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Between Cultural Clientization and Market Individualism

Integration policies in Stockholm since the 1970s.

Introduction

The "Metropolitan Investigations", a corpus of national enquiries on urban development issues in Sweden during the late 1980s, presented one of its reports with the following general outlook:

“The metropolitan environment offers the base for new social and political conditions through its intensive possibilities of contacts with the surrounding world – new political dividing lines, new value patterns and life-styles, and new modes of participation in the entire country. The big city environment has both positive and negative effects for the individual; it can have pitiless social and economic consequences for people lacking resources and competitive education or knowledge, while it can fully deliver to people with resources and professionalism.”¹

In the Swedish political discourse this was something of an awakening: The economic and social structure of big cities and the possibilities the metropolis offered for participation in society were determining factors for the success or failure of life in the city. The urban environment shaped the preconditions and expectations of the individual. The discovery of the metropolis as a co-producer of society's social structure had a great impact on what was considered to be one of the most urgent social problems: the integration of immigrants into Swedish society. Previously, neither political discussions nor social research about migration and resettlement had acknowledged the role of big

¹ Storstadens partier och valdeltagande 1949 – 1988. Underlagsrapport från Storstadsutredningen ("Metropolitan political parties and elections 1949 – 1988. Primary report from the Metropolitan Investigations". Swedish Government Official Reports-series), SOU 68/1989, p. 11.

cities as an independent variable to explain the different results of immigration and integration policies. During the “Golden era” of the Swedish welfare economy the majority of immigrants were invited workers, preferably from Europe or other Nordic countries, which lived in middle-sized industrial towns. Before the mid-1970s the question of integration – or assimilation – concerned mainly immigrant groups in mono-industrial urban settlements in Sweden.² So far research has focused for the most part on the culture and ethnical origin of certain immigrant groups, their family patterns and social behaviour in order to map their irregular success on the Swedish housing and labour markets.³ However, this focus changed during the late 1980s and early 1990s, not least due to mass-immigration and a wave of heterogeneous asylum-seekers, national recession and instability in the welfare system. Researchers, moulders of public opinion and politicians started to scrutinize the established institutions in an attempt to understand the impact of resettlement and immigration cultures on Swedish society. In connection to this shifting focus a greater hope and belief was put on the metropolis as a kind of automatic integration machine.

Initially, this article discusses two topics regarding the question of urban development and integration strategies in Stockholm during the last three-four decades: 1. What larger societal changes emerged from the mid-1970s that placed the big city, the metropolis – as symbol, concept and reality – in a key position to both explain and legitimate a new social reality? 2. What is the “inherent nature” of the metropolis – regarding integration as well as economic performance – in which politicians and leaders of interest groups actually put their faith in?

1.

Contemporary migration and the speed in which both people and capital shift places has come to shed new light on cultural and economic structures and values in western societies. Cities and metropolitan regions during the last decades have gained immensely in importance exactly because they are taking on a leading role in the modern historical development after the industrial society. Despite the unquestionable growth potential in

² Jan Ekberg, *Ekonomiska effekter av invandring* (“The Economic Effects of Immigration”), Växjö 2002, p. 1.

³ Håkan Forsell, *Inventering av forskningsläget över invandring och invandrarfrågor ur ett historiskt perspektiv* (“Overview of previous research concerning immigrants and minority issues in Stockholm city from a historical perspective”), Stockholm 2003, pp. 29-31.

