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Challenges for Diversity

Migrant Participation in Political Parties in Sweden

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1. Political representation in Sweden

1.1. Introduction

Sweden represents a case of favourable conditions regarding the *formal institutional framework* for political participation among migrants. Political incorporation of migrants has been an explicit goal in Swedish immigrant integration policy since the 1970s. The citizenship regime and the electoral rules extend considerable formal political and social rights to foreign citizens with a permanent residence status. For instance, already in 1975 foreign citizens with a minimum of three years residence in Sweden were granted the right to participate in municipal and regional elections (Hammar 1985; 1979). Characteristic for the Swedish institutional framework is that differences in formal rights between citizens and non-citizens are held at a minimum, which is reflected in the top score of Sweden in the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX 2011). This promotion of equal formal rights, which began already in the late 1960s, is closely related to the integrative logic of the Scandinavian welfare state (Borevi 2010).

However, despite favourable conditions the actual outcomes regarding migrant political participation have not been able to live up to the goals of equality or 'equal opportunity'. In practice, the 'political opportunity structure' for migrant participation is conditioned by other structural obstacles and informal exclusionary norms and practices both within the political system and in other parts of society, not least the labour market (see e.g. SOU 2005:56; SOU 2006:79; Soininen & Bäck 1999). Political and media debates the last decades on migration-related issues have often been focused on the (perceived) failure of the Swedish integration policy. Unemployment and measures for labour market integration has been at the centre of attention, and has dominated the debate for the last two decades, rather than migrants' rights or political participation. The fact that the Swedish integration policy receives high marks in different international comparisons, such as MIPEX, is sometimes depicted as a 'puzzle' because of its lack of fit with the image produced by the employment-centred debate about 'integration failure' and the current focus on labour market measures in policy making (e.g. Proposition 2009/10:60).

The shift of attention from migrants' rights and participation in society to employment, and a more narrow focus on integration in the labour market, reflects a significant change in Swedish integration policy since the 1970s. In 1975 Sweden adopted an immigrant and minority policy with clear traits of 'multiculturalism'. This policy was radical in the sense that it, initially, did not separate immigrant and minority questions (Soininen 1999). The reform involved a range of measures for promoting political participation and immigrant organization, as well as social measures for immigrants to retain their language and cultural practices (Proposition 1975:26). During the post-war era and up to the beginning of the 1970s the immigrants who arrived to Sweden were predominantly workers (mainly from Finland and countries in southern Europe such as Italy, Yugoslavia and Greece).

Beginning with the Chileans in the mid-70s, migration to Sweden changed character from workers to an increasing numbers of refugees in the 1980s and 1990s, peaking in the mid-90s during the war on the Balkans. Coinciding with the economic crisis in Sweden in the 1990s, the increasing unemployment rates among refugees became the centre of attention. Already in the 1980s when



migration became more diverse, and no longer involved just a few ethnic groups, the link between immigrant and minority policy was challenged, and subsequently reinterpreted (Soininen 1999). In 1998 the now watered down policy from 1975 was replaced with a liberal and more individualistic integration policy that emphasised 'cultural diversity' rather than multiculturalism (Proposition 1997/98:16). During the 2000s this liberal integration policy has been further reinforced (Proposition 2009/10:60). In a European perspective the current Swedish integration and migration policy is characterized by its focus on employment – on creating measures and incentives for labour market participation (Qvist 2012; Suter & Qvist 2012). After 2006 migration to Sweden has increased. Refugees and family ties account for a substantial part of this increase, and Sweden is among the countries in Europe that receive the largest number of refugees in relation to population size. Since 2008 there has also been an increase in labour migration, following the introduction of a new liberal policy in this area.

While political participation of migrants has not been on top of the political agenda in recent years it is still a highly relevant and historically important area in Swedish integration policy. Furthermore, there is a fair amount of research, both qualitative and quantitative, on various aspects of political participation among migrants in Sweden that will be discussed in the following sections. We depart here from the broad definition of political participation provided by Verba et al. (1995:38), referring to activities intending to influence government action, 'either directly by affecting the making or implementation of public policy or indirectly by influencing the selection of people who make those policies'. Based on this definition it is possible to identify three different, although closely related, areas of political participation:

- Voting (indirect influence)
- Political representation (direct influence)
- Civic participation and corporatist/interest group representation (direct/indirect influence)

For this project we will, first and foremost, draw on previous research on political representation and participation of migrants in political parties (see e.g. Soininen 2011; 2012; Soininen & Etzler 2006; Bäck & Öhrvall 2004; Dahlstedt 2005; Lukkarinen Kvist 2001). We will, however, also take into account research on political participation through associations and civic groups, such as migrant associations. Such corporatist or interest group channels represent a third area of political influence, potentially important in states such as Sweden, characterized by a corporatist style of policy making (see Soininen 1999; Odmalm 2004). Additionally, we will highlight and, to some extent, make use of existing quantitative data to provide a descriptive account on voting and migrant representation in national and municipal parliaments.

1.2. Overview Research

This section provides an overview of existing research on political participation of migrants in Sweden. The three areas of research identified above – voting, political representation and civic participation – is used to organize the presentation. In practice, however, these areas do not form separate sub-disciplines, it is more common that research integrates several of the areas, for



instance the link between civic participation and other political activities (e.g. Adman & Strömblad 2000; 2010). In Sweden there is also a substantial amount of statistical data on voting and political representation of migrants, provided by Statistics Sweden.

1.2.1. Voting

There is some research that provides knowledge on voter turnout among migrants in Sweden. Also, relevant statistical data in this area has become more accessible during recent years.¹ The research on voting among migrants began, most notably, after the reform in 1975 when foreign citizens with a minimum of three years of residence were granted the right to vote in municipal and regional² parliament elections. The first time the new rules applied was in the election in 1976. Voter turnout among foreign citizens that year was 60 per cent (total population: 90 per cent), which must be regarded as high. It also succeeded the expectations at the time (Hammar 1979). Since then, however, figures have gradually dropped (see Table 1.). In the last election in 2010 voter turnout among foreign citizens entitled to vote in municipal elections was only 35.8 per cent (81.6 for total population). During the period voter turnout has decreased for total population too. Nevertheless, there is a clear trend where the difference between total population and non-citizens is gradually increasing over time. Turnout in regional elections is very similar to municipal elections, at least for the years 2002-2010, and is not presented here in detail. This is probably explained by the fact that the elections for national, regional and municipal parliaments take place at the same day, at a single voting occasion.

Table 1: Voter turnout in Swedish municipal elections. Total population and non-citizens entitled to vote 1976-2010. (%)

<i>Municipal election</i>	1976	1979	1982	1985	1988	1991	1994	1998	2002	2006	2010
Total population	90,4	89,0	89,6	87,8	84,0	84,3	84,4	78,6	77,9	79,4	81,6
Non-citizens*	60,0	53,0	52,0	48,0	43,0	41,0	40,0	34,5	34,2	36,7	35,8
Difference	-30,4	-36,0	-37,6	-39,8	-41,0	-43,3	-44,4	-44,1	-43,7	-42,7	-45,8

* Non-citizens entitled to vote in municipal elections. There is no available data on naturalized citizens in municipal elections

Note: Estimates based on stratified sample data taken directly from the electoral toll (margin of error for 2002-2010: approx. ±1 %)

Source: Bird et al. (2011: 40), Statistics Sweden

¹ Between 1998 and 2007 the Swedish Integration Board was responsible for statistics on integration and produced several reports on political activity among migrants (e.g. Adman & Strömblad 2000; Rodrigo Blomqvist 2000). After the Integration Board was terminated in 2007 this task was transferred to Statistics Sweden. Data on integration, where political participation and representation form one sub-theme, has been further developed since then.

² Regional refers, here, to the Swedish 'landsting'.



It should be noted that there is no systematic data on voting among naturalized citizens in municipal elections. Such data is available for the national election where only citizens are allowed to vote.³ Hence, the figures for these two elections are not based on the same category and therefore are not strictly comparable. In the national elections there has been a gradual downward trend in voting among the population in general. When we examine the category of naturalized citizens, voter turnout is considerably higher compared to the category of non-citizens in the municipal elections (see Table 2). At the same time, however, it is consistently lower compared to the total population of eligible voters. It can also be observed that naturalized second generation immigrants display a slightly higher degree of voter turnout than first generation immigrants and that there is a positive trend. It is, however, too early to determine whether this trend is real or due to random variations.

Table 2: Voter turnout in Swedish national elections. Total population and naturalized citizens with immigrant background 2002-2010. Per cent (difference to total population in parantheses)

<i>National election</i>	2002	2006	2010
Persons with immigrant background (1st generation)	67,5 (-12,6)	66,9 (-15,1)	73,4 (-11,2)
Persons with immigrant background (2nd generation)*	67,9 (-12,2)	74,6 (-7,4)	79,8 (-4,8)
Total population	80,1	82	84,6

* Second generation immigrants is defined as persons with both parents born outside of Sweden.

Source: Statistics Sweden

Two important explanations for the rates of voter turnout among persons with migrant background are the length of stay in Sweden and citizenship (see also Tahvilzadeh 2011). The higher turnout among naturalized citizens in national elections compared to non-citizens in the municipal elections probably reflects both (see also Adman & Strömblad 2000: 45).

