

VIEWING NOBLE NARRATIVES IN SECURITY TERMS: SWEDEN AS POSTER CHILD OF EUROPEAN IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION POLICY

By looking at the trajectory of the 'Moral Superpower' image of Sweden, particularly in relation to its historically generous asylum and migration policies, this paper will examine how technocratic practices of state ranking and classification can work to identify a state as 'moral' or 'generous', and investigate the ways in which this identification enables citizens to individualise this progressive and tolerant identity and thus distance themselves from practices of marginalisation, exclusion or violence carried out in day-to-day life and in the name of their security. Through adopting a dynamic, sociological approach to practices of identification, it will argue that such a classification permeates all of society as a type of governmentality; a governmentality which sees the production of a happy, productive population and enabling intolerance to be seen as something which exists only 'over there'.

This paper will set out primarily that it is not simply Sweden as being 'good' that forms the foundations of this identity, but crucially Sweden as 'the *best* at being good'. Indeed, it is through its relations with others that the category of 'Sweden' is identified as such and such an identity can only be thought of in comparative terms. This paper will then set out how through practices of ranking, classification and fulfilling of criteria as set out by various international and European bureaucracies, Sweden is able to retain its image as moral exemplar, even though discourse and indeed practices around migration and integration have in Sweden, as with the rest of Europe, become more restrictive within recent years and that the notion of Sweden as a 'Moral Superpower' still lingers, despite attempts to relegate it to the dustbin of history and despite the moves towards a more Europeanised asylum policy.

Sweden as 'Morally Pure': Tracing the Moral Superpower Trajectory

The historical 'moral superpower' image of Sweden in International Relations which came about after the end of the second world war is a topic which has been subject to a broad range of scholarship (Ruth 1984; Nilsson 1991; Dahl 2006). Centred on its activist foreign policy from Vietnam to South Africa, this interventionist approach gained Sweden this label ahead of, among others Canada, Norway and the Netherlands (Dahl 2006). Indeed, Sweden's model could not be seen as merely a passive model, but as a guide or role model which is actively promoted. As a small state with no colonial history and a non-aligned security doctrine which has been in place since the Napoleonic wars, Sweden came to see itself as 'the conscience of the world' traditionally taking an active role since the second world war in highlighting the plight of powerless actors, standing in solidarity with the dispossessed and making its duty to speak out against foreign interventions. David Lumsdaine (1993) also points out how Sweden's generous foreign aid practices between 1949 and 1989 were shaped by humanitarian concerns within the country and were closely linked with what he labels a 'moral vision' in international politics<sup>1</sup>

This socialist, ideological model cherished amongst the Social Democrats (who aside from a few years in the early 1990s when Carl Bildt's Conservative led coalition were in power monopolized government until 2006) reached its climax under Olof Palme in the mid 1980s

---

<sup>1</sup> According to Eurostat, Sweden can still be seen to spend the highest proportion of its GNI on official development assistance, of the 27 EU member states (Eurostat, 2010, p.150). This was also seen in earlier reports, with Sweden spending the most on development assistance from 2005 to 2007 (Eurostat, 2009, p.126). In the 2010 report, Sweden was praised as being one of only 4 EU states to reach targets set by the United Nations, with Sweden the only state to actually *exceed* these targets (Eurostat, 2010, p.150).

VIEWING NOBLE NARRATIVES IN SECURITY TERMS: SWEDEN AS POSTER CHILD OF EUROPEAN IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION POLICY

who positioned Sweden publicly as detached from both superpowers throughout the Cold War, with especially vociferous critique of US foreign policy at the time.

Intertwined with the 'Moral Superpower' image in the Cold War era was also a self-identification of being an efficient and 'modern' state, with the most evolved democratic infrastructure and the most highly developed welfare system (Ruth 1984; Löfgren 1993). In this respect, a higher life expectancy, better hygiene, better healthcare and a higher standard of education were encapsulated into Swedish state identity<sup>2</sup>. Towns (2001) argues that the entry of Sweden into the European Union also saw the emergence of Sweden as placing itself at the forefront of gender equality, being ranked as the most gender equal state in two new indices which materialized in 1995; the Gender related development index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM)<sup>3</sup>.

Gradually absorbed into the 'moral' self-representation is the image around Sweden's generous refugee policy; one that was formulated in the 1970s and 1980s, being justified primarily not in terms of economic prosperity or as a cheap labour force for the country but sold in terms of common humanity, solidarity and egalitarian intent.<sup>4</sup> As Pred (2000: 44) points out, since the 1950s Sweden has differentiated between 'quota refugees' and those refugees who arrive individually at the border with no guarantee of residency, with the former category compiled of people whom the Swedish government committed to resettle directly in a local municipality- in agreement with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) once all other options have been exhausted (Migrationsverket 2012). In the late 60s and 70s however numbers of individual arrivals began to outnumber quota