the new economy, urban development is marked by signs of social threat and upheaval. The development plans of private investors and municipal politicians are primarily targeted at a diffuse entrepreneurial middle class with connections to expansive markets, resulting in the activation of social mechanisms of exclusion and an increasing spatial inequality. A new class society has emerged in influential cities with remarkable speed, and this transformation goes back to the general recession in the 1970s and the problems of legitimacy and social distribution priorities of the traditional welfare states. As several researchers have convincingly argued, the unequal development is a systematic expression of an internal tension within the capitalist system itself – between, on the one hand, the wish to evenly distribute assets and investments over the socio-geographic space as fairly as possible, and on the other the pressure of differentiating these investments to take advantage of specific preconditions of places and maximize accumulation.⁴ By the end of the 1970s Henri Lefebvre noted an “explosion of spaces”, in which industrial geography, the patterns of urbanization, every-day life and the political, regulating power of the nation state were instable and distorted.⁵ This tendency has increased through globalization, neo-liberalism and the urbanized labour market. In detail, the general transformation has proceeded in different ways depending on historical and institutional circumstances. A city always offers a certain amount of continuity, not only because larger parts of the physical environment exist for a long time, but also because previously leading social orders continue to have influence on society. The developments do not take place in an institutional vacuum, but are imbedded in regulating traditions.⁶ The dominating order during a certain historical time-period can hence offer strong and formative requirement and limitations for the development in a coming phase. In the case of Stockholm it is natural to emphasize the city’s position as the capital of Sweden. Since 1945 few big cities in Europe other than Stockholm have been marked to the same extent by social democratic etatism, politically motivated socio-economic regulations and recurrent, often fruitless, attempts from local private interests and municipal politicians to break the control of the state authority. It is

⁴ Neil Brenner, *New State Spaces. Urban Governance and the Rescaling of Statehood*, Oxford 2004, p. 16. For an earlier discussion, see: Neil Smith, *Gentrification and Uneven Development*, in: *Economic Geography* 58:2, 1982, pp. 139-155 , pp. 139-142.

⁵ Henri Lefebvre, *Space. Social Product and Use Value*, in: J.W. Freiberg (ed.), *Critical Sociology. European Perspectives*, New York 1979, p. 290, quoted in Brenner, p. 5.

⁶ Yuri Kazepov, *Cities of Europe. Changing Contexts, Local Arrangements, and the Challenge to Social Cohesion*, in: Yuri Kazepov (ed.), *Cities in Europe: Changing Contexts, Local Arrangements, and the Challenge to Social Cohesion*, Oxford 2005, p. 9.

at the same time noticeable what political propensity the municipal authorities in Stockholm have had for large scale solutions regarding for example infrastructure and land use policies. But in an overall view, the Swedish welfare state project depended on the co-operation of the capital city to promote a homogenous and nationally decentralized economy. The Swedish municipal organization was until the mid-1970s the perhaps clearest urban example of what the American political scientist Neil Brenner recently has called the long era of "spatial keynesianism".⁷

During the last thirty years this regulating and redistributing urban economy has been dismantled and replaced by a market oriented entrepreneurial political economy. Stockholm has changed from being the "liaison centre" of the nation to a semi-autonomous growth machine with direct links to the flow of information and goods that circulate outside of the national economic system. Such a transformation has not been accomplished without major changes to the city's environment – and to the relationship between people in that environment.

As a result of the escalating competition between investments and work opportunities, urban economic policy in Stockholm has come to favour the middle classes with greater purchasing power – in stark contrast to the financially weak working class that was the primary receiver of social policy distribution before 1970. To meet the challenges (e.g. to come off as a winner in the international battle of investment prospects and to strengthen the middle classes) the municipal political arena has rearranged urban and social space and equipped itself (with the help of increasingly urbanized national politics) with legal, economic and labour market policy means to promote further accumulation.⁸ This development has in a dramatic way changed the social space of Stockholm since the 1970s.

2.

The second initial question deals with the renewal of the big city regarding integration and economic growth. What kind of characterization of the city did politicians and leaders of opinion actually put their faith into? Was it the "individualistic" city that promoted specialization, differentiation and a possibility for the individual to be successfully established in urban society out of his or her own merits? Or was it another vision, that big cities facilitated the organization of different communities? Could

⁷ Brenner, pp. 114–116.

⁸ For a general overview of the development, see: Christian Kesteloot, *Urban Socio-Spatial Configurations and the Future of the European Cities*, Oxford 2005, pp. 123–126.

ethnic, lingual or confessional communities constitute a critical mass in the big city and thereby function as a platform for social and occupational existence?

