Scandinavian Political Studies, Vol. 21 – No. 1, 1998
ISSN 0080–6757

Immigrants in the Political Process

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Introduction

The problem with today's democracies, claims radical democrat Mouffe (1992), is not the ideal of democracy as such but the fact that its political principles are far from being realized, even in countries that claim to be democracy's foremost representatives. According to Mouffe, democratic advances have historically involved an extension of democratic rights along two dimensions: "either new groups have claimed access to rights already declared, or new rights have been demanded in social relations hitherto considered 'naturally' hierarchical, such as those concerned with race, gender, etc." (Mouffe 1992)

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Introduction

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interests. We contend that these arguments are equally valid for other under-represented groups such as immigrants.

Hernes argues that the exclusion of significant groups of society's members from the political process is incompatible with the argument for justice. She further argues that the best political decisions for society are those that are based on the experience of different social groups. Finally, participation and representation in political life is a question of different and sometimes conflicting group interests and their "impact" on political decisions. In theory, at least, those who are insufficiently represented are more unlikely to have their interests met in the general distribution of values. Judged by these criteria, the severe under-representation of immigrants must be seen to constitute a failure for the democratic process. Philips (1995) has advanced an analogous argument concerning the representation of women and ethnic groups.

In principle, there are two kinds of obstructions and barriers to immigrant political participation. Firstly, a lack of formal and legal rights linked to citizenship, which is a fact of life for immigrant groups in many societies. Secondly, problems concerning the exercise of existing political rights. For obvious reasons, research on immigrants has focused on the first set of obstructions, i.e., the lack of formal and legal rights. But the opportunity for immigrants to exercise these rights has not been sufficiently examined, which has been a point of criticism against research (Castles 1994). Consequently, the question of whether formal rights actually function in practice, that is, if they actually do guarantee equality, has been secondary in the case of immigrants. By contrast, once western democracies guaranteed their native citizens social and political rights by law, addressing the question of attaining legal rights became less interesting and the focus shifted toward the exercise of rights and how the significance of these rights differed for social groups within the native majority (Rothstein et al. 1995; Kymlicka 1995).

That immigrants and minority groups are under-represented in the democratic process regardless of their political rights is hardly news. In an international perspective, the inadequate representation of minority groups in politics is a fact. Individual political and citizenship rights are far from a guarantee of actual minority participation in political decision making (Kymlicka 1995). The actual content of formal citizenship for social groups in a minority position, e.g., women, ethnic, indigenous and immigrant minorities, is a matter that concerns many social scientists today.

In his typology of citizenship models for immigrants, Castles distinguishes between the exclusionary model, the assimilationist inclusionary and the pluralist inclusionary (Castles 1994). Castles places Sweden with countries like Canada and New Zealand which practice a pluralistic inclusionary policy, where political integration does not presuppose cultural assimilation.

He maintains that a substantive and multicultural citizenship can only be achieved by the latter model.

Seen in an international perspective, the Swedish immigrant policy with its goals of equality, freedom of choice, and cooperation has been regarded as an ideal. The liberal Swedish citizenship legislation and the extensive civil, social and political rights granted to resident aliens in the country (*denizens*) are cited in other countries as a good model that provides immigrants with full membership of society and promotes the integration of new arrivals (Hammar 1985). Equal participation and the impression of having a stake in society were seen as the best guarantees of a democratic social development in Sweden. This was a vital argument for introducing voting rights for resident aliens in local and county elections in 1975 (Bäck & Soininen 1996). The legal obstacles for the social and political participation of immigrants are therefore minimal, though not entirely absent, in Sweden.

The 1975 Electoral Reform

The 1975 electoral reform signaled a radical change in Sweden by allowing a foreign citizen to participate in local political elections for the first time. After six elections and one referendum, it has become an institutionalized feature of the political system, but not without problems. Especially in terms of the actual voting levels, it functions poorly. In a critical scrutiny of Swedish democracy by the political scientists who refer to themselves as the "Democracy Council," the continually declining electoral participation among immigrants is seen as a threat to democracy (Rothstein 1995).

This article aims to examine immigrant political participation, i.e., electoral participation and representation in the democratic process. How has the 1975 decision to give the vote and the right to run for election to foreign citizens who have been resident in Sweden for at least three years been realized in practice?

Immigrants in Swedish Society

In 1994, 74,000 people immigrated to Sweden, compared to 54,000 in 1992 (SOPEMI 1995). Nine percent of the immigrants were from Nordic countries in 1994, 65 percent came from other European countries, the majority from ex-Yugoslavia, and 26 percent from countries outside Europe. Migration to Sweden during the first half of the 1990s has been dominated by the conflict in ex-Yugoslavia. The number of asylum seekers has, however, fallen steadily in recent years because of changes in visa requirements.

One in ten persons resident in Sweden in 1994 were born abroad. Around half of them were foreign citizens, the rest naturalized Swedes. While around one quarter of all foreign-born are of Finnish origin, Europeans from non-

Nordic countries account for around one third of all foreign-born (SOPEMI 1995). The most encompassing definition of immigrants in Sweden includes all foreign-born and their children, and they totaled 1.6 million people in 1995 out of a population of 8.8 million. This total also includes the so-called second generation, i.e., children with at least one foreign-born parent. The narrowest definition of immigrants refers to resident aliens, a group comprising 0.4 million people.