---

<sup>2</sup> Sweden still has the highest proportion of 18-year olds in tertiary education, spends by far the highest proportion of its GDP on care for the elderly and ranks within the top two for social protection expenditure compared with other EU member states (Eurostat, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> Today, interesting results in terms of gender equality in Sweden can be seen in data published by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, who examine the number of women in Parliaments in various states. In 2011, Sweden can be seen to have the third highest proportion of females in Parliament (45% female), of 188 states surveyed, behind only Rwanda and Andorra (IPU, 2011). In 2010 and 2011, Sweden could be seen as having the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest proportion of female MPs behind only Rwanda (IPU 2010, IPU, 2009). Furthermore, Sweden was the only state, according to the Fundamental Rights Agency to introduce legislation against discrimination covering several areas of society which actually went *beyond* the scope of the European Parliament's Gender Equality Directive (FRA, 2009, p.62). Resonating strongly with this are public opinion polls according to which, Sweden is said to have the highest proportion of citizens vis-a-vis other EU member states to be in favour of gender equality in pay, with 99% agreeing that females and males should receive equal pay for carrying out the same job (European Commission, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> Important to point out here is that before 1970, the vast majority of immigration to Sweden was a result of labour immigration whereby Swedish companies actively recruited from neighbouring European countries (Kamali, 2009). Immigration controls were introduced however in 1967, coinciding somewhat with the oil crisis of 1973, and labour migration practically ceased in the immediate period following these events. Post 1970 therefore the bulk of Swedish immigration was the result of refugee intake and family reunification (Kamali 2009: 146). However, in the 1970s, the vast majority (80%) of all refugees came from other European nations, primarily Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. It was from 1980 onwards however that significant numbers of immigrants arrived from outside of Europe with around 50% of immigrants coming from non-European nations (Kamali 2009: 145)

VIEWING NOBLE NARRATIVES IN SECURITY TERMS: SWEDEN AS POSTER CHILD OF EUROPEAN IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION POLICY

refugees, coinciding with military coups and ethnic conflicts. Throughout the 1970s, the passing of legislation which saw non-citizens resident in Sweden for three years the right to vote in, as well as stand for office in local elections cemented this 'progressive' identity (Pred 2000: 45). The dominant Social Democratic governance of the time ensured that 'Sweden' was seen as a profoundly 'equal' society, with such notions of 'equality' viewed as a source of pride by the Swedish media:

'Editorials [during the 1970s] were often characterised by a pronounced self-righteousness, an unshakeable belief that Sweden really was the best in the world at formulating immigrant and refugee policies. A fundamentally ethnocentric worldview was manifested' (Bjork, cited in Pred 2000: 44).

The mid-1970s also saw the adoption of multiculturalism as a political doctrine whereby 'immigrants' were given the opportunity to decide the extent to which they adopted a Swedish cultural identity. The term '*invandrare*' was initiated as something forward-thinking and egalitarian in the late 1960s, introduced by the Ministry for Employment and adopted shortly afterwards by several other governmental agencies, with the aim of moving away from the supposed dehumanizing term 'imported foreign labour' (Molina 1997: 23). With the word immigrant or '*invandrare*' becoming divorced from actual processes of migration, and with the absence of ethnically determined categories of identity within Swedish society, such as for example compared with Britain's ethnicity categories of 'British Asians', 'Black Caribbean' or 'Black African', the terms 'immigrant' and 'Swede' came to represent two mutually exclusive categories. An immigrant could not be a 'Swede' and vice versa. However, an 'immigrant's' culture was according to the doctrine of multiculturalism, one which was to be respected and tolerated.

Sweden as 'the best at being good': A governmentality of self-righteousness and reassurance

Ann-Sofie Dahl (2006) likens Sweden's 'Moral Superpower' discourse with the Dutch notion of '*gidsland*'; a Lutheran almost missionary-like zeal (though without the same support of free trade as a means of universal progress). The Swedish 'Moral Superpower' narrative presumed Sweden as a state to be more 'enlightened' than other nations and thus rendering it obliged to 'spread the message' and to better humankind (Nilsson 1991 Dahl 2006). This 'enlightenment' enables a great deal of political discourse within Sweden on migration and asylum to be based on justifications not in terms of international obligations or labour forces, but in terms of human solidarity and support of fellow human beings in crisis. It also sees a far greater level of political debate centred around the human rights and social privileges of refugees that can be seen in any of the other member states.

Using the work of Foucault, one argument that I make in my paper is that Sweden's positioning at the top of various rankings or indicators its identification as most generous, most tolerant, most welcoming as well as most gender-equal, most modern, most egalitarian, cleanest and least corrupt can be seen to penetrate society as a form of governmentality, or 'conduct of conduct'. Modern forms of governmentality rely on stable identities and a population which sees itself as 'the best' will of course place more trust in its political institutions, be more satisfied with life in general, be more productive and content with the

VIEWING NOBLE NARRATIVES IN SECURITY TERMS: SWEDEN AS POSTER CHILD OF EUROPEAN IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION POLICY

manner in which they are governed<sup>5</sup>. There may of course be problems in society, but 'Sweden' will have the best approach in dealing with these problems. Sweden may be 'bad' of course, but it is nowhere near as bad as Italy, France or Great Britain (although it may be in danger of going that way if the 'good people' don't take enough interest in ensuring that this is not the case). This does not insinuate that the image of 'moral' or 'generous' is invoked by political elites in a contrived, instrumentalised way as a form of governance to which citizens obey but instead sees an art of governing as a strategy of action or conduct in relations. It is not top down, but permeates throughout all of society. Foucault defined governmentality as 'All the practices by which it is possible to constitute, to define, to organize, to institutionalise strategies that individuals, in their constitutive freedom, could have in relations with others' (Foucault cited in Bigo 2002).

For Foucault, such a concept of 'governmentality' defines a notion of 'government' which had taken place between the mid sixteenth century and end of the eighteenth century. The concept was forged to endeavour to understand the features of liberalism as a mentality of government (see Dean 2009), whereby it is presumed that society and state are strictly separate, thus requiring legitimate political power to constantly validate itself (see Rainbow and Rose, 2003: xi). For Foucault, it is the norms and values circulated through such a liberal 'governmentality' which have shaped us into the kind of individuals we take ourselves to be (Rainbow and Rose 2003: xi).