The first way of envisaging the metropolis as an extraordinary environment for integration has stressed the meaning of the division of labour for the social urbanization process. The city is, according to this perspective, shaping the institutions of society through the establishment and flourishing of specialized markets, and the city has done so historically in Western Europe since the Middle Ages. Integration through the market has been the primary way of developing a liberal civil society. And as the German urban sociologist Hartmut Häussermann has written, the civilizing accomplishment of the city has been to replace inherited, status- or clan-based privileges by meritocratic market processes. Thereby, older norms, social control mechanisms and codes of relationships have lost their meaning. The city culture has historically been the birth place of modern individualization.⁹

Following this line of argument, the city's fundamental social relationships are those structured around the money and consumer economy, a perspective very much in line with classic European urban sociology from the beginning of the 20th century. Material exchange takes place in urban economies, contracts are drawn, services and goods change hands. The indifference, distance and neglect between the city-inhabitants created by the rational market order are just a precondition for the sustainability and effectiveness of urban life. The individualistic form of integration is not synonymous with human tolerance. It is the market which keeps the balance in society through functional diversification and dependence, and through a consequent production of social distance.¹⁰

It takes little historical knowledge about the conditions of the mature industrial city to understand that this abstract picture of distance and indifference was only relevant to those already established in the urban society. Only two historical types of urban dwellers have been provided with an even remotely corresponding portion of

⁹ Hartmut Häussermann, *Zuwanderung und die Zukunft der Stadt. Neue ethnisch-kulturelle Konflikte durch die Entstehung einer neuen sozialen 'underclass'?* in: Wilhelm Heitmeyer/Rainer Dollase/Otto Backes (Ed.), *Die Krise der Städte. Analysen zu den Folgen desintegrativer Stadtentwicklung für das ethnisch-kulturelle Zusammenleben*, Frankfurt a. M., 1998, p. 151.

¹⁰ For further discussions on the mechanisms of markets and social distance in modern urban development, see for example Gerd Held, *Territorium und Grossstadt. Territorium und Grossstadt. Die räumliche Differenzierung der Moderne*, Wiesbaden 2005 and Markus Schroer, *Raum, Orte, Grenzen. Auf dem Weg zu einer Soziologie des Raums*, Frankfurt a. M. 2006.

independence and autonomy: the self-governing property owners of late 19th century industrial towns and citizens of a later phase, equipped with the generous social rights that characterized a West European welfare state until the 1970s.

But for the immigrant workers in European or American cities during the 19th century the connection to and amalgamation with collective structures and social networks were of vital importance if they were to survive. The second way of envisaging the metropolis argues that big cities have immigration to thank their existence for in the first place. Any unique “mentality” of the metropolis with a strictly “individual” view of social relationships did of course not characterize the new inhabitant straight away the day they set foot in the city. Traditions, cultures, family patterns from a variety of different places continued to grow within smaller communities and influence the city as a living environment. A predominant feature of this perspective is the functional connection between segregation and cultural solidarity. People did not wander around the city as rational, economic nomads, but instead looked for places of belonging. And in this process, certain urban areas evolved where people with similar backgrounds would seek to live together. Segregation is, according to this simplified notion, a voluntary drawback, an isolation chosen by the cultural group itself, for the purpose of strengthening the internal unity as well as the economic and social strategies determined by a shared culture.¹¹ This way of analysing segregation and immigrant cultures was of course fundamental for the sociologists of the Chicago School in order to understand the diverse forms of community life that occurred in the American urban landscape during the early 20th century.¹²

The simplified models of the individualistic and market-orientated city on the one side, and the community and culture-orientated city on the other, must however be modified when analysing modern European cities in general, and in Swedish cities in particular. The models have to comprise powerful frameworks of regulation, jurisdiction and interventions in the urban economy both from the local and national state. Swedish towns have a long tradition of being subordinated and organised out of the wishes and strivings of the state, and not out of wishes and striving of the citizens or civil society, to create legitimizing structures of social, cultural and economic exchange.¹³

¹¹ Fran Tonkiss, *Space, the City and Social Theory*, Cambridge 2005, pp. 38-40. See also Schroer, pp. 236-237.

¹² See for example: Robert E. Park (with Ernest W. Burgess and Roderick D McKenzie), *The City: Suggestions for the Study of Human Behavior in the Urban Environment*, Chicago 1925.

