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# Explaining Swedish “Exceptionalism”: The Case of Socio-Economic and Political Integration of Immigrants from Bosnia- Herzegovina in the 1990s

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# Citizens at Heart?

## Political Integration in Comparative Perspective

- The overall aim to investigate in a comparative framework what affect processes of subjective integration: particular focus on Bosnian diaspora in Sweden, UK, and Germany.
- A study on economically integrated Bosnians ("successful")
- A targeted study on politically active Bosnians in Sweden.
- A quantitative study using ESS-data



# Previous research concerned with the 'subjective' side of integration

- Has often brought forward factors related to the immigrant or diaspora groups themselves rather than to the host society (cf. van Hear, 1998).
- The existence of extensive social networks within the ethnic group or cultural correspondence between the native country and the host society are among explanations that have been suggested (Bennich-Björkman, 2006).
- Another line of research has emphasised the spill-over effects from in particular successful labour-market integration (Lundh et al, 2002, Edin & Åslund, 2001).
- Political culture research as well as recently published results exploring the interaction between welfare institutions and social trust (Kumlin & Rothstein, 2005) provides empirical evidence that identities and feelings of belonging are as likely to be affected by formal institutions as by relations and their embeddedness in culture .



## Methodological approach

- A combination of comparative quantitative and qualitative analyses in order to study how and to what extent the political integration of immigrants is affected by the design and practices of the host societies' political institutions in a selection of European countries.
- In so doing, we explore important theoretical contributions in the literature on migration, integration, policy design and political culture (Schneider & Ingram, 1997). Investigating the 'subjective' or psychological aspects of political integration combines theoretical insights from political culture research (Almond & Verba, 1963, Rice & Feldman, 1997, cf. Inglehart & Welzel, 2005) with those gained from institutionalism (cf. Hall & Taylor, 1996) on the policy field of integration which is rarely approached from these angles.



# The qualitative comparative study

- The Bosnian Diaspora in different countries of Europe
- Increase the possibilities of comparing the integration processes of a specific group that share important characteristics: time in exile, cultural roots and reasons for migrating and who thereby could be expected to reasonably much to the same extent have struggled with similar problems.
- We construct something close to a social science ‘natural experiment’. In this part of the research project we will be able to, at least to some extent, inquire the relative importance for political acculturation of correspondence between original political culture and the culture of the host society as compared to the institutional arrangements of the host society, for example levels of welfarism versus liberal-oriented systems.



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# Where are we?

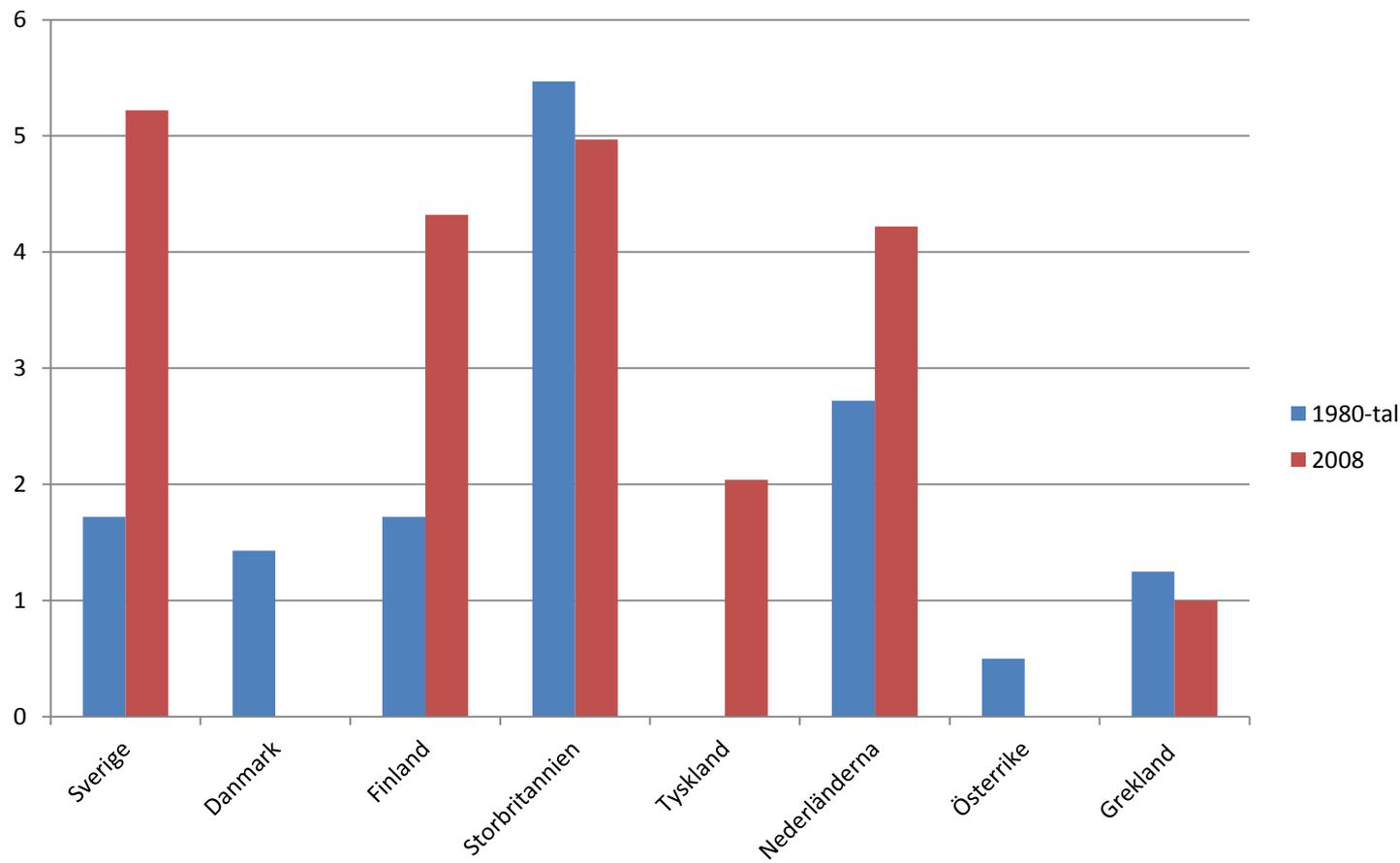
- Started in January 2008
- Previous studies on  
Bosnians
- Interviews in Sweden, Great  
Britain and Germany