For Foucault, this technique of power emerged from the caring, protective rationalities of the pastorate, which he positioned as a prerequisite to the various historical forms of governmentality. A modality of power which the author traces back to medieval Christendom sees the organisation of the day-to-day conduct of populations as akin to the manner in which a Priest (conceived as a shepherd) cares for his flock, or parish through promulgating rationalities of care and gaining detailed knowledge of each member as individuals through confessional practices (see Delumeau and Nicholson 1990). The corollary to such a modality of power is that obedience, self-control, personal submission,

---

<sup>5</sup> According to Eurobarometer, the Swedes had the second highest satisfaction rate with the lives they lead, in comparison with the other member states, after Denmark (European Commission, 2011, p.2). They were also classified as being the most optimistic of the member states, with the highest proportion saying that they feel the next 12 months will be better than the last (European Commission, 2011, p.15). Trust in political institutions was also high in opinion polls, with Swedes the most likely of the 27 member states to say that they trusted their national Parliament (European Commission, 2011, p.46), the second most likely of any EU member state to say that they trusted their government (European Commission 2011, p.45), as well as the second most likely to say they trusted local authorities and the United Nations (European Commission 2011, p.48-49). Interestingly, Swedes were the second most likely nation to state that they trusted TV (European Commission 2011, p.42) and had the third highest satisfaction rate with how democracy works in their country (European Commission 2011, p.71).

VIEWING NOBLE NARRATIVES IN SECURITY TERMS: SWEDEN AS POSTER CHILD OF EUROPEAN IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION POLICY

mortification and a renunciation of the self and the world by the flock are encouraged. It was through institutional Christianity that the ideas of pastorship, the care of others, and a dynamics of self-decipherment and self-renunciation were fully developed. This power is thus productive in its formation of subjects, endowed with an internal sense of responsibility, obedience and knowledge.

Such a notion of governmentality, which in our empirical case sees the effective management of a population by the creation of subjects who see themselves as most moral, generous and tolerant- can be seen to work through what Foucault labels a *dispositif*; what he defines in *Power/Knowledge* (1980) as 'a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions' (Foucault and Gordon 1980) The important point to note here is that the *dispositif* of governmentality is *heterogenous*, it encompasses scattered practices and diffuse, contradictory narratives within the overall discursive foundation. I make the argument that practices of ranking and classification by European bureaucracies and NGOs form part of this *dispositif* of governmentality; one which sees subjects as able to identify themselves as moral and tolerant and thus ignore or dismiss as 'over there' practices of intolerance, violence and exclusion.

'The Best of a Bad Bunch': Identity as Relational and Transindividual

In terms of what have been identified as the increasingly 'illiberal' practices of EU member states vis-a-vis cross border migration and the rise of far-right and xenophobic parties throughout Europe in contemporary times, such practices are certainly present within such a discursive foundation, but, as the result of processes of classification and rankings do not form the most dominant narratives around migration and asylum in Sweden so long as the country is ranked and classified as 'the best at being good'.

In examining this shift to the right, the admission of Sweden into the European Union in 1995 was said to have resulted in both the attempt to consign the 'moral' image to the dustbin of history in terms of foreign policy as well as a marked discursive shift in political language on refugee and asylum policy. The notion of refugees as being a 'problem' can be seen to have emerged during this time, with greater European cooperation and harmonisation also been argued as warranting a 'race to the bottom' of restrictive migration and asylum policy with 'more Europe' been argued as equalling 'less migration' (Hansen 2009). Migration scholars writing from within Sweden talked about the 'thorny road to Europe', and the 'worrying shift' towards what they label 'illiberal practices' which are more in line with those of Denmark, France and the United Kingdom (Ålund and Schierup, 2010)

In present times, we have witnessed the introduction of by the Swedish Parliament of a financial support or 'maintenance' requirement as a condition of family reunification in line with other European member states (EMN Sweden, 2010, p.14)<sup>6</sup>. Sweden as a member of the European Union participates with other member states at a meta level in activities which

---

<sup>6</sup> In practice however, there are a larger number of exceptions to the requirement than other member states including family members of minors, refugees, quota refugees, persons enjoying international protection and persons who have a residence permit and have spent four years in Sweden with a residence permit, as well as exemptions in cases where there are exceptional grounds (EMN Sweden, 2010, p.15)

VIEWING NOBLE NARRATIVES IN SECURITY TERMS: SWEDEN AS POSTER CHILD OF EUROPEAN IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION POLICY

administratively serve to 'securitize' the migrant and thus generate a general sense of unease around the notion of migration, for example the implementation of the the VIS (Visa Information System), the active participation in FRONTEX projects involving border surveillance and forced repatriation flights following failed asylum applications and working with airlines to prevent undocumented migrants from boarding flights to Sweden at the point of departure (see European Migration Network, 2010)

And certainly, many migration scholars writing from within Sweden talked about an end to 'Swedish exceptionalism' and the increase in racial hostilities following the discursive moves towards more negatively charged rhetoric around migration and asylum. In terms of outwardly xenophobic and far-right political parties, 2010 saw the election into Parliament for the first time *Sverige Demokraterna*, the Sweden Democrats, with its blatant anti-immigration rhetoric such as calls for 'a multicultural world, not a multicultural society' (See [Sverigedemokraterna.se](http://Sverigedemokraterna.se) 2010), resulting in inevitably an increase in the number of debates around migration and integration in the Riksdag and a gradual discursive shift of the mainstream political parties towards the right regarding the subject.