¹³ Casten von Otter, *Ska vi mötas på torget? Tankar kring integration, urbanitet och marknadsekonomi*

The historical oscillations between market-system integration and cultural integration that I will sketch in the following part have been touched upon previously by Swedish researchers. In her dissertation from 2002, *Välfärdsstaten i det mångkulturella samhället* (The Welfare State in Multicultural Society) Karin Borevi has shed light on the tension between the strivings of the welfare state to promote equality and freedom for the individual, and at the same time accomplish certain collective goals. Borevi has shown that the question of individual integration sometimes has a conflicting relationship with the same individual's membership of a certain ethnical, religious or cultural community.¹⁴ But as in other investigations of immigration policy in Sweden, the main focus is on the political work, official investigations and decisions on a national level. The focus in this article is instead on the local political and administrative level in Stockholm.

Between Labour Market Adjustment and Cultural Community

The main thread in this article is that communal immigration politics in Stockholm have moved back and forth between the two distilled urban strategies mentioned above. In the 1960s, and especially after the publication of a national labour market report on active work-immigration and the following debate about the “dumping salaries” by unemployed immigrants, it was above all the individual adjustment to the labour market that dominated the political agenda. For this purpose special contact and information bureaus were established where newly arrived immigrants could for example receive assistance by an interpreter. The goal was explicitly to “facilitate the adjustment of immigrants to workplaces and society in Stockholm”. Immigrants were supposed to be assimilated in Swedish labour market culture and lifestyle. The responsibility of the state was of a purely legal kind and there were no official discussions about cultural origin or identity as considering factors. The task of the municipal authorities was only to amend the immigrants to the demands of the labour market in the most suitable way. In 1967 an information office called “Immigrant Service” (in English originally!) opened its doors

(“Shall we meet on the square? Thoughts about integration, urbanity and market economy”), in: Ewa Gunnarsson/Anders Neergaard/Arne Nilsson (Red.), *Kors & tvärs. Intersektionalitet och makt i storstadslivets arbetsliv*, Stockholm 2006, p. 68.

¹⁴ Karin Borevi, *Välfärdsstaten och det mångkulturella samhället*. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis (“The Welfare State in Multicultural Society”), Uppsala 2002, pp. 304–308.

in central Stockholm. Here immigrants received information about social services offered by the municipality, conditions in the work places and the organisation of unions and associations.¹⁵ Within a few years the administrative responsibility for immigration was expanded within the city administration. In 1970 the Stockholm Board of Immigration was founded to coordinate and supervise work migration to Stockholm. The board also operated the economic support to immigrant organisations – for example through inquiring and visiting services – in order to uphold the immigrants’ interests in front of authorities and employers.¹⁶ It is worth noting what outstanding importance the municipality bestowed on the immigrant associations within their assignment to adjust, inform and integrate minority groups to life and work in the city.

The formation of immigrant clubs and associations was also recurrently encouraged by the municipal authorities in Stockholm during the post-war decades. The approach was highly understandable given the strong impact of popular movements in Swedish democratic history during the 19th and 20th century. When national immigration policy abandoned the goals of “assimilation” and instead explicitly embraced an open integration policy in the mid-1970s, this policy was focused around associational life. The societies and communities of immigrant groups formed “grass-root communities” which were interpreted by both national and municipal politicians as similar to formally established institutions of society such as the free Christian churches, the temperance movement or the workers’ association of “old” Sweden.¹⁷ The shift towards an explicit integration policy was, on the other hand, a consequence of the destabilized labour market that was proven increasingly unsuccessful in offering an inclusive context for immigrant workers. Instead, the association became a space where the individual could find support and confirmation of his or hers identity among equals. Through this immigrants were better prepared and armoured to face an outlandish and sometimes discomfoting reality.

The sympathy toward the associations of immigrants was hence undivided, at least among social democratic politicians. Associational life should give minority groups a chance to preserve and develop their own cultural identity together and in their own language. The task of the Immigration Board in Stockholm was to support and instruct

¹⁵ Stockholm City Council, The Board of Immigration, Documents, Appendix 71/1969. SSA (Stockholm City Archive).

¹⁶ Stockholm City Council, The Board of Immigration, Annual Administrative Report, Index 2, 1971. SSA (Stockholm City Archive).