In mass media and administrative contexts, the term "immigrant" is a collective noun used to describe sometimes very different categories of people. The common denominator for these individuals is that they have foreign backgrounds in one form or another. According to the National Immigration Board, the term "foreign citizen" or "foreign born" are often used as a synonyms for or definitions of "immigrant" (SIV 1994).

In Swedish usage during the 1960s and earlier, the term "foreigner" (*utlänning*) was common, but was replaced by "immigrant" (*invandrare*) in the 1970s. Foreigners became immigrants and Parliament reached a decision on the immigrant policy goals of equality, freedom of choice and cooperation.

When asked, "What do you first think of when you hear the word immigrant?," 19 percent of the respondents in a nationally representative survey answered that they thought of people from southern Europe, and 20 percent associated the word with the Middle East. Nordic countries, western Europe and eastern Europe were noticeably under-represented (Lange 1994). It is possible that the term immigrant in daily conversation means otherness, and therefore is defined in contrast to what is traditionally understood as typically Swedish. There is therefore a risk that physical appearance will determine who is seen as an immigrant. The use of the term "immigrant" instead of "foreigner" was meant to make strangers and foreignness more familiar, but the meaning of the concept has instead come to mean "alien" and "different." Indeed, many commentators argue that the term actually increases antagonism and contributes to an "us" and "them" situation (SIV 1994).

Westin (1996) has divided post-war immigration to Sweden into four distinct phases, each with its own characteristic type of immigration and immigrant. According to Westin's classification, the first phase, 1940 to 1948, was marked by refugee immigration from neighboring countries. The second period included immigration from Finland and southern Europe between 1949 to 1971, when the modern welfare state was growing and the post-war economic expansion created a demand for workers. The common Nordic labor market was established in 1954, at the same time as companies initiated an active policy of recruiting workers from countries like Italy, Greece and Yugoslavia. During the late 1960s, the Trade Union Confederation's concern for future wage development and competition for vacant jobs led to demands that non-Nordic workers had to have employment and resident

permits in order before arrival in Sweden. The non-Nordic labor immigration ceased in the beginning of the 1970s (Hammar 1991; SCB 1991). In order to guarantee equal opportunities for the immigrant workforce already in Sweden, further immigration had to be controlled by the government.

The third phase, 1972 to 1989, was characterized by family reunification and refugee immigration from third world countries. In the 1970s, immigration was dominated by South American refugees who fled after the military coup in Chile, the last democratic outpost in South America. But in the 1980s, the picture changed and most of the asylum seekers came from the Middle East. The number of people in need of asylum exploded toward the end of the 1980s. The war between Iran and Iraq was a major contributory factor. In 1989, non-Nordic migration accounted for 70 percent and non-European immigration for half of the total immigration to Sweden (SCB 1991).

The fourth and final phase began in the early 1990s, when immigration mainly consisted of asylum seekers from ex-Yugoslavia, with over 30,000 applying for asylum each year. This led to a tightening of the asylum regulations from a more generous interpretation of "political refugee" to a narrower definition based on the Geneva Convention.

Sweden is by no means unique in its adoption of a more restrictive asylum policy. A general European development is under way in this respect as the common European labor market requires a common external boundary. The strict European migration rules have been called "Fortress Europe" (Hammar 1991) and is one of the most controversial questions in Europe's so-called third pillar, "Cooperation in legal and domestic questions."

From Recruitment to Exclusion: The Labor Market

The character of immigration has changed radically during the past decades from recruitment of labor power to refugee immigration, and so has the opportunity for immigrants to enjoy full and equal membership in Swedish society. Several reports and summaries of the recent history of Swedish migration have highlighted and discussed the increasing difficulty immigrants have had gaining a foothold on the labor market. There is general agreement that integration on the labor market is the key factor that determines all subsequent participation in Swedish society (SOU 1995:76; SOPEMI 1995; Soininen & Graham 1995; Westin 1996).

In 1995, only 58 percent of resident aliens were part of the workforce, compared to 79 percent of the rest of the population (SIV 1996). The lowest levels of workforce participation are found among citizens of ex-Yugoslavia, but it is also low for non-European immigrants. Only one in two Iranians aged 16 to 64 were part of the workforce in 1995. Among naturalized Swedish citizens almost 40 percent were outside the workforce.

Being part of the workforce does not mean, however, that one has a secure job and income. Many of those who are available for the labor market are out of work. In 1995, the average level of unemployment was 7.2 percent among Swedish citizens, a figure which can be compared with the double-digit percentages among immigrants regardless of whether they were foreign or naturalized citizens. For foreign citizens, the average rate of unemployment was 22.8 percent in 1995 (SIV 1996). Almost 40 percent of foreign citizens from non-European countries were without work.