# Selection of informants

- Persons who have been successful in the labour market in the sense that they hold a position of some kind (suggested has been in academia) and therefore could not be expected to feel psychologically alienated by lack of labour market integration.
- Age between 20-40 and thus arrived when they were in their twenties and thirties, having their formative period of socialization behind them.
- Approximately 15-20 interviews conducted in each country where the focus is on capturing the perceived 'meeting' with the host societies through the life stories told.
- Combination of snowball method and databases of so-called successful Bosnians through Bosnian newspaper/journals and the Bosnia-Herzegovina Ministry for Diaspora

# Swedish Exceptionalism : proportion agreeing that ethnic groups benefit society (Eurobarometer 2009)





# Swedish Exceptionalism?

- 1950-1960s Labour market integration/Guest workers (South Europe/Yugoslavia)
- 1970-2004 Refugee immigration (Greeks, Latin Americans, Arab world, former Yugoslavia) - refugee quotas and humanitarian asylum
- Dual citizenship 1990s tacit, 2001 Act of citizenship formal
- OECD 1997 Sweden fairing worst in labour market integration
- 1997 *Sverige, framtiden och mångfalden: från invandrarpolitik till integrationspolitik* (Prop. 1997/98:1) – goals of integration and multiculturalism
- 2008 Labour market integration/A model of circular migration, a more restrictive model of asylum recognition/EU securitization
- “The end of Swedish exceptionalism” (Schierup and Ålund, 2011)?



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# Integration policy

- Integration program, language education
- Recognition of qualifications
- Dispersal policy and housing/ 1985 transfer from the Labor Market Board to the Immigration Board to municipalities— broke down when Yugoslavs arrived
- Recruitment channels favor those with social networks and connections, informal methods of filling job vacancies in private sector 70% more likely than in public sector
- Discrimination

Source: Lemaitre, G. (2007)



# Bosnians in Sweden

- 1992-1995, 60000 B&H refugees received in connection to the war
- 2007, 6367 resettled refugees
- By 2008, 80,000 people of Bosnian origin lived in Sweden, and some 50,000 obtained Swedish citizenship
- 92% under age of 50; 32% children under 15
- STATIV 2007, Bosnian relatively more successful
- 15% of resettled resp 25 % of asylum seekers university educated (engineers, economists, teachers, health personnel)
- 43 resp 50% secondary education
- Higher education higher probability of employment
- The place matters – ranging from 10% to 80% employment rate (1997)

Source: Povrzanovic-Frykman (2012); Bevelander (2011); Ekberg and Olsson (2000)



# Successful integration questioned – struggles of finding employment?

- Disorientation and the problem of recognition – institutional obstacles and possibilities
- Connections and self-employment
- Chance
- Psychological problems
- Structure supporting agency, social care trap, torture, unemployment and depression
- Many highly educated in social sciences, law and humanities lost hope of finding a job comparing to that in the homeland
- Importance of family, children's future and pride, individual subjective satisfaction with life in Sweden not directly related to employment and in spite of a downward mobility.
- Socialization primarily with people of the shared exile experience regardless of ethnic origin.