It is also important to take into account the changed character of migration to Sweden, mentioned above. In the 1970s migrants were more integrated in the labour market and union involvement likely contributed to the high turnout in the municipal election of 1976. Already in this election there was a campaign targeted towards migrants in their native language (Hammar 1979). The Chilean refugees that came in the 1970s were mostly political refugees and it is possible that political interest was particularly strong in this group of refugees. The changing character of migration since then has also resulted in changes concerning individual characteristics and resources of migrants. Individual factors such as education, knowledge in Swedish society and language, occupation and socioeconomic status explain a part of the differences in migrant voter turnout, but not all. Adman and Strömblad (2000; 2010) argue, based on statistical studies, that there is still a negative effect of 'being an immigrant' after controlling for such factors. They show that associational involvement has

³ Here, only data for the elections 2002-2010 are presented. There is data available from earlier elections (beginning in 1988) but since the definitions of categories have changed, these data would need a more in-depth analysis to allow for time series comparison.



a positive impact on migrants' political participation in general, but the effect specifically on voting is inconclusive. We will return to this issue of civic involvement in more detail below.

One way of conceptualizing the explanatory factors of migrant political participation is as a tension between individual characteristics and institutional factors (Bäck & Soininen 1998). An important institutional factor is that the voting rights of foreign citizens only extend to local and regional elections, which may contribute to lower participation. It would seem likely that local elections entail less political interest than do the national elections. The former are not subject to the same type of media coverage and it may be more difficult to gain information about the local issues at stake in the local and regional elections (see also Adman & Strömblad 2000). The presence of candidates with the same ethnic background, and knowledge about these candidates, may, however, have a positive effect on voting within the ethnic group (Bäck & Soininen 2004; Rodrigo Blomqvist 2000).

The poor integration of migrants in the labour market is an important institutional factor to take into account in Sweden. Based on an interview survey among voters in the municipal election in the city of Malmö in 1991, Bäck and Soininen (1998) demonstrate that integration has significance for electoral participation. Integration, here, does not refer to cultural integration, but to labour market integration and the degree of participation and interaction with the surrounding society and its institutions. The study also shows that the 'general cultural orientation' of different ethnic groups, in terms of egalitarian, hierarchical, individualist or fatalist values and norms, have an effect on voting behaviour.

Another important institutional factor is the presence of discriminatory practices and norms in Swedish society and the often negative depiction of migration-related issues in the media. Some research indicates that negative experiences of discrimination and prejudice have a negative impact on political participation. These negative experiences contribute to a feeling of exclusion and distrust in political parties and institutions. According to these studies the problem is not a general lack of interest or knowledge in politics among immigrants, but a lower confidence in the possibilities of achieving change through political participation (see SOU 2005:56; Dahlstedt 2005; Bäck & Soininen 2004).

In the national election of 2010 the 'Sweden Democrats', a right-wing populist party, won 5.7 per cent of the votes and, for the first time, was voted into parliament. The anti-immigration agenda of this party raises questions about the effect on political mobilization among migrants. The traditional parties in parliament tend to have relatively similar views in migration-related issues and the emergence of a party with a clear anti-immigrant agenda may in fact contribute to increased political participation. This change in the political climate may possibly have contributed to the increase in migrant voter turnout in the recent national elections (see Table 2). The impact of discrimination and of this recent increase in anti-immigration sentiments on migrant political mobilization is, however, an area where there is need for further research.

1.2.2. Political Participation

The actual state of migrant representation in Sweden will be elaborated in section four below. Here, we will give only a brief overview of the existing research in this area. Despite widespread consensus on the importance of increased representativeness of elected politicians, persons with immigrant background are still under-represented in Swedish politics (see e.g. SOU 2005:56). The political



parties have not succeeded in adapting their organizations to the challenges of globalization and a more ethnically diverse population. This would require accommodating and channelling a broader range of interests that go beyond traditional group interests. The Swedish political system is based on a heritage of social democratic working-class mobilization, which has, in recent years, been combined with a concern for gender representation (Soininen 2011). The political parties have, with some differences in scope, adopted policies for dealing with the underrepresentation of women in Swedish politics (Freidenvall 2011). Most of the political parties also have policies or explicit goals for migrant representation, but these have not resulted in the same concrete results (Lukkarinen Kvist 2001).

Research on migrant representatives among elected officials has revealed an 'ethnic hierarchy' where persons with migrant background are systematically under-represented in different boards and committees at the municipal level. Rodrigo Blomqvist (2005) has in her study demonstrated that this hierarchy remains after controlling for relevant background variables such as age, gender, education, occupation and time as a member in the party. Furthermore, Bäck and Öhrvall (2004) show in their study of elected representatives that migrant representation was lower in more prestigious organs of local government, such as the municipal executive board. This status-related pattern of under-representation was also reflected in the type of political assignment. Persons with migrant background were most frequently found in substitute positions and most rarely as chairman or vice-chairman.

Migrant representation in Sweden is hindered by the existence of exclusionary and discriminatory practices and norms. Party organizations are rarely openly negative; most often they are welcoming towards persons with migrant background and sometimes even initiate special recruiting campaigns. As organizations, political parties develop norms, routines and often a strong identity that is rooted in the history, ideology and political platform of the party. Adhering to shared norms and displaying a unified front in external communication is an integral part of life in most political organizations. Such shared norms and identities may, in practice, also function as mechanisms of exclusion. This sometimes involves openly prejudicial attitudes and practices, but also more implicit and non-reflected assumptions of ethnic homogeneity (Dahlstedt 2005; Soininen 2011).

Within the political parties there are considerable institutional barriers for immigrant candidates. In Sweden, as in many other Western democracies, the political parties have experienced falling membership numbers and a shrinking party activist base, where people are less willing to devote time for party activities. There has been a shift from mass parties towards election parties and increased professionalization. Parties have become less dependent on their members and the slimmed down organizations tend to be more closed as they downplay their traditional tasks of mobilizing, recruiting and socializing new members (Soininen 2012). Nomination processes and the intra-party rules and norms that govern these processes represent a central factor for explaining migrant representation. In a previous study (Soininen 2011; Soininen & Etzler 2006) such nomination processes were examined in 14 local party organizations based on interviews with representatives of nomination committees and documentation. This research revealed the existence of a series of barriers for immigrant candidates. These barriers exist at all stages of the nomination process. Within these processes formal and informal networks were important for nomination and the results indicate that these networks disfavoured potential immigrant nominees. Compared to women's representation which is governed by formally adopted policies, migrant representation is subject to



more discretionary judgements about the potential benefits of immigrant nominees. The pattern of a hierarchy is also visible in the relation between nominees and elected representatives. Swedish-born nominees are over-represented among the nominees that are eventually elected. Also, Swedish-born representatives are more likely to run for re-election than migrant representatives, which indicate the presence of exclusionary mechanisms in the work environment of the political organs as well (Johansson 1999; Khakee & Johansson 2003; SOU 2005:56).

1.2.3. Civic participation

The promotion of civic participation and associational involvement among migrants has been a longstanding concern in Swedish immigrant and integration policy. Support for ethnic organization was an important part of the 'multicultural' immigrant and minority policy of 1975. Corporatist policy making is, historically, a central feature of the 'Swedish model' and could, in theory, provide channels for migrant interest representation. This system, however, favours the traditional labour market partners and not ethnic associations. Also, under-representation of migrants is not only the case in political parties but also in the unions. The unions tend to emphasise class-based interests which has made it difficult to recognize other interests based on gender or cultural differences (see Soininen 1999; Odmalm 2004).

The promotion of associational involvement has also been motivated by a belief in civic participation as a vehicle of political integration. Associational involvement has, more generally, proven to increase civic and organizational skills as well as providing access to networks of political recruitment. This is of course an area that has received considerable scholarly attention, and this is also the case in Sweden (e.g. Bengtsson et al. 2004; Odmalm 2004; Adman & Strömblad 2000; 2010). In a recent quantitative study Adman and Strömblad (2010) examine the impact of associational involvement on political participation, differentiating between ethnic organizations and other civic organizations. In accordance with the large body of research in this area they find a positive effect of associational involvement in general. Involvement in ethnic associations did not, however, entail any such positive effect. One explanation may be that while the ethnic organizations contribute to enhancing civic skills, they do not provide access to politically relevant networks. This, again, may be related to the heritage of the class-based corporatist channels of interest representation in Sweden.

1.3. Legal Prerequisites and Regulations

Swedish legislation on citizenship is based on the *jus sanguinis* principle, which means that citizenship, in principle, is acquired at birth if either of the parents is a Swedish citizen. Foreign nationals who have a permanent resident permit and are registered as residents in Sweden by and large have the same rights and obligations as Swedish citizens. There are, however, some differences. Only Swedish citizens have an absolute right to live and work in Sweden and only Swedish citizens are entitled to vote in the Riksdag elections. A foreign citizen cannot be elected to the Riksdag. There are also a number of posts, such as for example police officers and military officers in the Swedish Armed Forces that can only be filled by Swedish citizens. According to the Swedish Citizenship Act of 2001 it is possible to hold dual citizenship. A person acquiring Swedish citizenship may retain his or



her previous citizenship if the law in the other country so permits. Similarly, a person who is a Swedish citizen and acquires another citizenship may retain his or her Swedish citizenship if the other country's legislation does not prevent this (www.regeringen.se).

As mentioned above, foreign citizens with a minimum of three years residence have the right to vote in municipal and regional elections. The electoral system in Sweden is based on proportional representation. General Riksdag elections, together with elections to the municipal- and the regional council assemblies, are held on the second Sunday in September every four years. Swedish citizens and citizens of other member states of the European Union have the right to vote in the European Parliament elections. It is a precondition that citizens from other European member states must be registered residents in Sweden and that they must hand in a notification to be listed on the electoral roll (www.valmyndigheten.se).