Seen in a ten-year perspective from 1985 to 1995, unemployment among Swedish citizens has increased from 2.7 to 7.2 percent, while the corresponding increase among foreign citizens has been from 5.2 to 22.8 percent (ibid.).

Factors that can explain the weak ties of immigrants and especially foreign citizens to the labor market can be found in the changed composition of the immigrant population, structural factors, changed socio-economic conditions, as well as changes in the labor market. The shrinking labor market offers fewer traditional, industrial jobs, while the new employment opportunities in both industry and the service sector demand language skills and forms of teamwork which were not previously required. Increasing attention has also been paid to the impact of deliberate and unintended discrimination on the ability of both newly arrived refugees and the second generation who was born in Sweden to compete for job vacancies (SOU 1995:76; Soininen & Graham 1995).

Electoral Participation

Political participation is exercised in many ways. Electoral participation can be said to be the most fundamental and at the same time the least demanding way of affecting the distribution of resources in society. When foreign citizens got the vote in local elections in 1975, it was an indication that Swedish society had accepted the principle that not only Swedish citizens may participate in the political decision making process, but also foreign citizens who are resident in the country for long periods of time.

How have the enfranchised foreign citizens made use of the opportunity to influence political decisions? The electoral participation of foreign citizens since the first "immigrant election" in 1976 in local elections and the 1980 referendum is presented and discussed below. After that, we take a closer look at the participation of four different immigrant groups in the 1991 local election in Malmö and discuss possible explanations for the groups' different participation profiles.

In the 1976 local elections when foreign citizens were able to vote and run for office in local elections for the first time, the turnout was 60 percent, compared with 90 percent for the entire electorate. Twenty years later, the

turnout among enfranchised resident aliens had fallen to only 40 percent in the 1994 election. Resident aliens were also eligible to vote in the 1980 nuclear power referendum, and their turnout was 53 percent. Considering that only 76 percent of all eligible voters participated in the referendum – compared with 89 and 90 percent in the previous local elections – the turnout of resident aliens in the referendum appears relatively high.

The low levels of participation in the first immigrant election in 1976 were not regarded as particularly alarming. Expectations were high prior to the election. Research had shown how other new voter categories, the working class at one time and women when they were first enfranchised, initially displayed little interest in using their votes. However, the interest of the new voters grew steadily during the subsequent decades and approached that of "middle class men." Even young Swedes show relatively low turnouts as first time voters. However, despite the hopes raised by these past experiences, the steadily declining electoral participation of foreign citizens was a fact.

Table 1 shows the average turnout for the foreign electorate since 1976 and the levels for the larger national groups. The general trend is declining voter participation, but it is not possible to detect a definite pattern. Neither proximity to the Swedish political system (Finnish and Danish voters compared with Chilean or Iranian voters), the national groups' length of stay in Sweden (earlier waves of immigration compared with arrivals in the

Table 1. Electoral Participation among Foreign Citizens in Municipal Elections in Sweden 1976–1994 by Country of Citizenship. Percent

Citizenship	1976	1979	1982	1985	1988	1991	1994
Chile	–	–	–	77	70	65	59
Denmark	57	46	49	46	41	42	45
Ethiopia	–	–	–	–	–	–	34
Finland	56	51	49	45	39	35	40
Greece	76	65	61	49	46	37	28
Iraq	–	–	–	–	–	–	42
Iran	–	–	–	38	39	41	41
Italy	61	60	58	52	50	44	49
Ex-Yugoslavia	66	56	52	45	38	35	27
Norway	59	54	52	49	45	46	42
Poland	64	59	54	47	40	36	32
Great Britain	71	57	55	54	50	48	48
Turkey	63	62	61	54	54	51	47
Germany	67	64	61	59	52	51	51
USA	45	45	47	45	44	43	40
Total	60	53	52	48	43	41	40

Source: SCB 1995a. Statistics Sweden (SCB) has collected this data in a stratified random sample of enfranchised foreign citizens. The data on electoral participation was, for the selected individuals, taken directly from the electoral roll.

1980s), and the type of migration (labor or refugee) seem to be unequivocal predictors of a particular group's voting behavior.

Individual and Institutional Explanations for Low Electoral Participation

If we proceed from the assumption that the social and political participation of immigrants is formed in an interplay between the group and society's various institutions, including the political, then the characteristics of both the group and these institutions can obstruct or promote political participation.

Likely explanations for low electoral participation may be sought in circumstances that are commonly known to affect an individual's political participation and also in those circumstances that are typical for immigrants. Several explanations of the lack of interest in local political questions among foreign citizens have been discussed over the years. In his book *Det första invandrarvalet (The First Immigrant Election)* (Hammar 1979) and in his contribution to *Rösträtt och medborgarskap (Voting Rights and Citizenship)* (SOU 1984:12), Hammar identifies a number of factors, which, according to general research findings, affect individual electoral participation and which might explain the low turnout in the immigrant electorate (SOU 1984). Among immigrants there is an over-representation of people with characteristics that usually entail low electoral participation. For example, they are single, young, have short educations, are seldom members of associations, and most importantly, they have recently moved to a new environment. But there are other factors that are more specific for immigrants: lack of information, language problems, difficulties with voting technicalities, lack of knowledge about political parties and Swedish politics, and a feeling of not belonging in Swedish society (SOU 1984:12).