¹⁷ Thomas Gür: Staten och nykomlingarna. En studie av den svenska invandrapolitikens idéer. Socialstatsprojektet (“The State and the Newcomers”), Stockholm 1996, pp. 181-183.

the associations and to help them receive municipal subsidies. During the 1970s this *community*-form of welfare supply determined all achievements regarding immigrant policy of the municipal administration. In 1971 a second office of the Immigrant Service opened in the suburb of Tensta due to the rapid concentration of immigrants there – although the construction of the area was not even finished.¹⁸

Earlier attempts by the municipality to facilitate an entrance to the labour market for individual members of immigrant groups gradually faded away and were replaced by subsidised forms of local, cultural association activity. The immigrant associations had to fulfil certain requirements to receive financial support: they had to be democratic, not affiliated with any political party, not primarily organize sport or leisure activities but rather be dedicated to cultural questions and societal issues. The associations should also be open to members not belonging from the country of origin.¹⁹ The instructions underlined in an interesting way that the municipality, when promoting cultural organizations of immigrants, wanted to support a kind of mixed form of popular movement and local community. The city of Stockholm acted on national directives and determined that the municipality ought to provide welfare services to the cultural associations of immigrants in a way that included neither cost prices nor market forces.

Local Political Integration and Cultural Clientization

The municipal election reform of 1975 gave immigrants who had been living in the country for more than three years the legal right to vote in communal elections. The outcomes of the reform highlighted a first problematic scenario of the impact that the big city had on integration policy. The election reform, according to the official motivation, was a prevailing manifestation from the established Swedish society of “the willingness of an open dialogue with, and respect for, other people”.²⁰ The reform was also a

¹⁸ Stockholm City Council, The Board of Immigration, Annual Administrative Report, Index 2, 1972. See also: Björn Erdal, *Därute i Tensta*, (“Out There, in Tensta”), Stockholm 1998, pp. 22–35.

¹⁹ One has to remember, that these statutes were formulated during a time-period when “origin” and “nationality” were regarded as more or less the same thing.

²⁰ Statement by Olof Palme in an interview with David Schwarz in the journal *Invandrare och minoriteter* (“Immigrants and Minorities”) 2:4 1974.

demonstration that integration policy in Sweden henceforth was characterized by ideals and visions of a multicultural society.²¹

Immigrants should have the possibility to influence the level of decision-making that “was closest to every-day existence”, meaning local society.²² Swedish municipal politicians explicitly fashioned themselves as handing over the most precious thing the country possessed: the democratic vote. The reform was a manifestation of the “kind and positive attitude” that existed vis-à-vis immigrants in the Swedish society.²³

The new election law was perceived of as an expression of a community based democracy. But freedom of choice is individualistic by nature.²⁴ Political representatives and administrators, however, supported immigrant groups on preconditions that they were organized as cultural collectives. This was a result of the prevailing, and historically legitimized, model of democracy in Sweden, where popular movements and voluntary associations constituted the foundation for social integration and participation in decision-making.

During the 1980s Stockholm underwent a disturbing development with regards to immigrant integration. Statistics of participation in the municipal elections showed that minority groups to an increasing degree did not take part in the representative democratic procedures. The unemployment rates in certain minority groups showed a rapid increase. The 1980s also saw new groups of immigrants and refugees arriving from Asia and Africa, which preferably resettled on the fringes of the large cities. The municipality had no socio-economic plan for these groups but rather neglectfully treated them as in-fill material in the social housing estates from the “Million programme”, despised by native Swedes.²⁵ The Board of Immigration in Stockholm wrote in an inside-pro memoriam strategy plan how the “cultural activities in immigrant associations” could be better

²¹ Carl Dahlström, *Nästan välkomna. Invandrapolitikens retorik och praktik* (“Almost Welcomed. The Rhetoric and Practice of Immigration Policies”), Göteborg 2004, p. 115.

²² *Invandrare och Minoriteter* (“Immigrants and Minorities”), 3:3-4 1976.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Gür, p. 181.