Applications for Swedish citizenship are handled by the Swedish Migration Board. The requirements for naturalization include: being able to prove ones identity, minimum of 18 years old, having a permanent residence permit, having lived in Sweden for a period of time (varies for different migrant categories, but usually a minimum of five years), 'good conduct' (referring to criminal record that result in an additional qualifying period, depending on the severity of the crime) (www.migrationsverket.se).

1.4. Actual State of Representation in Sweden

In this section we will provide a descriptive account of migrant representation in the national parliament and in municipal council assemblies, based on data from Statistics Sweden. This data covers the elections from 1991 to the last one in 2010.

1.4.1. Representation in National Parliament

The number of elected candidates with migrant background in the national parliament, *Riksdag*, has increased during the 2000s (Table 3). After the election 2010 there was 33 representatives with migrant background among the 349 elected candidates. This equals 9.5 per cent of the seats in parliament, which can be related to the proportion of persons with migrant background in the Swedish population, which is roughly 20 per cent.⁴ Hence, it can be argued that persons with migrant background are under-represented in parliament. It should, however, be noted that only naturalized citizens can be elected to parliament and the figure of 20 per cent includes both naturalized and foreign citizens. Still, even when we take this into account the difference between population and elected representatives is significant.

⁴ Based on data from Statistics Sweden, including both 1st and 2nd generation immigrants.

**Table 3: Number of representatives in national parliament with immigrant background, 1991-2010**

	1991	1994	1998	2002	2006	2010
Persons with immigrant background (1st generation)	7	7	7	19	17	28
Persons with immigrant background (2nd generation)*	1	1	2	3	4	5
Total number of seats	349	349	349	349	349	349

* Second generation immigrants is defined as persons with both parents born outside of Sweden.

Source: Statistics Sweden

The representatives born outside of Sweden come from different parts of the world, and not just Europe or the Nordic countries (Table 4). Table 4 shows proportions of total number of elected candidates from different regions of birth. The numbers in parenthesis are demographic data from each of the election years on the proportion of persons in the Swedish population born in that region. While the proportions of representatives have increased over time, so has the proportion of the population from most regions outside of Sweden. Hence the same pattern of under-representation can be observed over time. Again, we must, however, bear in mind that the population proportions include both naturalized and foreign citizens.

Table 4: Elected representatives in national parliament from different regions of birth 1991-2010. Proportions in per cent (population proportions in paranthesis)

	1991		1994		1998		2002		2006		2010	
Africa	0,0	(0,4)	0,0	(0,5)	0,0	(0,6)	0,6	(0,7)	0,0	(0,8)	0,6	(1,3)
Asia	0,0	(1,9)	0,0	(2,3)	0,0	(2,6)	0,0	(3,1)	1,1	(3,4)	3,2	(4,5)
Europe (excl. Nordic countries)	0,3	(2,6)	0,3	(3,4)	0,6	(3,6)	2,0	(3,8)	2,0	(4,6)	2,6	(5,3)
North America	0,3	(0,2)	0,3	(0,2)	0,0	(0,3)	0,0	(0,3)	0,3	(0,3)	0,0	(0,3)
Nordic countries (excl. Sweden)	1,4	(3,6)	1,1	(3,4)	1,4	(3,2)	2,0	(3,1)	0,9	(3,0)	1,4	(2,7)
Sweden	98,0	(90,5)	98,0	(89,6)	98,0	(89,0)	94,6	(88,2)	95,1	(87,1)	92,0	(84,9)
South America	0,0	(0,5)	0,3	(0,5)	0,0	(0,6)	0,6	(0,6)	0,6	(0,6)	0,3	(0,7)
Other	0,0	(0,1)	0,0	(0,1)	0,0	(0,1)	0,3	(0,1)	0,0	(0,1)	0,0	(0,1)

Source: Statistics Sweden

Migrant representation differs significantly between the political parties (Table 5). In some instances this is clearly related to the political stance of the party on migration and integration. It is perhaps



not surprising that the Sweden Democrats have no representatives with migrant background. Among the other parties, migrant representation is not simply a matter of 'left' and 'right' in the political spectrum. The Liberal, Green and Left Party are the ones with the highest proportion of elected representatives with migrant background.

Table 5: Proportion of elected representatives in national parliament with immigrant background* in different political parties, 1991-2010. Per cent

	1991	1994	1998	2002	2006	2010
Vänsterpartiet (Left)	0,0	0,0	2,3	13,3	9,1	15,8
Socialdemokraterna (Social democrats)	2,9	2,5	3,1	4,9	7,7	8,0
Miljöpartiet (Green)		5,6	0,0	5,9	21,1	16,0
Centerpartiet (Centre)	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	3,4	0,0
Folkpartiet (Liberal)	0,0	0,0	0,0	12,5	0,0	16,7
Kristdemokraterna (Christian democrats)	11,5	6,7	7,1	9,1	4,2	10,5
Moderaterna (Conservative/liberal)	1,3	2,5	1,2	1,8	3,1	10,3
Sverigedemokraterna (Sweden democrat)						0,0
Other	0,0					
Total	2,3	2,3	2,6	6,3	6,0	9,5

* Persons with immigrant background include 1st and 2nd generation (both parents born outside of Sweden)

Source: Statistics Sweden

As noted in the research overview above, nomination processes and the intra-party rules and norms that govern them are central factors for explaining migrant representation (Soininen 2011; Soininen & Etzler 2006). Earlier studies have shown that migrant nominees are under-represented in relation to Swedish born nominees when it comes to actually being elected (Johansson 1999; Khakee & Johansson 2003). This indicates the presence of an exclusionary mechanism where migrant nominees are placed on the lower part of election lists where they will not have a likely chance of being



elected. This sort of ‘list decoration’ may function as a strategy for parties to gain immigrant votes, while at the same time ensuring ‘business as usual’ in actual actual representation (Soininen 2011). In Table 6 we provide data on the proportion of nominees that become elected into national parliament. This data gives a clear indication about the existence of an exclusionary mechanism in the later part of the nomination process. During the 1990s the proportion of migrant nominees that became elected was roughly half of the corresponding proportion for Swedish nominees. In the 2000s, the differences have become smaller, but are still significant.

Table 6: Proportion of nominees that become elected into national parliament. Per cent

	1991	1994	1998	2002	2006	2010
Persons with immigrant background (1st generation)	3,6	2,7	2,1	3,8	2,8	4,7
Persons with immigrant background (2nd generation)*	3,1	2,7	3,9	4,3	4,7	4,1
Swedish background	6,7	6,2	7,0	7,0	6,5	6,4

* Second generation immigrants is defined as persons with both parents born outside of Sweden.

Source: Statistics Sweden

1.4.2. Representation in municipal council assemblies

The representation of migrants in municipal council assemblies is slightly higher compared to national parliament if we consider the whole time period (Table 7). It is important to bear in mind that municipal and regional elections are open for foreign citizens also. In the last election, however, the proportion of migrant representatives is actually lower, 9.1 per cent compared to 9.5 in the national election. Migrant representation in the political parties also display some differences compared to the national level. In the municipal council assemblies there is a clearer left-right dimension in migrant representation. It can be noted that the Sweden Democrats, perhaps surprisingly, have 7.6 per cent representatives with immigrant background in 2010. These candidates, however, are almost exclusively from the Nordic countries and the rest of Europe.



Table 7: Proportion of elected representatives in municipal council assemblies with immigrant background* in different political parties, 1991-2010. Per cent

	1991	1994	1998	2002	2006	2010
Vänsterpartiet	9,2	9,7	12,7	12,6	14,9	15,8
(Left)						
Socialdemokraterna	5,4	6,1	6,6	8,1	8,7	10,1
(Social democrats)						
Miljöpartiet	7,4	9,3	10,0	12,9	14,9	14,9
(Green)						
Centerpartiet	1,3	1,2	1,3	1,8	2,7	3,1
(Centre)						
Folkpartiet	3,7	4,2	4,5	8,8	9,1	7,8
(Liberal)						
Kristdemokraterna	3,7	3,5	4,9	6,7	7,7	8,1
(Christian democrats)						
Moderaterna	4,2	4,3	5,1	6,3	7,1	8,7
(Conservative/liberal)						
Sverigedemokraterna				6,1	5,3	7,6
(Sweden democrat)						
Other	6,9	5,1	5,7	6,6	8,3	7,4
Total	4,6	5,2	6,2	7,4	8,1	9,1

* Persons with immigrant background include 1st and 2nd generation (both parents born outside of Sweden)

Source: Statistics Sweden

Concerning nomination processes, we did the same analysis on the municipal level of the proportion of nominees that become elected, as we did on the national level. Here the pattern, at least at first sight, seems more even (Table 8). There are differences between nominees with Swedish and immigrant background, but these differences are smaller. It can also be noted that a much larger proportion of the nominees in general become elected at the municipal level. There are more seats to fill in the municipal elections, while the candidates elected for national parliament represent a smaller 'elite'.

**Table 8: Proportion of nominees that become elected into municipal council assemblies. Per cent**

	1991	1994	1998	2002	2006	2010
Persons with immigrant background (1st generation)	19,0	19,5	19,8	21,5	20,0	20,9
Persons with immigrant background (2nd generation)*	18,0	18,2	21,6	22,3	24,3	25,0
Swedish background	23,2	23,7	25,3	26,0	25,6	24,9

* Second generation immigrants is defined as persons with both parents born outside of Sweden.