In terms of statistics however, there is very little difference in number of foreigners granted residence status in Sweden from 1980 onwards to the present day. Indeed numbers only fell off slightly after a height of 79000, where they peaked in 1994 as the result of war in the former Yugoslavia in which a new category of 'humanitarian grounds' was added especially as a criterion to permit Bosnians to be granted residency in Sweden. Furthermore, between 2006 and 2009, the number of residence permits given remained above 75 000 annually, with family reunification becoming the primary reason given for granting these permits (Migrationsverket 2010)

And more interestingly, Hansen (2009) points out the reappearance of the 'Moral Superpower' image during the most recent Iraq war, in which stereotypes of Sweden as a humanitarian exemplar were again brought into being. Indeed from 2006 onwards Sweden was heralded as a 'safe haven' for Iraqi refugees in international media. CBC Radio Canada pointed out that 'No country outside the Middle East has been as welcoming to refugees of this war' and Spiegel Online reported that 'Life is so good in Sweden that families are encouraging their friends and relatives to move there'. In addition the BBC praised Sweden's generosity; 'No European country has welcomed as many Iraqi refugees as Sweden' (BBC 2008). This rosy image painted by the press could certainly by no means be seen as propaganda or tokenism and was indeed warranted to some extent, as up to Autumn 2007 Sweden had taken 60 percent of all Iraqi asylum seekers who had arrived in the EU, with Sweden granting positive decisions to between 80 and 90 percent of Iraqi asylum seekers for the years 2006 and 2007 respectively (Hansen 2009: 23)

Indeed, in comparison with the rest of Europe, Eurostat, the statistical arm of the European Union reports that between the years of 2006 to 2011, Sweden as having a significantly higher population growth rate compared to other member states, the second highest after Luxembourg in the most recent report, with the population reported to be forecast to rise over 10% by 2050 along with only 4 other member states. This population growth is stated as being 'mostly due to net migration', unlike all other member states, in the most recent report

VIEWING NOBLE NARRATIVES IN SECURITY TERMS: SWEDEN AS POSTER CHILD OF EUROPEAN IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION POLICY

(Eurostat, 2011b, p.21), or in addition to The Netherlands in the 2008 report (Eurostat, 2008, p.38).

In terms of new citizens, Sweden is stated as having the highest number of citizenships granted per inhabitant compared with all other member states and the highest ratio between the number of citizenships granted by each member state and the respective size of the resident population of non-nationals (Eurostat, 2011b, p.40). In previous reports, when acquisition of citizenship was only examined in absolute terms, Sweden can still be seen as having the 5<sup>th</sup> highest acquisition of citizenship of the 27 member states despite its size, after UK, France, Germany and Spain (Eurostat, 2008, p.78) and the 6<sup>th</sup> highest the previous year (Eurostat 2006-07, p.78).

Eurostat statistics also show Sweden as having a significantly higher population growth rate compared to other member states, the second highest after Luxembourg in the most recent report (Eurostat 2011b, p.17), with the population reported to be forecast to rise over 10% by 2050 along with only 4 other member states (Eurostat, 2008, p.27). This population growth is stated as being 'mostly due to net migration', unlike all other member states, in the most recent report.

In terms of new citizens, Sweden is stated as having the highest number of citizenships granted per inhabitant compared with all other member states and the highest ratio between the number of citizenships granted by each member state and the respective size of the resident population of non-nationals (Eurostat, 2011b, p.40). In previous reports, when acquisition of citizenship was only examined in absolute terms, Sweden can still be seen as having the 5<sup>th</sup> highest acquisition of citizenship of the 27 member states despite its size, after UK, France, Germany and Spain (Eurostat, 2008, p.78) and the 6<sup>th</sup> highest the previous year (Eurostat 2006-07, p.78).

When talking about 'identity' therefore in terms of nation states, it is futile to talk in terms of static or immobile identities. In times when identity is blurred by multiple local and global influences, we must shift our analysis to a dynamic one; one in which there are no given identities only identifications. From the late 1980s and early 1990s, critical constructivists and postmodern scholars within the field of International Relations have successfully argued that the very constitution of the state depends on the continuous construction and differentiation between the state 'self' and others. As opposed to viewing state identity therefore as an already existing set of characteristics, identity is instead viewed as a dynamic process; a practice of boundary drawing which renders the state coherent as a social and political actor. Much of the scholarship of this era examined how states come to see themselves as democratic, liberal and human rights exemplars by a process of continuously defining others who were illiberal, non-democratic and human rights violators (e.g Ashley 1988, Campbell 1992). Traditionally the focus of this work was on how a 'dangerous' or 'threatening' other was brought into being, thus justifying violent practices such as intervention in the name of both state security and human rights.

It was this body of work that played an important role in conceptualising the relational element of identity. In terms of Sweden, its role in International Relations was defined not against a dangerous 'other' but against other states who were less moral, less democratic or

VIEWING NOBLE NARRATIVES IN SECURITY TERMS: SWEDEN AS POSTER CHILD OF EUROPEAN IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION POLICY

less modern. It came to be seen as the 'most progressive' of the progressive states. This body of literature is essential therefore in maintaining that we can only talk about 'moral', 'open' and 'generous' in comparative or *relational* terms. Certainly, in the times of Schengen, Dublin and moves towards a wholly more Europeanised migration and asylum policy, we can no longer speak of any European nation as 'moral' or 'tolerant'. Such adjectives would not make sense in the context of migrant detention, deportation and the rising influence of far-right and xenophobic political parties throughout Europe.

