

## Citizens at Heart? Political Integration In Comparative Per- spective

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### Introduction

All over Europe the processes of immigration during the last decades have generated a growing concern politically and academically of identifying models of successful integration. Integration is however a contested concept that has been used in the literature covering everything from 'objective' indicators focusing on the labour market, formal citizenship or housing patterns, to subjective feelings of empowerment and belonging (cf. Marshal 1950, Brubaker 1992). Easily quantifiable aspects of integration such as getting a job or acquiring citizenship are often focused in the discussions and in the literature on integration processes in Europe (Lundh *et al* 2002, Mogensen & Matthiessen 2000, LeGrand & Szulkin 2000, Edin & Åslund 2001). However, even well integrated immigrant groups in the respects mentioned above have been shown to feel surprisingly politically and socially alienated and in lack of control and power of their own life. In her comparative study on interwar Estonians who had been living for a long time in exile in Sweden and in Canada, Bennich-Björkman found that the two diaspora groups differed considerably with respect to their support for the political institutions of their host societies as well as in their more subtle, but nevertheless

central, feelings of empowerment and of control. Despite being formally integrated to the same and 'objectively' successful extent, the Canadian-Estonians were more supportive of the Canadian political system and of its major institutions. Furthermore, they expressed stronger assurance of being influential as citizens and of 'mattering' in their new societies than did the Swedish-Estonians (Bennich-Björkman 2006). This clearly indicates that there is a real and important 'subjective' side to integration of which we however so far know very little (but cf. Povrzanovic Frykman 2001).

Without denying the importance of 'formal' integration, the aim of this comparative project is to explore the 'subjective' side of political integration by focusing on how perceptions and feelings of identity, belonging and loyalty are affected among first and second generation immigrants by different institutional contexts. As the immigrant-related experiences of single countries as well as of particular ethnic groups differ widely even in the, generally speaking, democratic, economically stable and welfare-oriented European states like Sweden, United Kingdom, Germany or France, democratic regimes or social security as such can not be the sole determinants of feeling at home, or of becoming what we in this project call 'citizens at heart'. Between Germany's strive for social integration in accordance with the corporate conservative welfare model and Great Britain's liberally influenced focus on the provision to immigrants of legal rights there is for example a wide gap although both constitute integration policies (Angenendt 1999, Koopmans & Statham 2000, cf. Borevi 2002). The British majoritarian election system with its great emphasis on personal votes and its Swedish proportional counterpart

with still quite party-controlled lists are miles apart although they are both democratic. This institutional variation, only briefly hinted at above, between European states that all today are major host societies to large immigrant communities, suggests that institutional contexts may prove to be more important factors in integration processes than what seems to have so far been assumed.

Two highly tentative hypotheses could be formulated. We believe that more personalistic and less party-oriented electoral systems, leading to increased visibility and contact between voters and politicians, create stronger feelings of empowerment among immigrant communities. Furthermore, liberal as opposed to more socially embracing welfare systems we believe to be more conducive to subjective political integration since they demand less 'institutional competence' on behalf of the individual than the conservative or social-democratic states. It needs to be emphasised again that at this early stage, these hypotheses are indeed highly preliminary. The project will be conducted by re-analysing European attitudinal data (ESS) focusing both on first- and second generation immigrants and by intensive, qualitative, studies of the Bosnian diaspora (first-generation) in four host societies: Sweden, Britain, Germany and France.

### **Overview of the field**

By what processes and through which channels are feelings of belonging, empowerment and identity formed? What institutional conditions affect immigrants, regardless if they are labour migrants or refugees, to become "citizens at heart"? Previous research concerned with the 'subjective' side of integration has often brought forward factors related to the im-