Source: Statistics Sweden

The larger number of nominees and candidates at the municipal level also allows for a more fine-grained analysis. Johansson (1999) found in a similar analysis that there was a ‘hierarchy’ of different regions of birth where Swedish born nominees had the best chances for being elected, followed by the Nordic countries and Europe. Here, using more recent data, we find that the pattern unfortunately remains (Table 9). The differences between the regions are, however, slowly decreasing. Hence, the trend is positive but considerable differences remain, indicating persistent barriers within the political parties to migrant representation.

Table 9: Proportion of nominees from different regions of birth that become elected into municipal council assemblies. Per cent

	1991	1994	1998	2002	2006	2010
Sweden	23,4	24,0	25,7	26,4	26,2	25,3
Nordic countries (excl. Sweden)	21,1	23,6	22,2	24,2	23,2	24,5
Europe (excl. Nordic countries)	18,6	17,4	20,3	21,9	20,1	20,7
North America	12,2	16,7	15,3	15,7	15,0	19,3
Asia	7,7	8,8	13,9	17,4	18,1	19,1
South America	10,4	19,6	20,3	18,5	17,1	18,7
Other	12,5	11,5	17,2	16,1	11,1	16,1
Africa	11,8	5,0	11,2	19,3	14,9	15,5

* Second generation immigrants is defined as persons with both parents born outside of Sweden.

Source: Statistics Sweden



Challenges for diversity





2. Diversity in Political Parties

2.1. Methodology

Three Swedish parties were selected for further analysis. Socialdemokraterna (The Social democrats), is the major left wing party and also the largest political party in Sweden. Moderaterna (The Moderate Party, Conservative/liberal), is the major right wing party and leader of the current coalition government. These parties were chosen because of their dominant role in Swedish politics, one from each side of the left-right divide that characterizes Swedish party politics. Miljöpartiet (the Green party) was chosen partly because they represent a smaller political party and partly because their structure and organizational focus differ from the two larger parties, offering perhaps new perspectives and insights. Although they often try to avoid being positioned on the left-right spectrum, the Green party has historically been most closely associated with left wing politics, even though they do co-operate with the current conservative government on some issues, for instance in the area of migration policy. The Green party also has a higher level of representatives with immigrant background than the other two parties. The parties' current level of representatives with immigrant background is listed in table 5 above.

2.1.1. Levels Covered

Interviews have been conducted on the following levels of the parties: elected representatives in the National Parliament with and without immigrant background, employees at the national party secretariat, members of election committees with a particular emphasis on the nominees for National Parliament, Women's and youth organizations within the parties. We've also conducted interviews with elected representatives at the local level with and without immigrant background. These different levels will be covered for all three parties, totalling a number of approximately 25 - 30 interviews, see table 2 below. Even though we've conducted interviews with local representatives, the main focus of the report has been on the national level. This is partly because previous research has focused on local level and covered both members and elected representatives. The traditional career route for Members of Parliament also mean that we have been able to ask questions about local party work to the Members of Parliament interviewed, since almost all of them have been candidates in local or county elections as well. The election committees are also responsible for compiling lists of candidates for election at all levels (local, regional and national), so the interviews with the election committees will also partly cover their work concerning local candidates.

The findings from the political parties has been complemented with interviews with non-party political migrant organisations, through co-operation with SIOS, an umbrella organization gathering some 20 ethnic organizations in Sweden. These interviews have been conducted through focus groups, reaching approximately 15 people, representing 15 ethnic associations.



2.1.2. Geographical focus

To be able to match the results from the interviews with election committees to that of the eventually elected Members of Parliaments, we have chosen to focus geographically on Stockholm. Stockholm consists of two constituencies; the inner cities and the surrounding county. This focus on Stockholm will, we believe, allow us to cover some interesting aspects of representation of people with migrant backgrounds. First, Stockholm is one of the cities in Sweden with a large proportion of migrants. This makes representation both more probable and more crucial. In this sense, Stockholm represents a sort of most likely-case for finding favourable factors. Second, choosing to cover both the inner-city (“Stockholm stad”) and the wider county (“Stockholms län”) will also allow for identifying possible barriers. Previous research has indicated that competition for nominations may be especially fierce in larger inner-cities, where there are a larger number of paid offices, making these especially attractive. This is perhaps not the case in the wider county, where there are a number of different municipalities, still with a high proportion of people with migrant backgrounds, but without the potentially fierce competition. We will, then, conduct interviews with Members of Parliament from the two constituencies in Stockholm⁵, and, later, interview the election committees responsible for placing them on the lists.

Table 10. Interviews conducted

Role and level	Number of interviews	Parties covered
Members of parliament without immigrant background	5	All three parties
Members of parliament with immigrant background	5	All three parties
National/regional secretariat	4	All three parties
Election committees	6	All three parties
Women’s organizations within political parties	2	The Social democrats and The Moderates ⁶
Youth organizations	3	All parties
Representatives from ethnic organisations	15	Immigrant organizations

⁵ An exception was made for The Green party, since their number of Members of Parliament with immigrant background was too low in absolute terms to make this practicable

⁶ The Green party does not have any other formal networks within the party than the youth organization, although they do have mentor programmes for women.



2.1.3 Selection of Interviewees

In an initial phase quite a lot of work was dedicated to finding the right connections and then to establish trust and interest within the parties by targeting, for example, group leaders in the Parliament and people responsible at the national secretariats. A letter describing the general focus of the project was distributed and personal contact taken. We emphasised here both the potential contribution of the research project to their political party, the interesting nature of the questions covered, and the general focus of our investigation – particularly, that we were interested in the broad factors and perspectives, as opposed to personal or potentially damaging details within the party. All three chosen parties have participated in the project and contributed greatly with their time and experiences.

After having taken a first tentative contact with the chosen parties, we compiled a full list of all Members of Parliament within the three parties, from the Stockholm area, born in a country outside of Sweden. Although we have a particular interest in people from countries outside Europe (as opposed to, e.g., people from other Nordic countries), this was not factored in at this first step. In making this list, we looked at the personal biographies of the Members of Parliament. Twelve candidates were identified at this stage; a majority being men and most of them with a non-European/TCN background. A first contact has been taken with all of them, eventually resulting in five interviews, covering all three parties. These interviews aimed to increase our understanding of favourable and unfavourable factors for diversity and political representation. Afterwards, we contacted Members of Parliament from the Stockholm area without immigrant backgrounds, resulting in another five interviews. These interviews offered further insights on why people become active and stand for elections in political parties, and they also helped us better understand how many of the favourable and unfavourable factors mentioned above that were specifically about immigrant background.

The perhaps second most important part of the political parties for our interviews is the election committees. These interviews have been carried out in November. It was both an interesting and challenging time to do the interviews, since it is right in the middle of their work with organizing the internal elections for the upcoming general election next year. This could have led to difficulties in scheduling the interviews, but it also means that the procedures, discussions and considerations of the election committees are fresh in their minds. The focus on the last election also made it possible to ask questions about their work without risking making them feel uncomfortable discussing results that were of yet not official or even finalized. In making the selection of people to interview, we focused on the chairman of the election committee and one other member.

In order to get a good picture of the enabling and hindering factors for people with immigrant backgrounds in political parties, we also conducted interviews with the national secretariats of our three parties. They offer insights on both how the parties work with different outreach campaigns, and how they work internally with diversity when it comes to employees. We've interviewed the head of staff for the Green party and the Moderates. For the Social democrats, we've interviewed the person responsible for their membership development.



Many Swedish political parties also have formal divisions within them representing special interest groups. For example, both the Moderates and the Social democrats have independent Women's unions. We've interviewed representatives from both. The Green Party does not have any formal women's network, although we've interviewed one Member of Parliament who has also been responsible for a mentorship program for women within the party. The political parties seldom have similar formal networks for people with immigrant backgrounds.

Youth organizations of the political parties play a very important role in Swedish politics, since they often form an important base for a person's further political career. Many people who are now Members of Parliaments or hold high positions within the party began within the youth organization. This is something that also came up in the interviews with the Members of Parliament, leading us to also interview the youth organizations of our political parties.

For our interviews with migrant organizations, we involved at the onset of this project the organization SIOS, an umbrella organization gathering some twenty migrant organizations in Sweden. They have been updated on the progress of the project, and the focus group interview with their board is planned for the end of January.

2.2. Access and Entry into the Party

This section describes the access and entry of new members into political parties. It begins with an overview of the interviewed elected representatives' journey into party politics; why they choose to become a member, how they became active and their experiences when it comes to welcoming attitudes and introduction. Afterwards, we turn to how the political parties reason around the issues of access and entry.

2.2.1. The Road to Politics: The Elected Representatives

The interviewed elected representatives describe somewhat different roads to party political affiliation, although their stories also bear many similarities. When asked about the driving force behind joining a political party, the single most common word was: "Påverkan". Påverkan is roughly translated into impact/influence – denoting being able to affect the outcome in important issues, although less linked to personal power than the word influence in English. For some, this was related to grander issues, such as equality, global justice, equal opportunities or environmental issues. For others, it was more focused on improving their local community, of contributing to the area in which they lived. In common was a shared commitment to being able to work actively for the improvement of society.

Most of the interviewees also shared a family background where political discussions were a natural part of everyday life. They remember talking about politics "at home". This was especially common for some of the representatives with immigrant background, especially those who came to Sweden as political refugees. For them, a political commitment was the very reason they fled their previous country, and a natural part of becoming a citizen in their new country.