In terms of how 'Sweden' as a category generates an identity of moral or generous therefore, the practice is multi-faceted. The actor labelled 'Sweden', whatever that may be, performs the role for 'the international' of being most moral, most tolerant and most generous, but what International Relations labels the realm of 'the international' legitimises this identity, imposes what Bourdieu calls a 'social essence' (Bourdieu 1984) prescribing what an actor must be via objectivising categories, a process which he labels 'symbolic violence'. This shows that 'all identities are transindividual': there exists no autonomous reality, whose identity would take form outside social processes (Balibar 2001: 50).

Practices of Power employed in Technocratic Processes of Ranking: Sweden as 'the best at being good'

So far, we have argued that Sweden's 'moral narrative' can only be labelled moral in relation to other European states. We can of course only speak in comparative terms. We have also argued that such a moralising narrative can be seen as a type of 'governmentality', which permeates throughout society and is generated, at least in part, as well as 'captured' by practices of labelling by what we have called 'the international'.

In this part of the paper I will look more deeply at the practices encapsulated in these processes of identification and argue that it is only a small number of actors performing bureaucratic and technocratic roles that (re)construct this moral superpower image. The 'international' in International Relations cannot be seen therefore as an intangible category or domain activity separated from the societal. For sure, the category of Sweden is 'generous' vis-a-vis other states, but who or what are involved when we talk this category of Sweden? Who or what are involved when we talk about this 'international'? Who or what are the actors involved in drawing these comparisons, monitoring the practices of states and ranking them against other states?

Twenty years after Walker's groundbreaking demolition of the central tenets of International Relations in *Inside/Outside*, whereby it was shown mainstream International Relations' treatment as ontologically given the system of sovereign states additionally serves to reproduce and preserve the said system, thus excluding alternative ways of framing global politics (Walker 1993), IR as a discipline can still be seen to maintain a strict adherence to its disciplinary boundaries and thus excludes more interesting or alternative framings of global politics as 'not proper IR' (Gagnon 2008).

Through examining the state not as a coherent actor however but as a field of actions, 'the international' comes not to be seen therefore as an abstract category or as a specific domain of activity separated from others, but, in this instance, as a complicated network or field of bureaucracies and technocracies which produce these categories, labels and rankings and thus

VIEWING NOBLE NARRATIVES IN SECURITY TERMS: SWEDEN AS POSTER CHILD OF EUROPEAN IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION POLICY

contribute to the (re)construction of 'Sweden' as a specific actor with a particular set of characteristics, motives, values and behaviours assigned to it.

A great deal of 'critical' scholarship within International Relations has already focused on these practices of ranking and labelling, however mostly in relation to those states placed at the bottom of these indices, drawing attention to the practices of power implicit in naming the most failed, the most fragile, the least progressive or the most corrupt of states. I argue however that practices of power are also at play in measuring 'progress' amongst states, in being labelled the most open, tolerant, equal or 'ahead of the pack'.

Through statistics and indicators; a collection of named, rank-ordered, simplified and processed data about a named social phenomena in a manner which enables the comparison and evaluation of different units (Davis and Kingsbury 2010: 6), Sweden is thus labelled at the 'best' at being 'good' and able to retain a moral superpower image. These rankings and indicators have, albeit in a different context, been shown to have a community mobilizing effect. In terms of a generous image around migration and asylum statistics, indicators generated by Eurostat, the European Agency for Fundamental Rights, Migration Integration Policy Index, UNHCR database, the European Urban Knowledge Network have received a great deal of press attention within Sweden since 2005, enabling headlines such as 'Axen (Swedish MP) proud of Europe's most humanitarian laws' (DN 2010) and 'Sweden is top country at integrating immigrants' (DN 2012)

The final argument I make in this paper is that such processes of identification, classification and ranking by the technocracies and bureaucracies that monitor, compare and rank states-becomes a means of how a population then identifies itself and is able to distance itself from practices of violence and exclusion in their name. I will draw on two prominent examples to illustrate this point, firstly a speech given by Eric Ullenhag, Sweden's Minister for Integration, to an audience consisting of his European counterparts at the launch of the third annual MIPEX (Migration Integration Policy Index)<sup>7</sup> in 2011 in which Sweden was ranked highest for the third year running. This speech, which went some way in producing notions of a 'Swedish exceptionalism' was given in English, and naturally aimed at an audience composed of 'international' or at least the 'European' technocrats. In this case, it is clear that Ullenhag is trying to distance Sweden from the restrictive practices taking place in the rest of Europe and the ranking as top in this specific indicator enables this. This speech is thus worth quoting at some length:

"Europe is at a crossroads and we have a development in Europe that greatly concerns me. We are going from open and tolerant societies to something of a different tune in migration policy. The Swedish government focuses on tolerance and openness in Europe but 24 countries are saying the opposite. Sweden feels like the moon. We have to yell out a bit more.

---

<sup>7</sup> MIPEX is a project produced by the British Council and the Migration Policy Group, in addition to 37 organisations at the national level who undertake research in participation with the Migration Policy Group. The organisation's website claims that the index is a tool to enable comparison of integration policies across all EU member states as well as Norway, Switzerland, Canada and the USA as well as Australia and Japan. The website also explicitly states the normative aims of the project in that it is specifically designed to improve integration policy insofar as it encourages greater transparency by raising public awareness and visibility of national policies thus stimulating debate on government actions (MIPEX, 2011).

