March 2020)

Comparisons with the participants' previous countries of origin and Sweden often occurred in the discussions and led to both laughter and negative opinions regarding their own nations, depending on the theme. Consequently, Sweden as a nation appeared in a positive light as "environmentally friendly", as the communicator stated. If there could be something to complain about, or "rumors", as the communicator described it, these could be addressed in the civic orientation course, which is done in the following dialogue concerning recycling.

> *Communicator*: There is a special vehicle, they burn the trash that warms the houses. There is a rumor that Sweden buys trash. It doesn't, but it does help other countries, [Sweden] is one of the countries that has succeeded in this recycling. Most countries keep it on the ground, which is very bad.

After the communicator stated that Sweden has "succeeded in recycling" in comparison to many other countries, and even "help[s] other countries" that keep garbage on the ground, the communicator showed a video clip entitled "Therefore, importing waste is good for the climate"[11](Field notes, April 2020).

A theme that is covered in all courses is waste management and how to sort waste:

> The communicator talks about what to do in the garbage rooms, and goes through the different drawers, glass, colored and uncolored, cardboard, plastic, and metal. The communicator then asks what they think about it and Nasrin says:

> *Nasrin*:   … it is very good; it does not exist in our countries. It is here in Sweden, and it is very good.
> (Field notes, April 2020)

Nasrin underlined the good practices concerning sorting waste in Sweden and compares them with "our countries", incorporating all the participants' countries. The communicator continued and described how, in many countries in Africa, for example, there are problems because much environmentally harmful waste is thrown away, which negatively affects people and animals. Again, Sweden as a nation is contrasted with "Africa" and the image of Sweden as "very good" is repeated several times. Africa, on the other hand, is repeatedly homogenized into one space and stereotypically narrated with bad habits and undeveloped.

No participants commented on the statements; rather, they reinforced the narrations on Sweden as a nation where sustainability efforts have succeeded in comparison with their own home countries.

In another section of the orientation course, the communicator said that it is not good to use cleaning items that have a lot of chemicals, such as "cleaning the toilet with chlorine". The communicator then asked if anyone had any comments about the air in Sweden. Nasim said that he had read somewhere that the air in Sweden is better than in any other country. Another participant confirmed that this is true for certain areas and said that air from Sweden has even been sold abroad. He said that the clean air that is sold comes from the northern parts of Sweden, where the air is very clean. The communicator agreed, saying that, "They are known for their beautiful nature". The communicator continued, explaining that there are laws in Sweden regarding where you can fish and how much you can fish after buying a fishing license (Field notes, March 2020).

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11   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MIwCwOX6eBc (In Swedish).

In this sequence of the civic orientation course, the clean air and beauty of Sweden is narrated, repeating Sweden as almost outstanding. As on some other occasions, it is not the communicators that bring up the "success story" but participants, thus adding to the sustainable success story of Sweden.

An Antagonistic Discourse

At the end of one of the sessions on sustainability, the communicator asked the participants what they thought about the information and the course. Several participants felt that the information was good for health and for the children. However, Nasim questioned the information and stated that he thinks there should be more information about laws, things that are good to know for people who are new to Sweden. He said: "We already know about the other things, about climate change and such". Fouad, who felt that the information was good, agreed with Nasim and said it would be good to focus more on what he said. Fouad argued that civic orientation should contribute to integration, talk about integration, housing, and help them become more integrated, to know the laws. The communicator said that it is true that it should contribute to integration, but nature and the environment are important to understand in order to understand Sweden. The communicator said:

> It [the environment] is very important in Swedish society, and in daily life, nature plays a big role. We talked about laws about how to do in the forest, and also about energy, which is very important and part of life and to be integrated, to understand how energy is organized here. (Field notes, March 2020)

The discourse on Swedish peoples' closeness to the nature was raised several times in the civic orientation courses and is repeated; for example, "the Swedish people have a close bond with nature" (Field notes, March 2020). Also, the "allemansrätt" ("the right of public access") is talked about as in the following from parts of the field notes:

> The communicator says that in Sweden, there is a regulation that gives population the right to enjoy the nature of their land "allemansrätten" ("the right of public access"). She also says this goes along with respecting others' private property and keeping the nature safe. The communicator says that the person can go camping but if it is more than two-days camping, the person should take a permission before.

> *Fadi:* How do they know that I was camping and how many days I stayed? Do they have cameras in every place?