For one Social democrat, the interest in politics began with a visit to his school by a representative from a different party – although he did not in the end agree with the representatives opinions, he saw the potential of politics in influencing society. The realization led to a membership in the youth organization of his current city, eventually also resulting in active participation. Beginning one's political career in a party youth organization is, he believes, a more common road to political participation in Sweden than in many other countries, where the youth organization both enables people to form the personal network necessary for a political career and serves as a recruitment base for future political posts. For another, the commitment to labour unions was the first step to a political party, and for still others, the local branch of their chosen party represented their first meeting with party politics.

When asked about this decision to join a political party, and the first impression, differences emerge. In one sense, everyone we've interviewed represents a "success case" for the political parties; they are all people actively looking up the party, attending a first meeting, choosing to become active in the party and choosing to stay active. Everyone we've interviewed has been a member for at least five years; many have held elected positions just as long.

The interviews partly reflect the fact that we have not interviewed the people who attended a first meeting and choose not to become active; they speak of a largely positive first impression. Representatives with and without immigrant background speak positively of the first time in the political party and of welcoming attitudes from the parties: in the youth organization, social activities in the city were a major part of the organizations work, which made it fun and easy to join; in the municipality, there was a lot of work to be done and many posts and committees to fill, making it easy to become involved in party activities, and in the local party organization difference and participation in local non-governmental organizations were seen as a strength rather than a threat. There seemed to have been enough opportunities to attend courses within the party, and instances of prejudice or racism – although definitely occurring – were seen as rare, and its importance downplayed.

Many also highlight the importance of a personal welcoming. Specific local political leaders offered a personal and highly valued introduction, support and encouragement. As we will show later, this is especially important for the later decision to become a candidate for an elected position.

Even so, some also testify about less positive experience. The meeting with local politics sometimes meant a rather dramatic clash between high ideals of important societal issues (justice, equality, solving the problems of the labour market etc.) and the political reality of internal power struggles, a new and rather unfamiliar political language and long and often tedious meetings devoted to technicalities. Some mentioned attending meetings where everyone had been active for a very long time and where everyone except them knew everyone. Some mentioned local leaders who've held positions of power for some fifteen years and seemed determined to hang on to them forever.

Representatives with and without immigrant backgrounds mentioned this clash, but our result suggests that this clash can be even more acute for representatives with immigrant background. For many of the representatives we've interviewed their experience as a political refugee meant an added interest to become involved in their new society. One felt keenly the responsibility to try to influence society for the better. He describes the transit from guerrilla soldier to party member as a somewhat difficult process, highlighting for example the important role of language: not only did he



first have to master the new language, he also quickly discovered that in politics, language was key⁷ – requiring a high level of fluency from a recently arrived migrant. This, he feels, created some tensions in his first meeting with party politics, although he also emphasizes that everyone he met felt that his difference was an advantage for the party. For him, the road to party politics came primarily through non-governmental organizations and his commitment to gender equality and integration. Another respondent describes her first meeting with party politics as one involving a lot of strange abbreviations and technicalities. Although aware of the fact that democracy does take time, she had not before realized just how long decisions could take. One local representative with immigrant background reasoned around why her friends were not active politically. This was a question that had occupied her mind for quite some time, and she had arrived at three factors: that politics were seen as difficult and bureaucratic; that it takes up too much of your time, with too many meetings, and that it is, at first glance, difficult to relate the political processes to everyday problems.

Although it is impossible to generalize from our limited sample, our interviews suggest that it might be easier to become active late in life in the Green party, without following the traditional route of youth organization-background. This is especially true when it comes to running for office early on in your political career, as we shall look more closely at in the next section.

Another factor that might make entrance into a political party difficult is that as an immigrant, during the first few years in the new country, establishing yourself can take quite a lot of your time. One Member of Parliament chose to take some time to establish himself first. For him, mastering the language, finding a job and a career, etc., were a necessary precondition before he began contemplating participating in a political party. He became active at the local level in the municipality where he lived, quickly holding a number of posts and devoting a large part of his spare time to them. He saw getting elected to the regional level (Landsting) as a natural evolution, although since his party lost the election, he didn't find regional political work as rewarding as his previous local work. He later returned to the local council, before being nominated to the National Parliament.

The majority of the representatives interviewed were Members of Parliament, so their mainly positive responses are perhaps not surprising; they represent to high degree successful cases, having made it almost all the way to the top. Even so, from their answers it is still possible to discern some possible barriers to entering party politics. One of them is the obvious emphasis on establishing oneself in the new country *before* seeking to influence it; the important role of language – where politics is also seen almost as a language of its own – and “choosing your words” being equally if not more important than the underlying or overall message. The other is the emphasis almost all the interviewees placed on the individual: they talked about themselves not being people who gave up, that they were the kind of people who worked harder when faced with resistance or prejudices, of not taking things personally or volunteering for tasks. This might both reflect on unwillingness to consider structural problems within the party, and lead to the survival only of the very fittest.

2.2.2. Access and Entry: The Political Parties

This section describes the challenges faced and the actions taken by the political parties when it comes to reaching new members and new groups in society and welcoming them into the party. It is

⁷ As we shall see, the importance given to language is also something the election committees reason around as a possible barrier



based primarily on interviews with national secretariats, youth organizations and the Members of Parliament.⁸

It begins with an overview of the result from interviews with the two major parties in Sweden, the Moderates and the Social democrats, and covers the work of the youth organizations, how the local level are seen both as the problem and the solution, and some of the activities done on the national level. After that, we turn to the Green Party.

Almost all political parties in Sweden are facing severe challenges when it comes to membership recruitment. Most have a downward trend when it comes to numbers of members, and most have experienced this downward spiral for several decades, until the situation, in some local branches, has become so acute that they, having won several seats in the election, might have difficulties filling them. Some researchers talk about a “crisis for political parties in Sweden”, and, ultimately, a crisis for local democracy. And – like many other traditional membership-based movements⁹ in Sweden – they are particularly weak in areas with a high proportion of citizens with immigrant background. At the same time, most political parties acknowledge these challenges and strive to meet them.

In Sweden, youth organizations are an important entry point into a political career. Most senior politicians, including the prime minister, began their own political journey there. Youth organizations teach future politicians how politics is done; campaigning, how compromises are achieved, writing political proposals and the art of debating them. They offer opportunities to form important personal networks, which is needed to become an elected representative (see below, chapter 4). Youth organizations also represent a real political force today, often representing a more progressive or radical stance than the party in general: for example, the youth organization of the Social Democrats recently launched a political initiative on youth unemployment, that were adopted – through their active work and campaigning – by the Social Democrats. Both the political parties and the youth organizations themselves seem to agree that the youth organizations are better at diversity than the party in general, even though the youth organizations acknowledge that they, too, face many challenges.

In our interviews, the local branches are seen as both the most important part of the political parties, the main problem and the main site for solutions. It is the local branches that recruits new members and are responsible for welcoming and introducing them; it is where political work begins; where it is most easy to run for office – and where exclusionary practices can have the most damaging effect. Local branches within Swedish political parties are also very independent. At the national level, the party can make common decisions on policy issues, or adopt national guidelines (such as for diversity, which many parties have), but the national boards or the national secretariat cannot tell the local branches what to do or how to do it. The barriers that individual representatives talked about previously were also mentioned by national secretariats. They include: a structure for party work which emphasis attending many meetings a week, old informal structures and hierarchies within some local branches, making new entrance difficult, and lack of a welcoming culture (greeting

⁸ This relates to answers to general questions about the party, as opposed to questions on their own personal experience, such as for example: “In general, how good do think your party is at welcoming new members?” or “From a general perspective, what do you think are the main reasons that people choose not to be active in a political party?”

⁹ Historically, almost all political parties and most of Swedish rich associational life is based on this idea of membership-based organizations, called “folkrörelser” (people movements).



new members; explaining the procedures to them; offering them a chance to speak and be heard in their first meetings). The sheer numbers of meetings you're expected to attend were seen as one of the main barriers to more people getting involved into politics, especially if you're in the middle of a career or have children.

At the same time, the local branches are also seen as the site for possible change. "It has to start at the local level" is a quote recurring in many of the interviews. Since local branches generally have many positions to fill, and the competition are by nature less fierce than for the relatively few seats in Parliament, many believe that this makes it easier to get involved at the local level. This was, as we've shown, also seconded by the elected representatives themselves. They spoke about being quickly included in the political work, enjoying (or at least surviving) the many meetings, volunteering for tasks and so on. Many also spoke about having someone "pushing" them in the beginning, encouraging them to stand for elections and offering them valuable introduction. While clearly a favourable factor, it is also a highly person-dependent one: the good luck of encountering the right person in the right local branch. Institutionalized measures to ensure the welcoming of new members seem largely to be missing.

The Green party seems to have a somewhat different experience, when it comes to new members' access and entry into the party. No one had themselves experienced any barriers in becoming active in the party, nor did they mention it when discussing other people's entry and access. This might be because the Green Party practices a "nine year-rule" or a "three terms in office"-rule (sometimes called "the rotation principle", the maximum time allowed at a position varies between different local branches). The principle states that any representative for the party should not hold the position for more than three terms, or more than nine years. This creates a high turnover for all representatives, which means that as a new member, you are likely to be encouraged to stand for election, and that this encouragement is likely to continue even for the higher offices. It also appears to make it easier for new people to enter politics late in life, that is, without having taken the long route of beginning in a youth organization. As a new member with experiences outside of political parties, you are likely to meet active encouragement, and also to be encouraged to disagree, do things in new ways and share your experience and expertise. One Member of Parliament spoke of having been "actively admitted" into the party, signifying an active process of stepping aside and letting someone in.