Some of these explanatory factors are highly relevant to the political behavior of labor migrants, but scarcely to refugee immigrants. For example, the average level of education is high in many refugee groups and the main reason for fleeing is precisely political activity in the home country.

A technical explanation for the low voting levels takes account of the special composition of and mobility within the foreign citizen voter group. Those foreign citizens who are most active and therefore also most inclined to vote are also likely to become Swedish citizens and thus leave the category foreign citizens. They are replaced by newly arrived immigrants who are preoccupied with establishing themselves in Swedish society and lack both the time and resources to devote themselves to politics and who, as new arrivals, are unfamiliar with Swedish political issues.

Another explanation concentrates on the institutional context. Rather than examining the characteristics of individual immigrant voters, explanations for low electoral participation are instead sought in the characteristics of social and political institutions. The fact that the voting rights of foreign citizens

only extend to local elections, which usually receive less media attention, has sometimes been identified as a reason for their small interest in Swedish politics.

An institutional explanation is that, unlike in many European countries, Swedish socialist and bourgeois parties typically do not differ on immigrant issues. Voting for a political party rather than for an individual candidate may also serve to reduce immigrant interest in voting and in election campaigns, if they are used to other electoral systems. Furthermore, issues of special interest and importance to immigrant voters normally do not attract the attention of politicians.

The fact that the Swedish media debates rarely reflect the actual perspective of immigrants is also important. Since the beginning of the 1980s, the main questions have involved a stricter regulation of immigration, the increased dependency of immigrants on welfare, and crime among immigrants. In short, immigrants are portrayed as a social problem and a drain on resources, and of course immigrant voters cannot identify with such a negative image. That the special issues of a particular group of voters do not gain the attention of political institutions or that they are formulated in a negative way, as is the case with immigrant voters, seems likely to reduce a group's motivation to participate. Participation by immigrant voters, like other voter categories, does not, however, rest only on narrow special needs of an ethnic nature or the needs of new arrivals, but is also associated with needs related to their social position with respect to other characteristics such as class and gender.

Institutional explanations today must also include the poor integration of immigrants on the labor market. A significant proportion of foreign citizens of working age, in some national groups even a majority, are outside the workforce or are unemployed (SOU 1995:76; SIV 1996). This exclusion from work-related institutions has further consequences in that immigrants are denied the process of integration into Swedish society provided by these institutions.

In certain refugee groups, the majority is in a position of permanent or long-term unemployment and consequently enjoys only incomplete social membership. The integration of new arrivals does not extend beyond contacts with certain authorities and the process of establishing oneself is never completed. The lack of contact with everyday life in Sweden, its routines, people and current political issues makes it difficult for immigrant voters to learn about society and politics. Participation presupposes that one can construct a working model of political life in Sweden, a construction which can only take form through interaction with other members of society. If elementary forms of linkage with Swedish society such as one's own income, place of employment, colleagues and work identity are lacking, then it is not surprising that many immigrant voters in such a marginalized social position

show little interest in politics. Lack of knowledge about and sporadic contacts with society, combined with a feeling of not being able to influence one's immediate situation create a kind of social citizenship that is incompatible with the social citizen who wishes, knows and believes that he/she is able to influence the political distribution of resources in society.

Electoral Participation of Four Immigrant Groups in the 1991 Local Elections

The results from our interview survey of immigrant voters in the 1991 local election in Malmö confirm the significance of integration for electoral participation (Bäck & Soininen 1994). The research project "Municipal Parties, Immigrant Politicians and Immigrant Politics" included a study of voter participation. The study was based on an extensive interview survey based on a randomly chosen sample of 366 immigrants born in Chile, Finland, Iran and Yugoslavia, as well as naturalized Swedish citizens. Given that the observed low and falling electoral participation was the impetus behind the survey, non-participation received special attention.

Our analysis of immigrant voters' electoral participation began with the question of why the voting levels of these four immigrant groups differ. The explanations were mainly sought in two factors. Firstly, in the varying degrees of integration into the Swedish majority society, i.e., the degree of participation and social interaction with the surrounding society and its institutions. And secondly, in the cultural orientations present in the different groups. Integration in our terminology therefore does not imply the adoption of values or attitudes. As indicators of types of integration, we have used participation through employment, membership of associations, exposure to mass media, socializing and marriage. All of these indicators display relationships with electoral participation.

Table 2. Electoral Participation by Integration Indicators. Percent

Indicator	Not Integrated	Integrated into Majority Society	Integrated in Both	Integrated in Own Group
Work	63	82	–	–
Association	63	82	75	(68)
Socializing	–	77	75	69
Marriage	65	90	–	74
Radio/TV	55	(92)	81	65
Newspapers	73	77	(71)	68

Note: Ns vary from cell to cell. The range of this variation is for the first column 62–201, for the second column 28–165, for the third column 47–141 and for the fourth column 29–178. Cells with $n < 50$ are in ().