²⁵ The Million programme (1964–1975) was a national plan to overcome a severe housing shortage. The massive housing estates erected in the city suburbs soon received a notorious bad reputation. The outcome of the programme is still a symbol for marginalisation, social exclusion and new poverty. See for example: Lars-Erik Borgegård/Eva Andersson/Susanne Hjort, *The Divided City: Socio-economic Changes in Stockholm Metropolitan Area, 1970-1994*, in: Sako Musterd/Wim Ostendorf (ed.): *Urban Segregation and the Welfare State*, Uppsala 1998 p. 210.

adjusted to “metropolitan circumstances”.²⁶ Even though “employment-seeking courses” and “start out-courses” were explicitly desired in city areas with high percentages of minority groups, the immigrant associations continued to act as an intermediary of municipal subsidies and brought on a broad spectrum of cultural programs; cinema and dance evenings, cafés or study groups.²⁷

In the beginning of the 1980s the debate about so called “positive housing segregation” also made its way into the political and administrative activities of the Stockholm municipality. A controversial suggestion was dropped by the managing director of the National Migration Department, Tord Palmlund. Palmlund suggested that different ethnical groups should be allowed to live together, densely concentrated to certain housing areas in order for the municipal welfare organization to give special and targeted services regarding education, healthcare and language teaching.²⁸ The city planning authorities in Stockholm even prepared an “ethnic-cultural” city district in the area of Hansta, but the plans were never realized due to devastating critique and the illustration of the foreseeable social results.

The spread of information became the most important task of the Board of Immigration in Stockholm during the 1980s. The Board printed booklets that were supposed to highlight the importance of immigrants in Stockholm’s society and spread them in libraries, schools and hospitals. The Board additionally arranged international conferences on multicultural issues. But despite the working efforts and good intentions it gradually became clear that the actions taken by the city to come to terms with minority and integration problems did not bring any improvements. In a report from 1986 the city administration showed that work immigrants and refugees lived under considerable worse social and economic conditions than the rest of the population. Approximately 50 percent of the city’s social allowances went to families of foreign origin. At the same time the situation on the labour market in Stockholm was considerably better than in any other part in Sweden²⁹ A new critical concept entered both the political and the societal debate: *clientization*. The integration policies adapted

²⁶ Stockholm City Council, The Board of Immigration, Promemoria 81/1981, SSA (Stockholm City Archive).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Hans Hellström, De nya Stockholmare. En studie av arbetskraftsinvandrare och flyktingar i Stockholms stad samt Invandrarnämndens verksamhet (“The New Stockholmers. A Study of Immigration and the Work of the Stockholm Immigration Board”). Stockholms stadsmuseum / Kommittén för Stockholmsforskning Stockholm 2000, p. 53.

²⁹ Forsell, pp. 30-36.

by the national state and local governments made people of foreign origin into passive receivers of welfare services, and in the process minority groups got marginalized and stripped of any possibility of exercising real economic or political influence.³⁰ In fact, they became used to having no explicit obligations towards the majority society and still receive – without corresponding efforts – financial support for their internal cultural activities. This assessment was first heard from the political conservatives and neo-liberals, but soon spread through the whole ideological spectrum. The clientization-debate initiated a decisive image of the welfare state as weak, inflexible and without knowledge of the social composite of the citizens.

Marginalization of Immigrants in Stockholm during the 1980s.

The report about social allowance distribution caused almost political panic. Despite generous submissions of welfare services, subsidies to immigrant associations and the city's active programmes for social integration immigrants and minorities did not receive any employment. The Board of Immigration concluded in one of its internal reports: "Employers in the Stockholm metropolitan region, both private and public, do not seem to have fully understood what reserve of workers the immigrants and refugees actually constitute."³¹ This statement – as several others during the 1980s – clearly reflects the existing gap between immigrant policy measures taken by the city municipality and the development of the big city as the nexus of economic growth and socio-cultural dynamics. It had suddenly become clear that the labour market in big cities no longer automatically brought weaker groups to the surface, as it was expected to do, and as it had done in the industrial era. And at the same time it was taken for granted in the plans of integration strategies by the city administration that immigrant groups were a "reserve"; that they composed a separate, detached part of the whole work force.