A new employee of a regional secretariat, who were recruited from outside the party, spoke of having even senior officials telling her that it was "great" with new perspectives and ideas, often encouraging her to try *more* new ways of doing things. Interestingly, the Green Party is also better at recruiting young people and people between 30 – 40 than older people, a diversity-challenge opposite the one facing many other political parties. Even for the Green Party, though, it still seem to be a prerequisite to attend many meetings, and they also run the risk of giving new members to much to do precisely because they want to encourage competent people. This does not, of course, mean that the Green Party does not have their own challenges when it comes to diversity (some of them are discussed below), only that entry and access does seem to be easier when a party has a high turnover of its elected representatives.

Next, we'll turn to the question of nominations and elections and internal party structures regarding them.



2.3. Internal Party Structures: Nominations, Careers and Experiences

Below, we turn to the challenges for diversity when it comes to having a “career” in a political party, especially with regards to becoming a candidate in the general elections on local and national levels. The first part focuses on formal procedures and informal practices of the election committees; the second is based on the individual experiences of elected representatives.

2.3.1. Election Committees on Nomination Procedures

In all parties the processes differ over the country and in different constituencies. The process for nomination and the role of the election committee also differs between the parties.

This example comes from the Social democrats “Stockholms stad”. For this region the election committees are elected at the annual meeting within S called Representantskapet. Representantskapet consists of delegates from affiliated organisations and their representation is determined by their size. The electoral committees consist of 7-11 delegates where the most important interest organs within the party have one representative each. This mean that the immigrant committee (an umbrella organisation for 32 immigrant associations within the Social democrats in Stockholm) , the union , S-women (The National Federation of Social Democratic Women in Sweden), S- pensioners, the youth organisation SSU, and the general committee have one representative each and then there are also representatives from different geographical constituencies. The electoral committee also includes a chair and the municipality secretary. Respondent say that it is an informal norm that they try to put together an, in representational term, mixed group.

For the Moderates in the city of Stockholm, the election committee consist of a chair, a vice chair and 10 delegates representing the different geographical parts of Stockholm. The youth organisation also has one representative. Considering diversity an M respondent says that they always try to get a mixed group of persons in the electoral committees.

In the Green party, election committees are assigned at membership meetings and consist of 7 delegates. The gender balance should be equal and the youth organisation has one representative. The election committee have one convener, not chair as the organisation norm of the committee is flat. MP respondent say that the appointed persons should mirror a cross-section of the members and an electoral committee without the experience from persons with immigrant background is incomplete. This is however only an informal norm. Recently, this resulted in a long discussion at a member meeting as the then suggested election committee lacked immigrant background experience. The discussions lead to a change in the constitution of the committee but no formal changes in charters were made.

The role and influence of the election committees also differs between the parties. In the Social democrats, the role of the election committee is largely to weigh different interests within the party. Some of the election committees’ work is in detail stipulated in the charts and some can they organise more independently. The most important part of the stipulated is a consultation process with a large number of organised interests inside the party where the election committee should inform itself on which candidates each organisation supports. Compromising, seeking trade-offs and going back and forth with suggestions between different interest groups and internal divisions



characterize the process of putting together a list. The outcome is partly a result of an inherited power balance within the party, the negotiations within the election committee where every delegate is put to represent a certain interest and the election committee negotiations and consulting with all the internal organised interests. In addition, there is also a long list of formal and informal criteria to consider. First, there are national level decisions on 50/50 gender balance and since 2012 also a goal of 25% on the party list under 35 years old. In Stockholm there is also a local decision about immigrant background representation. Historically workplace background is important and now both from the “the LO collective” (The Swedish Trade Union Confederation, commonly referred to as LO, an umbrella organisation for fifteen Swedish trade unions, organising “blue-collar” workers) and from the “TCO-collective” (The Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees is a national trade union centre, the umbrella organisation for eighteen trade unions in Sweden that organise professional and other qualified employees). Other criteria’s mentioned in interviews were geographical representation, a mix of experience and renewal, people with governmental experience and understanding of inter party negotiations and cooperation as well as leadership qualities.

In the Moderates it is the so called Förbundsstämman who appoints the election committees. For the Moderates in Stockholm, the election committees are also an arena for negotiations, however in this case it seems to primarily be about weighing geographic interests. The Moderates uses a combination of popular member ballot and negotiations between local geographical associations. The popular member ballot is seen as consultative only: the election committee use the result of the member ballot as one of many components to consider when they put together their draft list. The influence of the member ballot has been weakened – and its name changed to “consultative member ballot” - as the election committees was thought to need freer hands in the selection. The election committee should weigh in many criteria and also have a comprehensive approach where the list should mirror a mix of representatives. Since the 2010 election a goal was set that 20% of the candidates on the lists shouldn’t have had a commission of trust before. The formal guidelines also state that the lists should on the whole be balanced with the regard to competence, experience, gender, age, ethnicity, geographical residence, continuity, renewal and other relevant criteria. One respondent said that the candidates should both be well fitted for the task and have the support of the members. The respondent also says that this way the election committee can put less known names on the list as well as oversee the diversity. But the negotiations with the geographical associations are very important also in the phase after the member ballot. The election committee present their proposed ballot at Förbundsstämman where the final list is approved. A respondent says that if the election committee has done a good job there will usually be no changes of the list and changes on the parliament list is very rare.

For the Green party, the popular member ballot decides the ranking on the party lists. The role of the election committees in Stockholm has, after recent internal decisions, been reduced to almost only administration. The arguments for this reform were that the process should be decentralized and rely even more on direct democracy. The election committee receives all nominations, the candidates are asked to write a short presentation of themselves, and the election committees put together this information in an online and paper catalogue which serves as material for the member vote. The party also tries different forms of more personal meetings where the candidates can present themselves for their fellow members. Each voter/member has a number of votes to divide between their favourite candidates, and the cast of votes are hardwired to a gender balance



selection. After the popular member ballot the committees transform the votes into lists. The final selection takes place at a membership meeting, open for all members where the lists are consolidated. The whole party list is confirmed or dismissed. In case of rejection the draft list is remitted back to the election committees.

All of the parties have some formal and informal guidelines when it comes to diversity and representation. The most well-known is the formal rules when it comes to gender balance: the Social democrats and the Green party have rules on 50 – 50 representation of men and women, and the Moderates rules state that no gender should have less than 40 % representation. As shown above, the election committee of the Social democrats in Stockholm also have a number of other formal interests to consider, notably age.

Everyone we've interviewed from the election committees also give a positive view of diversity in general. There is however a tendency to talk first about established categories such as gender and age. Immigration background is often described as more complex, for example difficult to define. One recurring problematization is that in order to have more candidates on the lists the party need a larger member base pool from such groups to draw from. And this work often fall on the local level and the party members with immigrant background are described as essential to recruit and head-hunt a more diverse member base as well as attract additional votes from immigrant communities.

All respondents have examples of more or less informal practices/norms that guide the selection, most obviously the bartering and power struggle that takes place within S an M. But the respondents also discuss how formal practices can hinder what they see as good candidates. All party respondent express need to be more flexible, have more rotation on commissions of trust and that the parties must be more outward looking. All talk about renewal as an important aspect to balance with experience. For the Green party, the weak role of the election committees makes it difficult to adjust for diversity on the final list. This was experienced this year, and was also something one Member of Parliament from the Green party reflected around, as we shall see below.

2.3.2. Elected Representatives on Nominations, Careers and Experiences

The majority of the elected representatives that we've interviewed are Members of parliament. Most had, by the nature of their current position, stood for election to a number of both internal positions within the party and external in general elections. When reflecting on why they think they were first nominated and second elected, most highlights personal networks as the number one key to a political career. This picture is also confirmed by the respondents from the election committees. This network consisted mainly of friends in the party; developed during years of local political activities or during years in the youth organization. Of the five Members of parliament with immigrant background, only one thought that their immigrant background had been an advantage, and then only in relation to the person's strong background in a non-governmental organization, which led to employment at a governmental ministry. On the direct question of whether or not they thought that their connection to groups outside the party (for example for outreach purposes; reaching new target groups etc.) had been considered when nominated them, most disregarded the possibility. For them, that might be important later on in the general elections, but in order to end up on the party lists, internal connections within the party were paramount, almost to the exclusion of everything else. Respondent from the electoral committees also often describe networks outside the party



rather as a complement and bonus. These internal connections were described as “having friends within the party” or, when it came to being re-nominated, to having been visible and active locally during their term in parliament. These networks seem to have taken considerable time to establish. In one case the most important network dated back to the time in the youth organization and in another to the long career at the local level. In the case of another interviewee, his work within a non-governmental organization outside the party seemed to play a more important role than networks within the party, although since he had also worked at a Government Ministry, he most likely had those as well. He was also placed high up on the list, a result which he claims surprised him, since he apparently had expected to end up lower down after the different fractions of the party had had their say on the first version of the list. These situations with fractions competing for top positions highlight the importance of networks and of having a firm support within different parts of the party. In this particular case the candidate seems to have anticipated certain fractions to work against him, which later turned out not to be the case. One Member of Parliament ran for office without having previously been active locally, although she had worked for many years as a high profile editorial writer at one of Sweden’s largest national newspapers, which ensured the necessary visibility within the party.

The interviewees also spoke of the support they had received from people within the party, encouraging them to accept nominations and stand for election. For all of them, this active encouragement had played a major part in their choosing to do so. Since nominations and positions to fill are a scarce resource in political parties, all of them had experienced running against another candidate. One spoke candidly of fractions within the party, of “getting used to the environment”, but most of them downplayed the experience of opposition. For the Member of Parliament who previously spoke about being “admitted into” the party, this was also the main explanation she saw why she, as a non-white woman, held her position of power in a society still influenced by power structures: “It’s not enough just to be competent or work here. There are many of us who work hard and are competent without making it on to the lists. So in a way, I am here because someone stepped aside and let me in.”