In the second explanatory factor, "Cultural Orientation," we have used a version of Douglas' "group" and "grid" theory. Group refers to the extent to which a group member is controlled by social relations and pressure from within the group itself. Grid refers to the degree of normative control an individual experiences as a result of a system's prescriptions and rules. Douglas' theory has been developed by Thompson, Ellis & Wildavsky. They distinguish between four active general cultural orientations (*ways of life*) which they consider more basic than the general values and perspectives associated with national and local cultures (Douglas 1973; 1982; Thompson et al. 1990; Selle 1991).

The first way of life is *egalitarianism*. Egalitarianism is a result of a combination of strong group relations and minimal normative prescriptions, i.e., a weak grid. Relations between individuals are egalitarian, which means that it is difficult to deal with conflicts because there is no hierarchy of authority.

The second way of life is *hierarchy*, and differs from egalitarianism in that strong group relations co-exist with a strong grid, i.e., an extensive normative system of rules and regulations. Social relations are hierarchical and there are accepted methods of conflict resolution. Hierarchical individuals can both take orders and exercise their own power, depending on their place in the hierarchy.

The third way of life is *individualism*. Individualists are bound neither by strong group relations nor by a strong system of rules. They experience group relations and boundaries as temporary and negotiable.

The fourth way of life is *fatalism*. Fatalists cannot influence the formation of rules and regulations, but still feel bound by them.

The immigrant groups we examined have different compositions with respect to these orientations.[1] Starting with the most common cultural orientations, we can describe the Finns in our sample as mainly individualists and egalitarians (78 percent). Among Chileans, egalitarians (48 percent) comprise the largest group, and hierarchalists and fatalists are most strongly represented among Iranians (81 percent) and Yugoslavians (66 percent). Like the integration indicators, the cultural orientations are related to electoral participation:

Table 3. Electoral Participation by Cultural Orientation. Percent

Cultural Orientation	Electoral Participation	N
Hierarchalist	80	80
Egalitarian	78	86
Individualist	74	82
Fatalist	54	58

That the individual's participation in different forms of social interaction – integration into society – is of great importance for his/her inclination to vote in an election is quite natural, considering that actual electoral participation can be taken as a sign of integration in political life and of the individual's wish to actively support the democratic political system. Its opposite is political apathy and alienation. When electoral participation is the least demanding and most traditional way for the individual to support political democracy, it is understandable that hierarchalists show by far the highest levels of electoral participation and fatalists the lowest.

These results also enable us to shed some light on other questions which are raised by the original problem: "Why do immigrants vote less than Swedes?" and "Why is the electoral participation of immigrants declining?"

We had access to comparative material consisting of a questionnaire survey of a sample of the entire electorate in the same municipality where we carried out our own interviews. When we combined the material, the integration indicator "membership of an association" together with social status appear as important explanatory factors. The low electoral participation of immigrants can partly be explained by the fact that they are less integrated into the majority society than the native population and that they have a lower social status – more of them belong to the working class. Information on the cultural orientation of Swedes has not been available, but based on other surveys it is reasonable to assume that the extremely low-voting group (the fatalists) in particular is under-represented in the native electorate.

An important explanation of the declining turnout might also be sought in our integration/culture model. The group of foreign citizens with local voting rights is subject to continuous turnover. At the same time as people leave it through naturalization, return migration and mortality, it is filled by people who have lived in the country for only a short time, with low levels of integration. Therefore, the group's center of gravity tends to be those who are poorly integrated. It may also be the case that the changes in the structure of immigration lead to a situation in which groups with a low-voting cultural orientation are more strongly represented.

Representation in Political Assemblies

In the 1994 election, Sweden's voters elected 13,550 local councilors in the country's 288 municipalities, 1,777 county councilors in the 23 counties, and 349 members of parliament. Of these, 710 were foreign born and 127 were foreign citizens.

Of course, these figures must be compared with the proportion of immigrants in the population in the same year. Close to ten percent of the population was foreign born. The representation for that category of inhabitants in the local assemblies is between 4.4 and 4.6 percent. This is

Table 4. Elected Immigrants in the 1994 Election

	Local Council	County Council	Parliament
Foreign-Born	625	78	7
As percentage of all	4.6	4.4	2.0
Resident Alien	119	8	–
As percentage of all	0.9	0.5	–

Source: SCB 1995a.

slightly less than half of the representation they would enjoy if the elected bodies reflected the composition of the population.

In the study of representativeness in the municipalities in 1992, we gathered data not only on immigrants, but also on sex, social status, age and geography. As expected, it turned out that women, blue-collar workers, the young (under 30 years old), and the old (over 60 years old) and, somewhat unexpected, residents in the central districts of municipalities are under-represented. Compared with other under-represented categories, foreign-born are the second most under-represented group, exceeded only by the young.

Regardless of definition, the proportion of immigrants has increased since the end of the 1970s in the elected local councils. However, as the number of immigrants in Sweden has increased in the same period, the increase in the representation index[2] for immigrants is quite modest (see Table 5).