VIEWING NOBLE NARRATIVES IN SECURITY TERMS: SWEDEN AS POSTER CHILD OF EUROPEAN IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION POLICY

You could say that Sweden must be doing something wrong if 24 disagree but we are convinced in Sweden that it is a difficult path to go down if we become less tolerant. There are three reasons why we should remain open, and I'll tell you: The first is that we have a responsibility and a moral obligation as human beings to show solidarity with and to open the doors to refugees and people who need protection. But if you don't care about solidarity or any of that stuff, then history has always shown that open and tolerant societies, especially small states like Sweden, are successful when we open our borders. If Europe wants to be one of the most important economies in the world, we must be open to be able to compete with the likes of China, India and Brazil. And lastly, we are getting older all over Europe and have a demographic problem. Migration is key to support those who are retiring."

Secondly, I point to a speech made by Swedish EU Commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom on International Migrants' Day last year aimed at leaders of the other member states<sup>8</sup>:

"Europe is changing; we can't ignore the role migration plays for our growth and European competition in the global arena. Migrants contribute to the economies of receiving nations as employees, entrepreneurs, consumers and investors whilst increasing the diversity of our countries. We must also acknowledge the role migration plays in the future. Our continent is facing a huge demographic problem and we need to be realistic if we are to maintain our standards of living. Migration is the key to this....[T]here can be no reason for failing to respect the rights of everyone living in Europe but unfortunately the recent attacks of migrants in Italy has shown that migrants are too often targeted by campaigns based on hate and xenophobia leading to hostile environments. I have often expressed my concern about this rhetoric. Only strong political leadership can help counter such racist propaganda. Let me take this opportunity to reiterate my call to EU leaders to stand up for diversity and the importance of having open and tolerant democratic societies".

Through being ranked as best therefore, albeit the best of a bad bunch, Sweden is able to formulate a coherent identity as 'generous' and establish a continuity with its pre-EU moral superpower image under Olof Palme. The political elite are legitimately able to pontificate lecture other European leaders on how to be 'moral' and thus ignore practices of violence and marginalisation in their own state. In another context, Didier Bigo, following Paul Veyne has shown how politicians in enacting their roles as spokespersons for, in this empirical case, the most moral or generous state- are not peddling rhetoric or propaganda or crudely instrumentalising power to deceive their intended audience but instead believe in the myths they are propagating as these myths are the way in which they frame their explanations of the social and political world and the way in which they see their own struggles and values (Bigo 2002).

As a form of governmentality which permeates throughout society, the identification of Sweden as 'best' is more interestingly mirrored however in comparative public opinion surveys carried out by the European Commission entitled 'Eurobarometer'. These show the extent to which the 'moral' identification is individualised and re-appropriated in day-to-day

---

<sup>8</sup> This argument made by Cecilia Malmstrom on International Migrants Day is developed further in an article she wrote for the British newspaper *The Guardian*, where she calls on European leaders to not allow 'populist and xenophobic rhetoric' to shape European policy on asylum. She points again to 'recent attacks this time in Hungary and Greece' as evidence for what happens when xenophobic parties gain momentum.

VIEWING NOBLE NARRATIVES IN SECURITY TERMS: SWEDEN AS POSTER CHILD OF EUROPEAN IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION POLICY

life. In the most recent 'Future of Europe' report, Sweden had the highest proportion of people (80%) who agreed with the statement 'People from other ethnic groups enrich the cultural life of my country', (European Commission, 2010: 53), see appendix 1 and the highest proportion of people (77%) to agree with the statement 'immigrants play an important role in developing greater understanding and tolerance with the rest of the world' (European Commission, 2010: 58). In a similar survey undertaken in 2006, Sweden was also the highest country by far to agree with the statement 'Immigrants contribute a lot to our country' (European Commission, 2006: 48)-see appendix 2.

Furthermore, Sweden was the only nation to have the highest proportion of answers to the question 'Which characteristics are most important for being a national of any one country?' saying 'exercising rights' was most important, and the country to place the absolute least importance on having parents of the nationality on question or being raised in the country (European Commission, 2010: 44). In the most recent Eurobarometer biannual report, Swedes were the 3<sup>rd</sup> least likely of the 27 member states to state that 'immigration' was the worst problem facing their country (European Commission, 2011: 35).

### Conclusion

This paper has discussed the way in which the practices of a small number of actors labelled 'the international' or 'the European' can identify a state at most generous, most moral and most tolerant. This enables 'Sweden' as a category to retain to some extent its moral superpower image of the Cold War era. In addition this paper has also shown how such classification can permeate throughout society as a type of governmentality. Indeed, modern forms of governance require stable identities and this paper has argued that those who are labelled most moral individualise this narrative and re-appropriate it in the form of trust for democratic institutions.

Somewhat worryingly and perhaps paradoxically however, such moral narratives have been shown to have the effect of 'othering' practices of violence and exclusion as existing only 'somewhere else', in Italy, Hungary or Greece, but certainly not in Sweden. We may have our problems in Sweden but we are nowhere near as bad as everywhere else. A question that arises therefore is to what extent these practices of ranking, classification and identification not only mask but also enable practices of exclusion. To what extent can this governmentality of self-righteousness, with its moral and noble intentions, actually contribute to the production of a terrain whereby the 'good, welcoming Swede' is differentiated from the *invandrare*, or in-wanderer and actually fuel the problems of stigmatization and marginalization that they claim they want to resolve elsewhere.

