

Civic Orientation for Migrants in a Swedish Context  
Exploring values and governing from an intersectional perspective

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**General description** (research questions, theoretical framework)

Different social models for integration and citizenship are increasingly discussed in Europe. Previously recognized conventions of citizenship, about who the citizen is, may or should be challenged (Joppke 2007). Discussions in both research and political organizations can be seen as a consequence of the decline in variations of “multicultural” models that were fundamental to integration policy in Sweden, as well as in several other European states (ibid.; Sonninen 1999). In Sweden, the multicultural integration policy in 1975 was formulated through the three key concepts: equality, freedom of choice and collaboration (prop. 1975:26). During the 1980s, cultural and ethnic group rights were reduced and adaptation to international policy took place. A further shift occurred in the early 1990s with ever higher individual demands on the migrant from the states across Europe. Among other things, there was increasing demand for participation in education such as language courses and courses on social orientation. After the investigation “Sweden for newly arrived migrants – Values, welfare state, everyday life” (SOU 2010:16) a new regulation was added: “Civic orientation for some newly arrived immigrants” (SFS 2010:1138). Through this law, homogenization and national standardization of education efforts have been developed. This applies to both implementation and teaching materials; e.g. the textbook “About Sweden” (first edition 2010, City of Gothenburg, latest edition 2017), which we have analysed.

Each municipality is required to organize and offer newly arrived immigrants civic orientation; courses described by organizers to “give keys to Swedish society”. Government control includes that the county administrative boards annually monitor the activities and return the results to the government. The orientation should preferably take place in the mother tongue in dialogue and reflection with support of “civic communicators”, who will have some educational skills (SFS 2010:1138). This education initiative raises a number of issues that we discuss in our contribution from an intersectional perspective, but with a particular focus on gender. The specific Swedish approach to gender equality has become an important marker, a national self-image and a certain “success story”, where binary classifications often function as demarcations between “Swedes” and “the Other” (Carlson & Kanci 2017; Forbes et al. 2011).

Theoretically, our contribution rests on a narrative and discursive approach (Andrews 2007; Fairclough 2003). The standardization and homogenization developed for civic orientation in the Swedish context can also be seen as a powerful state governance in line with Foucault's perspective on governmentality (Foucault 2000), which is useful for the analysis of policy documents and teaching materials. Also Bacchi's social constructionist analytical framework (2008) is used for reviewing political documents, where Bacchi argues that politics to the same extent construct social problems as it reveals or solves them. Our interest is directed to questions about how the participants are understood as subjects, what characteristics, abilities and positions they are expected to adapt to and occupy. We have explored how the image of the migrant/citizen is (re)constructed, interpreted and negotiated within the discourses of the education. Our interest has also been to investigate how narratives about Sweden, “Swedishness”, “Swedish values”, citizenship, everyday life and welfare state emerge in civic orientation for newly arrived immigrants (cf. Griswold 2010; Yuval-Davis 2011).

### **Research questions**

- What social and cultural values/norms regarding Swedish society are articulated in policy documents and teaching materials? How are these related to gender and ethnicity from an intersectional perspective?
- What narratives about the newly arrived migrants are conveyed in the civic orientation's documents and teaching materials? Which individuals/groups are included, respectively, excluded?
- What dominant stories are visible? Are there also “counter stories” expressed?
- What experiences and reflections do migrants highlight in their own stories of having participated in the education?

### **Methods/methodology**

The empirical data consists of policy and steering documents, teaching materials, mainly the textbook “About Sweden” in different editions used in civic orientation, and interviews with some migrants who previously participated in the education. An intersectional perspective has been used in the narrative and discursive approach to examine how different (re)constructions are linked and interact with, for example, gender, ethnicity, class and religion/view of life (Christensen & Qvortrup Jensen 2012; Yuval-Davis 2011). Methodically we have searched for

organizing recurring concepts that hold together and substantiate dominant speech as well as visual representation in teaching materials.

Narratives related to discursive themes turned out to be a useful comparative tool – especially as regards nationalism and self-image related to the intersection of gender and ethnicity (cf. Carlson & Kanci 2017). A narrative is about a relational, situational and contextual story and is of existential value to human beings – both individually and collectively (Yuval-Davis 2011). This is something that we also will emphasize in the analysis of the still ongoing interviews with migrants who previously participated in the education.

### **Expected outcomes/results**

The preliminary analysis shows how gendered, culturalized and ethnified discourses are discerned throughout the material and how the (re)constructions of the immigrant and the “Swede” are played out together with fostering attitudes. In particular, an ethnocentric and ideological gender equality discourse is linked to “Swedish” norms and values – both in policy documents and teaching materials like in the textbooks “Om Sverige” (“About Sweden”). Perceptions of the traditional and culturally bound immigrant woman are strongly emphasised in dominant discourses and is thus an object that always is about to be changed, which the course participants sometimes show resistance to.

A perspective of fostering (cf. Carlson & Kanci 2017; Eriksson 2010) and ”Othering” (Osman 1999; Rosén & Bagga-Gupta 2013), as well as a strongly dominant gender equality discourse is discernable in the material, where gender positions occupy an idealized “Swedish” framing. Both women and men who have migrated to Sweden are almost automatically placed as more traditional and less equal than men and women born in Sweden (Knocke 2011; Magnusson et al. 2008; Yazdanpanah 2013). There seems to be reason to still discuss the three key concepts formulated in the 70's in the bill as regards the multicultural integration policy (prop. 1975:26): equality, freedom of choice, collaboration.

The case of civic orientation for migrants in a Swedish context can be seen as both disciplinary and mobilizing (cf. Abdulla 2017; Eriksson 2010) and analysis of material and experiences from participants are important in order to fill a gap in research on the “social problem of integration”.

### **Intent of publication**

EERJ, Education Inquiry, Gender and Education

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