Most of them also downplayed the significance of their first elected position, that in a local council (municipality). Although the support received to run for their first elected position must have been an important and probably positive personal experience for them at the time, they did not seem to find this especially noteworthy. One reason perhaps being, and in one interview almost explicitly stated, the sheer number of elected positions that political parties at the local level have to fill. This, in combination with a shrinking membership base, is becoming an increasingly acute challenge for contemporary party politics, as well as for the working of the local government. The real challenge, one informant reflected, came after being elected. Voluntary party work at the municipality level consists of long hours, many meetings, and evenings and weekend dedicated to unpaid work. As an unpaid local politician, you may also end up working with everything from plumbing to city planning, education and culture. This makes it particularly difficult to recruit younger representatives and young elected politicians are more likely to quit in the middle of their term in office. However, it could also contribute to the possible barrier discussed above with the “survival of the fittest”, making political participation as an either-or choice – either a more than 100 per cent commitment, or none at all.



As seen in this section, having an established network within the party was the most important favourable factor for eventually being elected Member of Parliament. These networks seem to be mostly informal in nature; connections made during a number of years of active participation, rather than belonging to one of the formal networks within the parties, although these were ascribed a general influence. In the cases examined here the conditions for career advancement were favourable. For others, however, the lack of similar networks may constitute a considerable barrier for advancement in the party. The networks described seem to require a long time of party commitment. Therefore, the importance of these networks may become a mechanism of exclusion for people recently arriving to the country. Furthermore, the informal nature of these network may work as a barrier as well; previous research indicates that informal structures are sometimes more difficult to identify, address and change. On a more positive note, the active personal support and encouragement the interviewees have experienced demonstrates the ability of individuals within the party to increase the participation of people with migrant background, through offering both political and “moral” support, nominating them for positions as well as persuading them to accept the nomination. At the local level, the support needed to become elected is perhaps less than the support needed to become successful in the political work that follows.

2.4. Immigrants as Elected Representatives

In this section, we turn directly to the question of diversity and political participations. We ask our interviewees if and how they feel their immigrant backgrounds have affected their political career (for example, do they themselves consider them representatives of other people with immigrant backgrounds, or have they felt any pressure from the party to act as representatives). We also discuss how the political parties view diversity (is it important, if so, why, and are there any supporting network to ensure diversity in representation?)

2.4.1. The Elected Representatives on Diversity

The issue of migrant representation was touched upon in the interviews. One informant spoke of actively choosing *not* to become involved in social or integration issues (as a very active local politician it was almost the only area that he had not at one time or another worked in), and in general, all the interviewees distanced themselves from being a representative of immigrants. At the same time, when asked what they thought their own personal political career meant to the political participation of migrants, all agreed that having Members of Parliament with a migrant background was probably an important positive factor. One spoke at length of the importance of role models, other mentioned the positive reactions they often got from people with a migrant background. Even the Member of Parliament who had actively distanced himself from the issue of integration spoke of visits to ethnic organization in times of election and of being interviewed in Turkish media as a way to reach new groups, hinting of a pragmatic approach to outreach activities and of somehow feeling the responsibility towards the party to help reach new groups. The distancing from integration issues while at the same time acknowledging the importance of migrant representation may seem contradictory. A possible interpretation, however, is that the informants work towards a



‘normalization’ of migrant representatives in all areas of political life. For this purpose it may be seen as a strategic act to avoid integration issues.

The interviewees all felt that their political party was open to people with migrant background, mostly emphasising the nature of political work: that parties need (rather desperately) new members and that there is, especially at a local level, a lot of work needing to be done and positions to be filled. Most thought political participation for immigrants might be easier at the local level, where the competition was not as fierce, perhaps especially in smaller towns. At the same time, it was mentioned that the reception of immigrants is better in areas with a high percentage of immigrants, specifically in and around the major cities.

Interestingly, this belief in local politics as being more open to people with migrant background is not confirmed in the latest statistics on migrant representation in Sweden (see table 7). Historically, migrant representation has been higher in municipal councils, but after the latest election in 2010, migrant representation is actually slightly higher in Parliament. It is, of course, easier for anyone to become elected at the local level than at the national level. Taking this into account, the conditions at the local level do not seem particularly favourable for migrants. A possible interpretation, supported by the statements of the politicians, could be that the main problem for the parties is how to attract new members and getting people involved in politics in the first place. This can be related to the shift from mass parties towards increasingly professionalized parties that have occurred in both Sweden and many other Western democracies. Parties have become less dependent on their members and the slimmed down organizations tend to be more closed as they downplay their traditional tasks of mobilizing, recruiting and socializing new members (Soininen 2012).

Most politicians with immigrant background downplayed the experience of discrimination, xenophobia or prejudicial attitudes within their party. While acknowledging that it does exist, as political parties mirror general structures within society, its importance and scope is downplayed. Many use general terms such as “it happens in all the parties”, or, “well, naturally I’ve encountered it sometimes, but nothing I couldn’t handle”. Asked again for specific examples, they generally downplay its importance even more or decline to offer them. This is in all likelihood not because they have not encountered xenophobia or prejudice, but because it may, in hindsight, seem trivial, especially when viewed in light of their subsequent success.¹⁰

One mentions instances of racism experienced at the local level while working together with representatives from other parties. While being encouraged to take on a leadership position within her own party (despite being woman, non-white and relatively young), she encountered opposition from men at high positions from the other parties in the local community. She has chosen to see that opposition as a “good education”, teaching her how to handle opposition and how to use opposition as an inspiration for further commitment to feminism and anti-racism. While being averse to using formal quotas when it comes to immigrant background, she reasons around visible minorities, talking about checking political assemblies for “hair colour” (“In the higher positions, there’s almost no black hair”). And she still feels that some sort of mechanism needs to be in place:

¹⁰Some of the answers suggest that many have experienced instances of what researcher calls “micro aggressions” – small ways of demonstrating alienation. Examples mentioned in the research as well as in the interviews include questions such as “where are you *really* from?” or comments made about immigrants in their presence.



“The understanding of these issues have to increase, and how different structures combine to cause discrimination and alienation. Sometimes I still feel that I am either an immigrant or a woman; either diversity or gender equality.”

Most representatives with immigrant background are averse to using quotas for migrants (although often in favour of using it for gender). One talks about lack of diversity as an “unintended consequence”, even in a political party of generally aware people. He often compares immigrant background with gender and all-male assemblies: how even in organization where the importance of equal representation is taken for granted, there is still a need of some sort of “constant vigilance”. Without formal “safety measures”, representation can always drop from one election to another. This was the case for the Green party, where the number of representatives with immigrant background dropped significantly on their most recent party lists. This is especially challenging for a party that combines a deep belief in democratic representation and diversity with limited means of the election committees to balance the list accordingly. Apart from gender, direct democracy can paradoxically lead to a list that is seen as democratically deficit.

2.4.2. The Political Parties on Diversity

All three parties agree that diversity is important for all levels and entities within the parties. On the direct question of whether or not diversity is important, all answer “yes”. Furthermore, most did not try to qualify the answer (with additions such as “the most important part is the right person on the job”, or “competence has to be the most important aspect”). Diversity was important, and, when asked why, they offered a number of reasons. The most recurring one that all seem to agree on is that it is a question of trust and legitimacy. Our national parliament has to mirror the population at large, if that population are to trust in the decisions it makes. This is true also of the political parties. One representative of M, who has made a quite drastic turn when it comes to image in the last decade, re-launching themselves as the “New Moderates”, explicitly says that for citizens to trust the “new party”, they have to include all aspects of society, and they have to be seen doing it. Other reasons include arguments of justice; it is unjust not to have diversity, and of utility; the decisions made are better if a diverse group, representing and bringing in new perspectives and with different experiences, have taken them.

How far the work for diversity goes differs within the parties. Some work actively on also having diversity when it comes to employees at the national secretariats; others have not so far considered it when recruiting for the secretariat, but express interest in the other parties’ work on recruitment when the topic comes up in the interviews.

Some also talks about “real diversity”, meaning that what is needed is not just people with and without immigrant background, men and women, younger and older people etc., but people with different ways of discussing and doing things, opinions, etc. – and creating an environment where these differences are seen as an advantage. The interview from the national secretariat of the Green party was sure that it *was* an advantage, but also that people in general, no matter how much they valued diversity, were instinctively drawn to people who resembled themselves. Therefore, to achieve real diversity, you need both diversity in backgrounds and experiences and an organizational culture that was accepting of these differences. If you managed to achieve it, these different perspectives and experiences would strengthen the party. He used the example of P4, a Swedish



radio channel that reaches a large part of Swedish citizens commuting to work by car. If the party wanted to get news across, the news program of that channel ought to be the obvious choice. But since most of the people who work with communication in the Green Party lives in a bigger city (as do most of the Green Party members) and commute by train, that alternative seldom came up in the discussion, because it was not how *they* consumed news. Diversity means increasing the different perspectives and experiences offered, if and only if you actually embraced these differences.

All parties also have formal measures to increase diversity when it comes to gender. For the Social democrats and the Moderates, this includes formal women's organizations within the party as well as guaranteed minimum representation on the ballot lists. For the Green party, it is the only formal limitation of the direct democracy in their trial elections (it is impossible to submit a vote that does not have 50 % women on it).