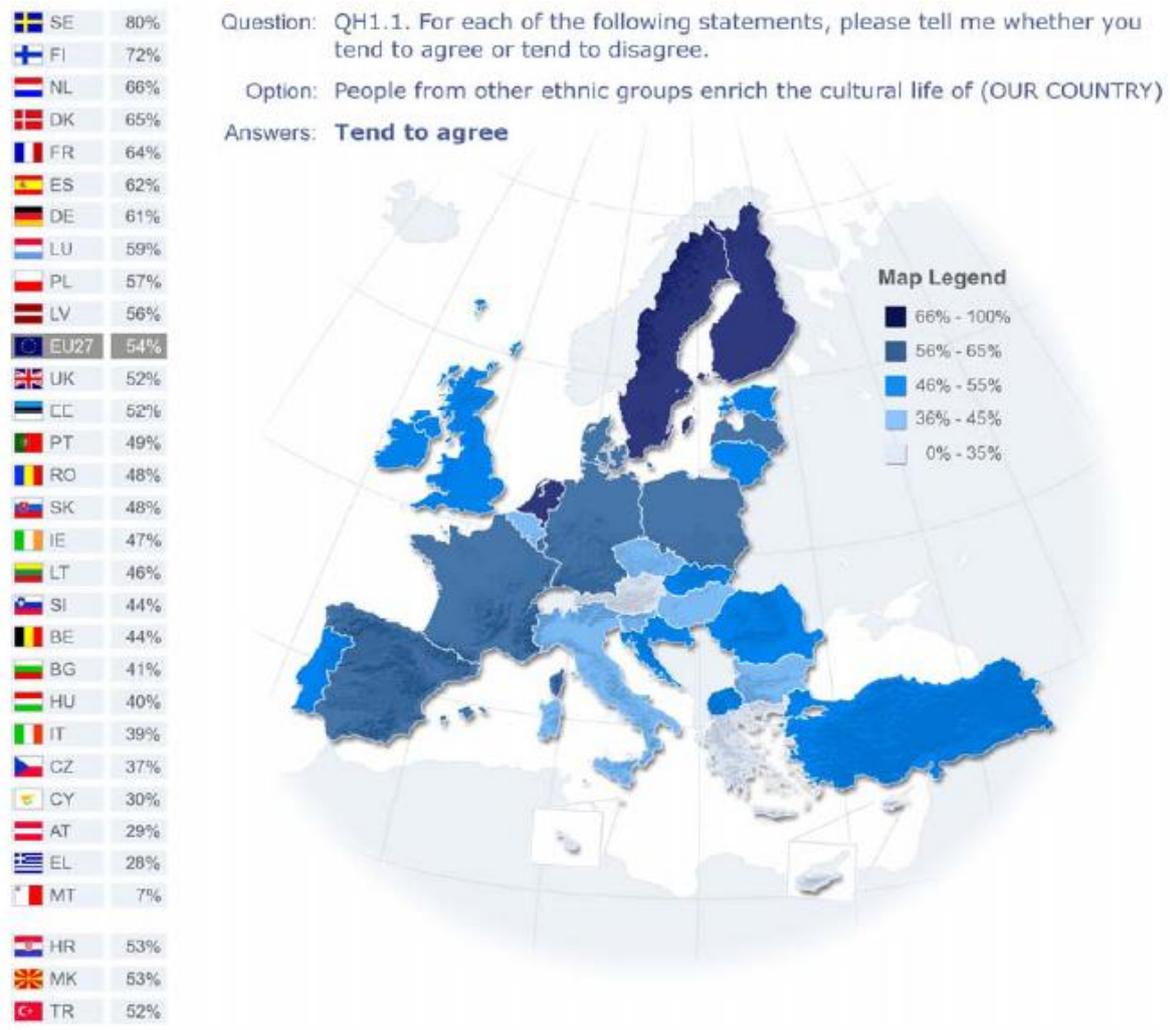
VIEWING NOBLE NARRATIVES IN SECURITY TERMS: SWEDEN AS POSTER CHILD OF EUROPEAN  
IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION POLICY

Bibliography

- Alund, A. and C. Schierup (1993). "The thorny road to Europe: Swedish immigrant policy in transition." Racism and Migration in Western Europe. Oxford: Berg: 99-128.
- Ashley, R. K. (1988). "Untying the sovereign state: a double reading of the anarchy problematique." Millennium-Journal of International Studies **17**(2): 227-262.
- Balibar, E. (2001). "Outlines of a topography of cruelty: citizenship and civility in the era of global violence." Constellations **8**(1): 15-29.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste, Harvard University Press.
- Campbell, D. (1992  
) . Writing security: United States foreign policy and the politics of identity, Univ Of Minnesota Press.
- Commission, E. (2008). Europe in Figures: Eurostat Yearbook 2008, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.
- Dahl, A.-S. (2006). "Sweden: Once a moral superpower, always a moral superpower?" International Journal **61**(4): 895-908.
- Davis, K., B. Kingsbury, et al. (2010). "Indicators as a technology of global governance." NYU Law and Economics Research Paper(10-13): 10-26.
- Dean, M. (2009). Governmentality: Power and rule in modern society, Sage Publications Ltd.
- Delumeau, J. and E. Nicholson (1990). Sin and fear: the emergence of a western guilt culture, 13th-18th centuries, St. Martin's Press New York.
- Foucault, M. and C. Gordon (1980). Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977, Vintage.
- Gagnon, C. (2008). Political Scientists Gone Astray: Bringing Ethnography Back Into the Picture. Association for the Study of Nationalities. New York.
- Hansen, P. (2009). "Post-national Europe—without cosmopolitan guarantees." Race & Class **50**(4): 20-37.
- Kamali, M. (2009). Racial discrimination: institutional patterns and politics, Taylor & Francis.
- Löfgren, O. (1993). "Nationella arenor." Försvenskningen av Sverige: 22-119.
- Lumsdaine, D. H. (1993). Moral vision in international politics: the foreign aid regime, 1949-1989, Princeton University Press.
- Nilsson, A.-S. (1991). Den moraliska stormakten. Stockholm, Timbro.
- Pred, A. R. (2000). Even in Sweden: Racisms, racialized spaces, and the popular geographical imagination, Univ of California Pr.
- Rainbow, P. a. R., N. (2003). The Essential Foucault: Selection from Essential Works of Foucault from 1954-1984. New York, New Press.
- Ruth, A. (1984). "The second new nation: the mythology of modern Sweden." Daedalus **113**(2): 53-96.
- Schierup, C. U. and A. Ålund (2010). "Beyond Liberal Pluralism: Migration and Politics of Exclusion in Europe."
- Walker, R. B. J. (1993). Inside/outside: international relations as political theory, Cambridge Univ Press.