Table 5. Proportion of Immigrants among Elected Representatives 1979, 1988, 1991, 1994 and Representation Index (RI) in Local Government 1979 and 1992. Percent

	1979	1988	1991	1994	RI 1979	RI 1992
Foreign Born:						
Local Council	3.7	4.3	4.2	4.6	−0.54	−0.48
County Council	2.5	4.0	3.7	4.4	−0.69	−0.51
Parliament	–	2.6	2.0	2.0		
Resident Alien:						
Local Council	0.7	0.9	0.7	0.9	−0.82	−0.83
County Council	0.2	0.6	0.5	0.5	−0.95	−0.91

Source: Hammar 1982; SCB 1995a; Bäck 1993; 1996.

Of the 28 municipalities examined in 1992, 20 were included in the major political science local government research project carried out in the late 1970s and early 1980s (cf. Strömberg & Westerståhl 1984). The data

collected in the program is comparable with our own and allows us to compare the representativeness of politicians in 1980 and 1992 in exactly the same municipalities. One question that received special attention in the 1992 study was the way in which organizational changes in the municipalities had affected representativeness. The 20 panel municipalities were classified in two groups according to the occurrence of novel forms of organization with origins in the business sector (entrepreneurs, outsourcing, performance studies, purchaser-provider split model): a group of municipalities with a traditional organization and a group with a more market-oriented organization. This division refers, of course, to the situation in 1992. Twelve years earlier, none of these arrangements were thought of in the system of local government.

When the municipalities were classified according to the type of organizational changes they had introduced, an interesting pattern appeared – not only with respect to the representation of immigrants, but also with respect to the representation of other under-represented groups.

Table 6. Changes in the Representation Index between 1980 and 1992 by Organization in 1992. Averages

Category	Traditional Organization	Market Oriented	Difference
Central District	−0.25	+0.04	+0.29
Elderly	+0.06	+0.15	+0.09
Women	+0.19	+0.15	−0.04
Youth	−0.26	−0.34	−0.08
Workers	+0.41	+0.25	−0.16
Immigrants	+0.08	−0.11	−0.19

The conclusion which can be drawn from Table 6 is that the introduction of market arrangements in the municipalities is associated with an improved representativeness for residents of central districts and the old, but with a worsened representativeness for traditionally subordinate and under-privileged groups in society, such as women, youth, workers and especially immigrants.

The same study showed that the introduction of market-oriented organization was associated with a particularly large reduction in the total number of elected posts and, at the same time, a particularly large increase in the number of all-rounders. Both of these circumstances result in a reduction in the number of elected representatives. It is obvious that these reductions are primarily disadvantageous for those groups in society that have previously been subordinate and under-privileged. It is significant that representative-

Table 7. Local Politicians' Focus of Representation and Association Contacts. Percent

	Consider Themselves to Represent Immigrants		Contacts with Immigrant Associations	
Born	Percentage	N	Percentage	N
Abroad	28.7	79	9.1	76
In Sweden	0.7	1.562	0.9	1.420

Source: 1993 Municipal Politicians Survey (unpublished).

ness actually improves for older people and for residents of central districts, two groups that are under-represented in the local government apparatus, but that are not members of society's under-privileged strata in the same way as women, workers, youth and immigrants.

In 1993, a questionnaire survey was conducted among a sample of local politicians in the 20 above-mentioned municipalities plus eight other municipalities and four counties. Of those who answered, 42 percent revealed that "apart from being a representative for their party, they also considered themselves to be representatives for another group or interest in the municipality." Of these, around five percent considered themselves to represent immigrants, refugees or a special ethnic group in local politics.

Not surprisingly, this was strongly related to being an immigrant oneself. Among the politicians born in Sweden, not even one percent reported themselves to be representatives for immigrants, while more than a quarter of foreign-born politicians saw themselves as representing the immigrant constituency.

Similarly, there was a strong relationship between being an immigrant oneself and being contacted by immigrant associations. Also in this respect, fewer than one percent of Swedish-born local politicians answered that "during the last twelve months an immigrant association has come to me personally with a request about local politics." The likelihood of a foreign-born local politician being contacted by an immigrant association was ten times greater.

Therefore, it is elected politicians with immigrant backgrounds in local politics who see themselves as representing immigrants and who act as a channel for immigrant interests. The problem, however, is that many of the newly arrived refugee groups do not have their own representatives. The older labor force immigrant groups are highly over-represented among elected politicians with immigrant background.

Another question is what significance one's self-image as representative and mediator can have for policy making. The significance of a group or

category of citizens having their "own" representatives in decision making contexts for the actual political decisions is an issue that has been discussed for a long time in political science.

Systematic knowledge about the degree to which the political system's outputs (decisions) and outcomes (results in society) are affected by a group or category being represented in a decision making forum is meager. In a survey of politicians in 1993, we tried to approach the question by looking at the different positions politicians from different groups adopt when they are confronted with the question of how different local activities ought to receive priority. Should the municipality do more, are things acceptable as they are now, or can certain activities be cut back?