Different paths of political practice were tried out on state national level during the 1980s. The National Department of Labour was responsible for the so called "working line", which was supposed to steer the directives of immigrant policy making. But the "working line" was soon to be played down as the Department of Immigration took over

³⁰ Masoud Kamali, *Distorted Integration: Clientization of Immigrants in Sweden*, Uppsala 1997.

³¹ Stockholm City Council, The Board of Immigration, Report of the 27. October 1987, No. 22. SSA. (Stockholm City Archive)

responsibility for the adjustment of immigrants to the national labour market with a stronger emphasis on “social integration”³². The time-span that could pass before newly arrived immigrants had any contact with employers or working life in general was continuously getting longer. From the mid-1980s an additional strategy, called the “whole of Sweden”-strategy, was tried out. It meant that refugees and asylum-seekers were placed geographically all over the country to avoid the clustering of certain groups in specific areas, particularly in the metropolitan areas. The underlying thought was to promote social integration in a “close” and local environment. In reality the opposite resulted since the large structural changes in the economy, and the transition from industrial production to knowledge intensive work and service economy was already happening. The vacant jobs were clustered around the metropolitan regions and university towns³³. Municipal politicians and national investigators noticed and pointed out the ongoing changes of the metropolitan areas in Sweden during the 1980s, where Stockholm took on a leading position. Social acknowledgement and a successful integration in the labour market could not be considered as a class project any more, as it had been in the old industrial town, or as a project permeated with social and cultural values that were still very relevant in the 1970s. Instead integration and acknowledgment had turned into an individual and market oriented project.

The New Urban Economy and the Transformation of Values

Integration policies were particularly lagging behind contemporary economic and social development and its reinforced “urban way” of living. When the national “Metropolitan Investigations” analysed the political engagement in big cities in Sweden during the 1980s, the state investigators outlined the shifting base of standards and values in the new urban social environment. In urban society common values had turned “post-material”, the investigators wrote, giving priority to issues like self-fulfilment, life-style, environment and economic growth. The urban values presupposed a high level of competence among the citizens; that the citizens “knew the system” and were able to take advantage of their cultural skills and language knowledge in the purpose of acting

³² Ekberg p. 9.

³³ Mats Benner, Sweden divided into three parts, in: *Axess* 2/2003, pp. 18–20.

strategically and flexible to get the right education and the right employment.³⁴

Immigrants and minority groups had, according to this analysis, limited possibilities to navigate their own lives within the same cultural framework. They did not know the system as well as native Swedes and they were predominantly nourishing material values bound to a diminishing welfare order.³⁵

Even though policy makers increasingly became sensitive towards the emergence of new forms of social and economic behaviour, and that different values influenced the inhabitants in the cities, they still had a predisposition to regard immigrants as a reserve that could be called for in times of crisis. When the economic recession hit Stockholm in the beginning of the 1990s the city administration sought new possibilities for the immigrant associations to take a greater social responsibility. Municipal financial support to immigrant associations was now given under the condition that the associations took active part in the reception of asylum seekers, since the number of refugees to Stockholm had increased beyond all expectations. The Board of Immigration in Stockholm wanted the immigrant organisations to help their fellow countrymen with practical problems and inform them about necessary health care and services.³⁶ The city administration sought, in other words, to benefit from the cultural communities that the city had been given financial support to for several years, although this policy of subsidy had apparently not been the foremost solution to the problem of economic and social integration.

Hence, from a municipal political point of view, the big city as a place of integration and social acknowledgment obtained a dubious and indistinct practice. For those who were able to read the system and take advantage of their individual abilities and assets to create or take part in networks of instrumental relations, there was a place in the formal economy and possibilities to gain acknowledgement and even a political hearing for their demands and wishes. For those who were outside of the system, there were marginalized communities to join, family-based networks often occupied in low-paid service sectors or the informal economy. And politicians eventually listened to these groups only when demands were put forward in the name of a cultural or ethnical “otherness”.

The metropolitan region of Stockholm demonstrated during the late 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s a pointed redistribution of social, cultural and economic

³⁴ SOU 68/1989, pp. 56–58 (Swedish Government Official Reports-series.)

³⁵ von Otter, pp. 70–72.