VIEWING NOBLE NARRATIVES IN SECURITY TERMS: SWEDEN AS POSTER CHILD OF EUROPEAN IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION POLICY

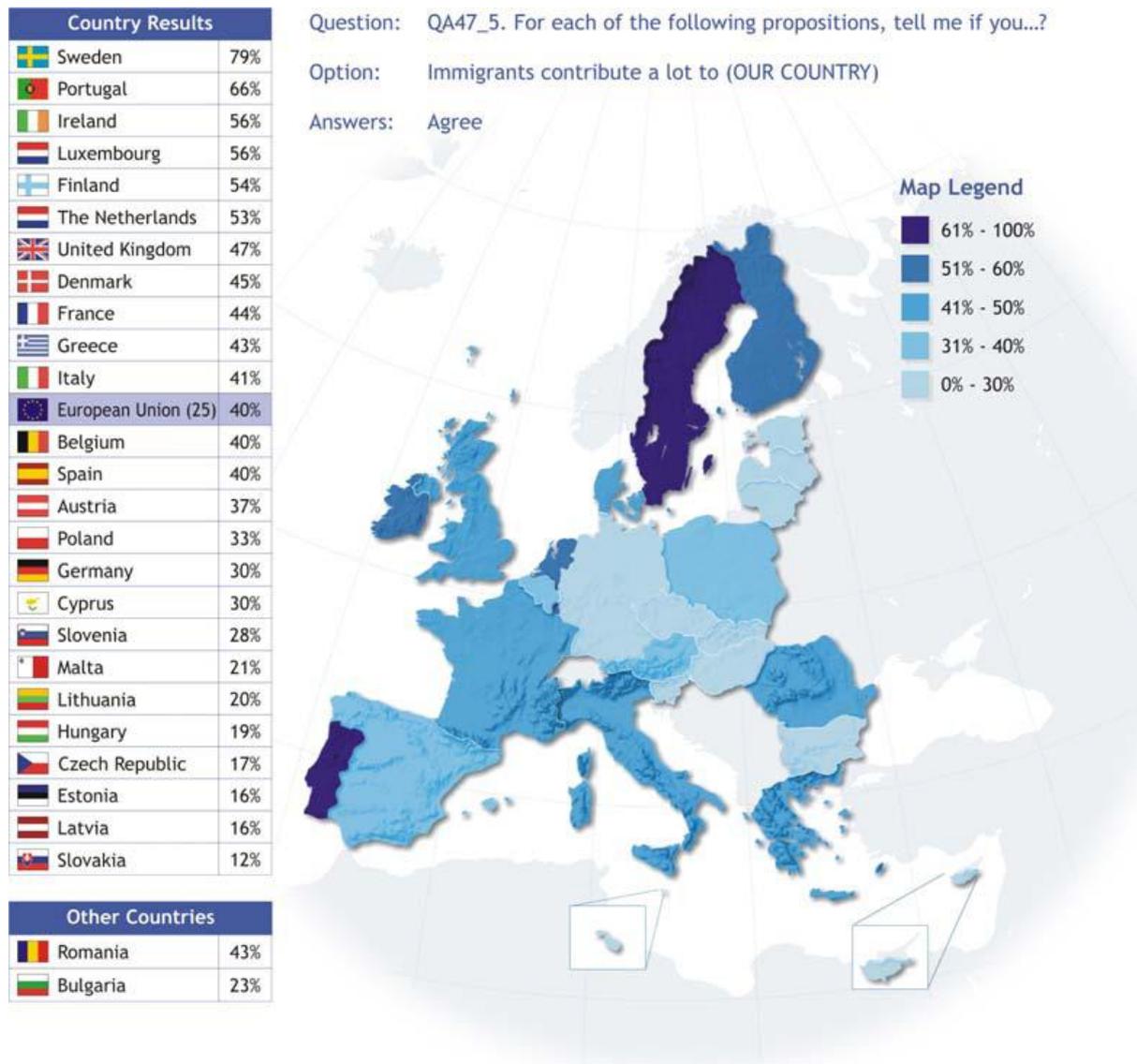
APPENDIX 1: Proportion of sample agreeing to statement 'People from other ethnic groups enrich the life of our country' (%)



(European Commission, 2010, p.53).

VIEWING NOBLE NARRATIVES IN SECURITY TERMS: SWEDEN AS POSTER CHILD OF EUROPEAN IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION POLICY

APPENDIX 2: Proportion of sample agreeing to statement 'Immigrants contribute a lot to our country' (%)



(European Commission, 2006)