For the Social democrats and the Moderates, the women's divisions can be seen as a formalized way of fulfilling the favourable factors mentioned in the stories of the individual Members of Parliament. They encourage women to become candidates, offers personal support and training, as well as profiling and supporting the candidates. The Green party, while choosing not to have any other formal divisions within the party except the youth organization, offers similar support in their mentorship program for women.

Similar formal support networks appear to be missing when it comes to immigrant background. Furthermore, the legitimacy of organization based on immigrant background/ethnicity appears to be fundamentally lower than organization based on age or gender. In a way, the reluctance to organize around immigrant background mirrors historical objections to organization based on gender: "can one politician with immigrant background really represent all migrants"? "Do we run the risk of being seen as "just" immigrant politicians?", "Does not 'competence' has to come first, and how do we find competent candidates with immigrant background?", "We need more active members with immigrant background to choose our candidates from, but how do we recruit members with immigrant backgrounds if they don't feel that political parties represent them?". The fact that those difficulties are not volunteered when it comes to gender probably reflects the success of Swedish parties in normalizing gender and representation – a process that has taken us some fifteen to twenty years.

Linked to the comparison between gender and immigrant background are the issue of intersectionality; that is, the awareness that power structures combine to create different experiences of being woman, white, with or without immigrant background etc. Some of the women's divisions work actively at their own diversity and reaching women with immigrant background, and politicians with and without immigrant background highlights the need not only to reach men with immigrant background. Even so, handling combined power structures is still a challenge facing most of the political parties today.



3. Ethnic Associations on the Political Participation of Migrants/TCN

SIOS is an umbrella organisation gathering some twenty ethnic organisations in Sweden totalling approximately 80 000 members. SIOS activities and political work focuses three areas: 1) people's ability to keep their native language, as a resource that is currently not being used by society. 2) Culture, and the view of culture as something changeable. Within a democratic framework, differences must be allowed to exist, a sort of equality in differences, achieved mainly through dialogue. 3) Democracy, specifically linked to language: how can people not fluent in Swedish still be allowed to express themselves and influence the society in which they live and work? For migrants arriving late in life this is of course especially important. Some of them may never be as fluent in Swedish as they are in the native language. If it takes 30 000 words to understand an editorial article in the major Swedish newspaper, how can these people still understand and influence politics? For them, the tentative efforts of Swedish political parties in times of elections (mainly manifested in short information on the party available in a few different languages) are not enough. This echoes the experience of one of the interviewed Members of Parliament; even imbued with political interest from a lifetime of political commitment, eventually resulting in him having to flee his native country, the road to being sufficiently fluent in Swedish to be able to express that commitment was long.

3.1. Differences Among and Within the Ethnic Associations

The 15 people representing 15 different ethnic associations all of them acknowledge the differences between them. The representative from SIOS describes it as "no organisation has met the same Sweden". This also affects the meeting with the Swedish democracy: there is going to be huge differences in resources, contacts and experience between, for example, the Kurdish Association, with a long history of political participation in Sweden and many within them active in party politics, and the Chinese Association, representing members with no prior experience of a multi party democracy. But they also acknowledge differences within their groups, depending on former education background, social group, and view on their living in Sweden. One talked of different "waves" of immigrants from his country, the first coming mainly for work, from a working class background, looking to save money and return to their "home land", when war erupted, and a second wave of immigrants came to Sweden, this time often from the middle class, realizing that they had to make a permanent home here. However, even while paying attention to these differences, they still shared many experiences – and many frustrations.

3.2. Language as a Barrier

One such shared experience was the role of language. Many in their associations came to Sweden as an adult, making the mastering of a new language a challenge in itself. And this was especially



hindering in party politics, which was seen almost as language of its own. Not only does political work within a bureaucracy require a firm grasp of almost impossible nuances, many also felt that the political parties placed emphasis on eloquence and being able to speak in front of large group of people.

3.3. The Glass Ceiling

Some of the representatives of the ethnic associations were also active in a political party. Others had friends or acquaintances that were active. They felt that most political parties welcomed them when they become active, and offered some means of having a career within the party. However, at a certain point, these opportunities disappeared. They spoke of having friends allowed to the middle of the party, but never to the top; always stopping short of the top positions. This experience echos the historical experiences of women, sometimes called the glass ceiling – advancing within a company or political party, until they eventually hit an invisible barrier, preventing them from reaching the top.

3.4. “We’re here”

Many political parties talk of wanting to become better at reaching different groups and recent citizens, but few use SIOS member organizations as a way to do so. When they contact the political parties themselves, they are met with little interest. Many of the ethnic associations do important work to further political interest amongst their members; translating information about the parties or the Swedish political system, inviting political representatives to talk at meetings etc. They are also willing to take on a bigger part is this, working as an intermediate link between the parties and recent immigrants in Sweden. In this, they still feel that they are largely underused by the political parties themselves.

3.5. Shared Commitment

While testifying to many shared frustrations when it comes to the political parties work with diversity, these frustrations can be seen as an advantage; they also testify of a shared commitment to furthering political activity amongst their members and of wanting to make a difference in the Swedish political system. If responded to, SIOS and the different ethnic associations can be an important resource when it comes to furthering diversity within political parties.



4. Summary: Favourable and Unfavourable Factors

4.1. Entry and Access

The inconclusive nature of local political work as an entry point

In the interviews, a belief was expressed that being nominated and elected was easier at the local level for people with migrant backgrounds, since competition is scarcer when there are more seats to fill. This was, as shown above, not confirmed in the statistical overview. One possible reason may be that the barrier to parties having a larger proportion of people with immigrant background is not for them to be nominated or elected, but recruited as member and active participants in the first place. This image is confirmed in the shrinking membership base of many political parties. It also represents a possible strong incentive for political parties to actively try to reach new groups and recruit members from different segments of society.

The role of language

For some, the role of language represented a possible barrier. Not only do newly arrived immigrants have to learn a new language, the nature of party political work requires the ability to “weigh their words”, to understand subtle differences and adapt to the cultural milieu of the party organization. When difference is seen as a strength, this opens up for the participation of more recently arrive migrants, making it possible for them to also develop the personal connections needed to eventually be elected Member of Parliament. When it is not, people are likely to stop trying and become active somewhere else.

Party work based on meetings

When asked about possible barriers to become active in a political party, the single most common response was: “the many meeting”. Attending many meetings a week – just for the internal party work – is difficult if you’re establishing yourself in a new country, are in the middle of a career or have children. The fact that the meetings are sometimes heavily influenced by local informal structures and exclusionary practices further increases the problem.

4.2. The Party Structure

The internal focus of nominations

Contrary to what might have been expected, the people interviewed did not feel that their migrant background had been capitalized upon in order for the party to reach new groups in a following election. Outreach potential might be important later on, when campaigning during an election, but it was the internal connections shown above that were seen as paramount in order to end up as a nominated candidate. The election committees themselves reasoned around the importance of



having networks within more groups in society, but since they still acknowledge that their role is often about weighing internal party interests against each other, this confirms the internal focus of nomination processes. This internal focus of the nomination processes might hinder the election of candidates with their strongest support outside of the party (for example, through work in non-party political non-governmental organizations) and prevent a strong support from different ethnic groups from being considered an advantage for the party.

The importance of networks, and their informal character

Another factor identified is the importance of personal networks, and the informality of their nature. The networks mentioned were described as “friends”, connection established during many more or less informal meetings during a long period of time, either from long service at the local level or a long time within the youth organization. This may make it difficult for people to gain access to the political party, and may discourage some from trying, if you have to have been active for years to be nominated for a position.

Safety measures needed for guaranteed representation

It is a strong recommendation of this report that some sort of “safety measures” for minimum level of representation is introduced for immigrant background, similar to those of gender. The use of internal party quotas for women the last fifteen years and their subsequent widespread acceptance is an important experience to draw from. This is especially important when the influence of the election committee is limited by formal or informal practices, limiting their ability to look at the entire list.¹¹

4.3. Immigrant Background and Diversity

The role of individuals and individual explanations

The Members of Parliament represent the successful cases. From these, it is however possible to discern some possible barriers. The factors representing favourable conditions for our cases may in other cases hinder the participation of people with migrant background. One such factor is the importance placed on individual personalities and traits. Explaining their success in terms of their own personality – not being a person who gives up when faced with resistance, for example – may undermine the ability to consider structural problems or explanations. This individual focus was also seen when describing support from other people – individuals who nominated them and encouraged them to accept the nominations.

¹¹ Please not that these “safety measures” does not automatically mean the introduction of formal quotas for immigrant background. The Moderates, for example, is traditionally skeptic towards the use of formal affirmative action, while still having regulations and informal practices that ensure equal representation when it comes to gender.



Diversity as the norm

All parties agree that diversity when it comes to representation and participation is important. It relates to issues of legitimacy – for the political system and the specific party, justice, and utility. That diversity is the official norm for the party and unanimously seen as an advantage is clear. Paradoxically, this can perhaps lead to a reluctance to be aware of instances of racism and structural barriers within the party. While all parties agree that diversity needs to regard both gender, age and immigrant background, immigrant background were seen as the most problematic. The obvious example is the reluctance to organize around immigrant background within the party, or to acknowledge the need of it. When talking about diversity, it was more common to volunteer gender or age as an example of it.

The need of formalized support networks

Having networks that encourage, support and profile candidates with immigrant background similar as those for women, can perhaps address the challenge of simultaneously advancing diversity as a norm and acknowledging instances of racism. One example is the immigrant committee of the Social democrats in Stockholm. Its organizational strength ensures that it can both influence political policy and the number of representatives with immigrant backgrounds.



Challenges for diversity





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