³⁶ Hellström, p. 56.

assets and the emergence of separate arenas where people could influence the development of society. The access to democratic arenas had been an important goal also for the immigrant policies of the municipality during the 1970s when “cultural integration” had been the key-concept. But in the 1980s the transformation of society, and not least the increasing importance of big cities as the nexus of new forms of economic and social accumulation, resulted in a marked divide between minority and majority cultures which observed each others “democratic arenas” in isolation and from a distance.

The Shallow Fusion of Urban Growth, Stability and Integration

It was not until the 1990s that the issue of integration became explicitly connected to policies of regional and urban growth. But, as later research has proved, it turned out extremely problematic to fulfil goals of integration that had no economic carrying capacity only from structural predictions of growth in the metropolitan region. The components that were fused in the economic strategy – partners of development, structural funds, local growth and sustainability agreements – offered no contact with the question of integration. And since the goals of economic development in the region were independent of the participation of immigrants and their special contribution and experiences, the dominant actors (trade and industry companies, interest organisations and political entrepreneurs) used the growth potential of the city in a way that had no effect on integration.³⁷ The new policy tended, in other words, to be just another casting of the cultural integration policy that characterized the 1970s, only this time with an economist signature.

During the 1990s it became quite obvious that the urbanized economy substantially influenced both the city society as a whole and the city’s political establishment, often in harsh ideological conflict with social welfare advocates on the national level. The city environment was no longer a box containing similar social relationships, but the city dictated the preconditions under which people interacted and influenced the development potentials of the individual. The city created – or blocked – new interfaces regarding

³⁷ Ragnar Andersson, Äktenskap med förhinder – försök med en politik för att förena ekonomisk tillväxt och integration till invandring i de svenska storstäderna (“Prevented Marriage – Economic Growth and Integration”), in: Gunnarsson/Neergaard/ Nilsson , p. 156.

labour and education as well as housing. Trade and industry interests became the successor of the state in clearing the path for the city's further expansion, replacing social knowledge with entrepreneurship and thereby calling upon the citizens to adjust or update their qualification: competitiveness, awareness of place advantages and individual adaptability.³⁸

But a modifying approach to modern urban development has also emerged in the last years. Social scientists and geographers have given attention to the community aspect of economic performance, an aspect of urban economic geography that for a long time was regarded as an unsuitable perspective on Swedish towns. Minority groups living close together in urban areas do not only constitute a platform for a cultural population centre. There also exists something like a "community of the market". The community of the market emerges where places, shops or estates exist that can bring economic interests and social and cultural needs together on a small-scaled level.³⁹ For a remarkable long time the image of urban immigrant communities in Stockholm and other larger Swedish cities was created out of the concept of the political or religious group, and not out of the concept of small businessmen, -women or traders. But the internationalization of Stockholm during the last decade and a half also brought awareness with it that the core process of successful integration in big scale regeneration projects is all about bringing back, or creating, a running economic system. It is not about "location policies", but instead about establishing organized markets and energetic and efficient local cooperation.⁴⁰

Conclusion and Outlook

In the end, a both obvious and still highly complex picture of the modern city as an "integration machine" emerges. A city like Stockholm is on the one side characterized by the mosaic of diverse groups of inhabitants; immigrants and minority assemblages that can very well find and protect a community environment in the city's liberalized labour

³⁸ For a more lengthy analysis of Stockholm's development in relationship to national state politics, see Forsell, Does Stockholm need Sweden?, in: *Axess* 6/2003, pp. 18–20.

³⁹ Steven Gold, The Migrant Economy, in: *Axess* 4/2005. Siv Ehn, The Sleep of Suburbs, in: *Axess* 4/2005.

⁴⁰ von Otter, p. 71.

market if they are backed up by urban politics that are not devoted to municipal “clientization” of minority groups, or anxious investments to promote a strong “cultural identity” within immigrant associations. The unfolding of the neoliberalized urban economy since the 1990s does reward individualistic choices and flexible solutions in the division of labour, but presupposes at the same time the existence of a social safety net and a solid welfare system so that the fear of exclusion among the individuals will not wipe out all forms of cohesion.

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