> *Communicator:* This depends on the person and his sense of responsibility … and don't forget what we said before about the relation between the Swedes and their government being built on trust.

> *Ghassan*: We will never get to reach this level of mutual trust in our countries.

Again, the narrative confirms Sweden as a "success story" where a sustainable nature can be enjoyed and that the relations between the people and the government are based on trust. However, there are some agonistic voices, not raised in relation to the discourse on Sweden and the "banal nationalism" depicting Sweden as "the best in the world", but related to complaints about some of the course content being irrelevant for the participants and the focus on issues of integration into the Swedish society. "To talk about integration, housing, and help them (the course participants) become more integrated, to know the laws", as articulated by Nasim.

Discussion

In this paper we have looked at the content of "nature and environment" in civic orientation courses for adult migrants in Sweden. We did this with the intention of finding out how the issue of sustainability was articulated, as this is an issue prescribed in policies for all institutional arrangements like education.

We have shown how sustainability is articulated in the civic orientation courses as issues such as the ozone layer, clean air, global warming, climate change, weather, and waste sorting. Through the articulations from the communicators, but also strengthened by some participants' articulations, a Swedish "success story" is constructed. Sweden stands out as handling nature well, already having a national agenda on sustainability, abandoning petrol-based cars, and "helping" other countries with waste sorting and garbage. This "success story" is embedded in articulations of "banal nationalism" and essentialism, such as constructions of "us" and "them" and comparisons with other geographical spaces in the world that are homogenized and depicted as undeveloped and unhealthy. Especially, the Middle East and the African continent are blatantly homogenized, also sometimes reinforced by the course participants themselves, as some of the extracts have shown. There are few nuances or "hybrid interactions" mentioned between national and different cultural spaces, as brought up by Bhabha (1990).

Drawing on Billig's work on "banal nationalism" (1995), we argue that the civic orientation courses reproduce a constructed self-narration of Swedish society, and in this case a narration of sustainability work, nature, and the environment that is outstanding in the world. This is done through the articulations of everyday practices like waste sorting, avoiding chemicals like chlorine, and avoiding driving petrol cars, which is the case in the Swedish national space, as discursively constructed in the civic orientation course. According to Billig, nationalism becomes absorbed into the nations' environment and constructs the background space into "national space" (Billig, 1995, p. 41). Furthermore, we agree with Fox that the civic orientation courses "underpin the social order without requiring, or even permitting much tinkering" (2017, p. 26). We have shown how "us" and "them" are constructed through the "small words" that Billig (1995) emphasized, both in the civic orientation class itself and from a wider geospatial perspective. Sweden is constructed as the container of clean air and beautiful nature, which are symbols that have been used within nationalistic discourses since the end of the 19th century (Storey, 2001). This is also the case in Sweden, where nature emerged after the 1930s as something common, practical, and beneficial to Swedish citizens (Andersson, 2020, p. 2; Sandell and Sörlin, 1994). This comes back in the discourse of the beautiful nature in the north of Sweden, where it is possible to go fishing and camping after buying a fishing license and not camping more than two nights. When one participant asked how it was possible to tell how long a camper had stayed, the communicator answered that Swedes' "relations to its government are based on trust".

Difficulties regarding sustainability work were not raised in any of the discussions in the civic orientation classes. Everything seemed well organized and taken care of through the national plan and other practices, and the newly arrived migrants also came to understand how to sort waste and avoid dangerous chemicals. This nationalistic discourse replicates the welfare states' self-narration through, in this case, the content concerning sustainability.

Connecting back to Larins' claim that civic orientation courses are "essentially civic nationalist ideology applied to migrants" and therefore better understood as "migration control" (Larin, 2020, p. 127), we are inclined to agree, even though "control" is probably too strong a term. As this paper has shown, the courses certainly reflect "the self-representation of majority groups more than anything else", as again argued by Larin (2020, p. 128). The Swedish

nations' self-representation comes through with the help of "banal nationalism" embedded in narratives about Sweden and its successful sustainability work.

The UNESCO initiative on "rethinking education" emphasizes that this initiative shapes the future of humanity and the planet, and in continuatiuon of this we conclude that there is an urgent need to critically reflect on the aim, content, and teaching practices of civic orientation courses for newly arrived migrants and ask what civic orientation specifically contributes to, if not to reproducing an image of a well-organized welfare state that no longer even exists.

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