The questionnaire does not contain typical "immigrant questions," but the effect of being or not being represented can instead be illustrated through other categories of citizens and other questions. For example, women give much higher priority to child care than male politicians do. The balance measure (the difference between the percentage who will "do more" and the percentage who considers cut-backs in activities) increases by 14 points if we go from men to women. In the same way, the priority accorded to schools increased by 15 points on the balance measure for members of parent associations, and by 12 points for sport for members of a sports association. If we compare board members in sports associations with non-members, the balance measure increases by 46 points.

The sex of the politician is obviously important. Whether or not he or she is a member of a parent association or a sporting association is also significant. Likewise, the desire to spend money on local activities increases by 11 points on the balance measure if we compare politicians who are employed by the public sector with politicians who are employed by private companies, organizations or have their own companies. In view of this, it is not unreasonable to imagine that politicians who are immigrants would accord priority to immigrant issues if they were confronted with them.

Immigrant Associational Involvement

In the previous section we discussed the participation of immigrants at the core of the democratic chain of government and asked to what extent immigrants participate as electors and elected. However, various aspects of associational life also have an important function. The political parties and their affiliated organizations play a direct role, of course, in a political system like the Swedish in which the parties, the electoral system, and representative democracy are accorded central importance.

The Swedish model has often been depicted in terms of its actual content rather than as representing a model of democracy (for example full employment as the primary goal of public policy), but aspects of the model

can also be said to deal with the democratic process (cf. Petersson 1991). Compromise and consensus, a strong public sector, the importance of expert knowledge, and the central role of interest organizations in the political process have all been stressed. Given the Swedish model's view of democracy, participation in interest organizations is almost as significant as participation in a political party.

Even if political parties and interest organizations are important for the way democracy functions, one can also ask what significance other, more social, forms of participation can have for democracy. Is democracy improved if large numbers of people are active in leisure activities, sports clubs, congregations and fraternal orders? (Cf. Putnam 1992).

The analyses in this section are based on data from the report *Föreningslivet i Sverige – en statistisk belysning (Associational Life in Sweden)* (Häll 1994). The data in the report is in its turn taken from an investigation of the standard of living in 1992, which is based on oral interviews with a sample of the Swedish population aged 16 to 84. The sample includes approximately 7,000 people, of which around 300 were distributed across the categories of second generation of immigrants, naturalized citizens and foreign citizens.

As in other contexts, immigrants were under-represented among members and office holders in associations. Under-representation follows a scale on which second generation immigrants are least under-represented, followed by naturalized citizens, with resident aliens in the category of most under-represented.

Table 8. Membership and Activity within Swedish Associational Life 1992. Ages 16–84 years. Percent

	Member in an Association	Active in an Association	Office holder in an Association
Native Swedes	92.9	52.4	29.9
Second Generation Immigrants	92.4	53.2	25.8
Naturalized	89.6	41.8	22.0
Resident Aliens	83.4	35.1	16.8

Table 8 clearly shows that a second generation immigrant is as likely to be a member of at least one association as a native Swede. For resident aliens, the likelihood is somewhat less. One could perhaps say that at least for foreign citizens there are external barriers to associational involvement.

Whether these barriers arise at the boundary of the association or earlier is impossible to determine based on the present data. The majority of

associations represent or organize a definite group or category of society's members – let us call this group or category the associations' *recruitment base*. In order to become a union member, for example, one has to be employed. The recruitment base for women's organizations consists (almost) exclusively of women. To become a member of an automobile association one has to be at least interested in cars and probably also own a vehicle. In fact, there are two external barrier: A barrier to joining the recruitment base and a barrier to becoming an association member. The available data does not reveal which of the two results in a lower relative likelihood of membership for a certain group – in this case foreign citizens.

The data in Table 8 also indicates the existence of internal barriers – barriers that prevent immigrants in associations from becoming active members. Internal barriers to second generation immigrants becoming active members do not appear, but such barriers do exist and prevent them from being elected to top formal posts. For the foreign citizens, there are internal barriers both for active membership and election to posts.

In general, we can say on the basis of the aggregate figures that neither the external nor internal barriers are of notable magnitude. However, the mean values conceal considerable differences between different kinds of organizations.

In many organizations, immigrants – both second generation and resident aliens – are fairly well represented. Included in this category of associations are important organizations such as the cooperative movement, trade union movement and sports organizations. The external barriers – those that are found at the recruitment base and/or the boundary of the association – are relatively low. At the opposite end of the scale is a category of organizations with high external barriers for both resident aliens and second generation immigrants: We may suspect that some of these associations have barriers to becoming part of the recruitment base. This is conceivable in the case of shareholder organizations, or fraternal orders (e.g. Rotary Clubs, Lions, Free Masons, Odd Fellows, etc.).

Others, for example women's organizations and political parties, seem extremely unlikely to have such barriers. In these latter cases, it is rather the barrier at the boundary of the organization which is operative. It is especially thought provoking that the political parties present such barriers to immigrants. A native Swedish citizen is three times more likely than a resident alien and twice as likely as a second generation immigrant to be a party member.