migrant or diaspora groups themselves rather than to the host society (cf. van Hear 1998). The existence of extensive social networks within the ethnic group or cultural correspondence between the native country and the host society are among explanations that have been suggested (Finer & Finer 1989, Bennich-Björkman 2006). Another line of research has emphasised the spill-over effects from in particular successful labour-market integration (Lundh *et al* 2002, Edin & Åslund 2001). However, political culture research as well as recently published results exploring the interaction between welfare institutions and social trust (Kumlin & Rothstein 2005) provides empirical evidence that identities and feelings of belonging are as likely to be affected by formal institutions as by relations and their embeddedness in culture. This research project therefore aims to investigate through a combination of comparative quantitative and qualitative analyses how and to what extent the political integration of immigrants is affected by the design and practices of the host societies' political institutions in a selection of European countries. In so doing, we explore important theoretical contributions in the literature on migration, integration, policy design and political culture (Schneider & Ingram 1997). Investigating the 'subjective' or psychological aspects of political integration combines theoretical insights from political culture research (Almond & Verba 1963, Rice & Feldman 1997, cf. Inglehart & Welzel 2005) with those gained from institutionalism (cf. Hall & Taylor 1996) on the policy field of integration which is rarely approached from these angles. We believe that both the theoretical and policy-relevant gains may therefore prove to be large.

In the conceptualisation of institutions we include both constitutional practices like electoral systems and the utilisation of political rights (e.g. eligibility to vote in general elections and qualifications required to run for public office) and the very substance of public policies (e.g. how government-funded resettlement programs for immigrants work). We suspect that the choice of 'welfare regime' (Esping-Andersen 1990, cf. Swank 2002) is an important key to understand cross-national variations in policy design and implementation. Not least could this prove to be of importance for migration management and its links to integration. The liberal, corporate conservative and social-democratic regimes are all represented among the European states that we have the possibility to compare. Previous research gives support for some tentative conclusions regarding the beneficial impact on political integration of election systems emphasising personal votes which however need to be further researched (Togeby 1999, Rodrigo Blomqvist 2000). The impact of variations in welfare regimes on the processes of integration has so far been strongly suggested rather than empirically investigated in a comparative context (Dörr & Faist 1997). Hence, to our knowledge there exist few attempts to more systematically investigate these societally important questions in a comparative manner.

### **Project Description**

The approach here is comparative in two particular aspects. Firstly, the intention is to compare political institutions and their eventual effects. Here we will focus on a number of Western European countries, including Sweden, Britain, France and Germany who are all major immigration

countries. This first comparison will be conducted primarily by analysing – through quantitative techniques – already existing data from recently performed cross-country surveys on citizenship and democracy on a European basis. In these analyses we will – as far as possible – control for differences between the countries when it comes to the immigrant population, i.e. the size of different immigrant groups, in order to isolate the effects of various political institutions. Included here are both labour migrants and refugees, which enables us to compare if and how the institutional impacts differ with respect to migration motives.

Secondly, the purpose is to study more intensively how one specific group of refugees, namely the Bosnians, have integrated politically in their different European host societies (cf. Gustavsson & Svanberg 1995). By choosing the Bosnian diaspora in Europe, we greatly increase the possibilities of comparing the integration processes of a specific group that share important characteristics: time in exile, cultural roots, and reasons for migrating and who thereby could be expected to have struggled with similar problems. We construct something close to a social science 'natural experiment'.

A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods will be used. We will start with the former, using cross-country surveys that will be supplemented with variables that are constructed from results in previous research on the political culture among Bosnians and the culture in the host societies. Several large-scale surveys are both available and suitable for our purposes. The European Social Survey (ESS) was conducted for the first time in 2002, and repeated in 2005. This cross-national survey, recently awarded the Descartes-prize, provides excellent op-

portunities to compare social attitudes, values and political opinions of the populations of more than twenty participating European countries. The qualitative part involves doing biographically oriented interviews (Miller *et al*, 2003, Bertaux 2003) with Bosnians in exile in a smaller selection of European countries: Sweden, Great Britain, Germany and France. We intend to concentrate on how political integration proceeds in interaction with institutions also in the intensive part of the project. The selection will therefore be of persons who have been successful on the labour market in the sense that they hold a position of some kind (suggested has been in academia) and therefore could not be expected to feel psychologically alienated by lack of labour market integration. Another selection criteria is age. We intend to interview Bosnians who now are between 35-40 and thus arrived when they were in their twenties and early twenties, having their formative period of socialization behind them. Approximately 20 interviews will be conducted in each country where the concentration will be on capturing the perceived 'meeting' with the host societies through the life stories told.

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