A third intermediate category is comprised of associations such as independent churches and congregations, associations within the Swedish church, voluntary civil defense organizations and local action groups. There is little incentive to become a member of one of these associations for foreign

citizens. However, second generation immigrants are in no way under-represented among the members.

In sum, the pattern of exclusion differs for different sectors of Swedish associational life. Different parts of associational life also have different democratic functions. The political parties and their affiliated organizations naturally play a direct role in the political system where party organizations, the electoral system, and representative democracy are of central importance.

In our examination of the data on the associational involvement of immigrants, we have seen that the external and internal barriers to interest organizations are relatively low. Seen in terms of the "Swedish model," Swedish associational life functions quite well for immigrants. With the exception, that is, of the political parties which are the fly in the ointment. It is not easy for an immigrant to become involved in the political parties, and it is virtually of no help to be born in Sweden of foreign parents. The picture becomes even more problematic if we add a "social capital" perspective. Within a major part of Swedish associational life, immigrants are excluded in practice from membership and activities. Some signs also suggest that the barriers are difficult to surmount.

Exclusion from Society and Under-Representation in Political Life

It is natural that much of the international research on immigrants has focused on problems associated with immigrants' legal status and their formal political and social rights. And in many countries, conflicts over the form and content of immigrants' social citizenship are still waged in terms of their inadequate legal rights.

Sweden's immigrant policy, with its far-reaching social and political rights, liberal citizenship laws and respect for cultural difference, is often seen as an exemplary model of how to give immigrants equal membership in society. However, the result of our examination of how legal political rights work in practice for immigrants is not encouraging. The results testify to a significant exclusion of immigrants not only from the work-related institutions, but also from the democratic process itself.

Although the 1975 electoral reform itself was a step in the right direction toward greater political equality, foreign citizens are still to a large extent excluded from the democratic process in practice, and their voting levels continue to fall. Naturally, this is in conflict with the argument for justice. Starting from an even more radical position, we could also argue that limiting voting rights for foreign citizens to the local level is irreconcilable with the basic principles of democracy and thus conflicts with the justice argument.

Our examination of the political representation of immigrants has shown that they are heavily under-represented among elected representatives regardless of current citizenship. In addition, immigrant politicians are

often people who have been Swedish citizens for decades (Bäck & Soininen 1996). The question is how well these politicians have succeeded in keeping in touch with the experiences of large groups of non-European refugee immigrants and the realities they face due to the much tougher economic and social climate and the increased xenophobia of the 1980s and 1990s. Experiences that are specific to the refugees of the 1980s and 1990s do not, therefore, find their way into the political decision making process and seem unlikely to do so unless politicians from the majority society prove capable of representing them.

To what extent, if at all, members of one social group can represent another group's interests in politics is a much debated question (see, e.g., Kymlicka 1995). Even if the demand for a perfectly representative political system is unreasonable, as Kymlicka has convincingly shown, we argue, following Hernes' interests argument, that immigrants are needed, both as voters and elected representatives, in situations where only they can be expected to take account of their group interests and especially in contexts where conflicting group interests are present. One example is measures to improve the weak position of immigrants and especially non-Europeans on the labor market. This is a vital immigrant interest but it may conflict with the interests of other social groups at a time of high unemployment.

Ultimately, low electoral participation and lack of political representation are important immigrant experiences and interests that seem to have vanished from the political process.

Despite the liberal Swedish citizenship legislation, approximately half of all foreign-born prefer to retain their original citizenship even if this limits their formal political rights. There are a number of reasons for the lukewarm interest in changing citizenship. One important explanation might be the assumptions of national cultural and ethnic homogeneity that still inform Swedish citizenship. According to Leca, today's democrats face an important challenge, namely that of developing a view of citizenship which is relevant in multi-ethnic and multi-cultural societies, and where emphasis on national homogeneity is replaced by increased pluralism in matters of cultural and ethnic identity (Leca 1992).

Our conclusion is that a more effective realization in practice of the existing political rights of foreign citizens and the eventual expansion of these rights would be an important advance for Swedish democracy. Another way to promote greater immigrant participation in politics might be to encourage a view of cultural and ethnic pluralism as integral to citizenship. This would presumably make it more acceptable for many immigrants to acquire full political rights through naturalization.

As late as the 1960s, the political participation of foreigners in Sweden was regarded as undesirable and the exclusion of immigrants from the democratic process was seen as a natural state of affairs (Bäck & Soininen 1996). One of

the central problems for democracy, according to Mouffe (1992), is that societies seem to be so ready to accept the existence of a natural hierarchy in relations between a majority population and immigrants, and that the exclusion of the latter from the political process is regarded as self-evident. This may be the most intractable institutional barrier to the participation of immigrants in politics.

NOTES

1. The group and grid dimensions are operationalized by factor analysis of 15 attitude items where the respondents were asked what role the state, groups and individuals ought to play in society. The operationalization procedure is described in Soininen & Bäck (1993).
2. The *representation index = (share of the political representatives – share of the population)/share of the population*. This measure (RI) is –1 if a category completely lacks representation, 0 if the category has an exact proportional representation and a positive value if the category is over-represented (Bäck 1993; 1996).

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