Source: Maja Povrzanovic-Frykman (2012)



# Citizens at Heart?

- 12 informants in depth life stories
- 4 women (dentist specialist, construction engineer, social worker, biomedical engineer/agricultural studies)
- 8 men (1 construction engineer/IT specialist; 1 high school teacher; 1 economist/warehouse supervisor; 1 economist/accountant; 1 chemical engineer/communal environment quality coordinator/; Associate professor/researcher chemistry/doctoral student, writer; veterinarian/agriculture/chief of sales department agricultural products)
- Focus group – 7 informants (1 lawyer, 2 university teachers, 1 medical doctor, 1 psychologist; 1 architect; 1 economist)



# Overall findings from interview study

- Early decision to integrate and learn the language
- Questioning the integration system and officially given information about the chances when discriminatory and de-qualifying – Employment office, labour market education and school system
- Using the universal system in pursuit of professional recognition – occupational citizenship, university educational system and educational support
- Using ethnic networks and contacts to get the right information
- Chance – meeting right Swedish person, mentor
- Music and sports as fields of integration and socializing with the Swedish people
- Dual citizenship as empowering and enabling
- General trust in the system, yet declining with time
- Members of trade union
- Accepting themselves as immigrants, but not the discriminatory treatment of their children
- Feel politically integrated, vote, interested and informed, but not very active
- Socially integrated into Swedish society?
- Transnational identity, positive to EU integration
- Family values and socializing with people of similar experience of asylum seeking, common cultural frames originating in former Yugoslavia popular music, films, but following Balkan contemporary cultural and political life as well via Internet/ some active in Bosnian Associations



## Case 1: Questioning the integration system as discriminatory, relying on the universal welfare system

- F, 50, 19 years in Sweden, dentist, mixed origin, mixed marriage, 3 children
- Northern Sweden, moved south for a job, did not accept any directive concerning the placement, education, kindergarten - found them discriminatory
- Decided to take up her university education from the beginning
- Meeting right persons, professional peers within the university and profession
- Market demand for dentists dramatically changed, easier to find a job
- Ambitious to be promoted, but feels "a glass ceiling" in her professional development
- Disappointed by the school system as discriminatory towards their children
- Feels empowered, but not socially integrated



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## Case 2: Using integration programs and Swedish contacts to get the qualifications and a job

- M, 43, 18 years in Sweden, economist, Bosnia(k)n, mixed marriage, 2 children
- Northern Sweden, moved to mid Sweden to get into an adequate employment program
- Studied economics in Sarajevo, but did not receive the diploma, was unemployed, did not want to take university studies from the beginning
- Got information about employment programs for educated economists by SFI teacher in Swedish, meeting a supportive officer at the employment office, getting the right trainee position – using Swedish links and contacts
- Feels integrated, but not fully accepted by his Swedish co-workers
- Critical to Swedes' prejudice about Muslims and Bosnia



## Case 2: Integrated but not feeling well

- I had never had a problem directly. But indirectly, when talking with them, but nobody ever asked me who I am. Yes, a few years after this auditor asked and when I told him he said that he would have never hired me.
- Swedes asked me that and I said that we did not need to integrate at all because we came here as integrated, and I do not see a cultural conflict there. There are only differences in temperament.
- And I am 100% integrated but, I do not feel well. Not in everyday but I'm missing something. Waiting for something to get finished, so I go on and nothing is happening.
- A room between the heaven and the earth (Cardak ni na nebu ni na zemlji).



## Case 3: Believing in own capabilities and fighting for recognition

- M, 48, 18 years in Sweden, construction engineer, married, Bosniaks, 2 children
- Working for an international IT company
- Sent to inadequate courses by the employment office
- Found about the IT course through own contacts
- Belief in own capabilities
- Integration as a "normal life"
- Active in Bosnia and Herzegovina Association



# Case 3: Integration as a normal life, Sweden and future

- I am a positive person due to what they gave us, the initial injection of some kind that we could move forward, I'd have been disappointed for one moment, it is a normal thing to be disappointed in individuals in any society, in associations and family, in firm you work with, but I still believe in this country and the way they accept immigrants. That the same chance was given to everyone.
- For me the integration is that you simply do not depend on anyone and that you can create, I and my wife normally, my normal family living conditions, respect the laws of the state which apply. I am not politically engaged in a Swedish organization, and I have no time for it. I see myself doing this job that I do, that I and my wife have a better life, to take advantage of free time that we have, to travel somewhere whenever we find time. If I were to get pension, I would spend half time in Sweden ...and half time, down there.



# Case 4: Transnationalism and multiculturalism

- M, 39, 15 years in Sweden, quota refugee, doctoral student, mixed origin;
- Employment office discrimination
- Education and culture
- Returned to Bosnia and felt discriminated
- Transnationalism, multiculturalism and European orientation



## Case 4: Multiculturalism

- One aspect is precisely that some people from the Balkans, for example,..., specifically it applies to my generation who were born in late seventies, early eighties, we are looking for people who have the same frames, the frames of references, cultural references, who grew up with the same music I think that was very important, while on the other hand for me it is very important to have international, meaning not only the Swedes, but contact with some international people, which in Sweden is very well, because we live, because there live so many nations, and to me, I think it really enriches life and gives me a new perspective with which I can see my own culture and the culture of our people and culture of Sweden, of course. I get there, I think I'm getting, it is quite, quite positive, but it is of course something that I personally think that one must get there with some kind of work to such an extent that he accepts the cultures in such a way that he attempts to integrate in both cultures, instead of seeking his place in some kind of one separate culture. I personally think that living between two cultures can be very positive (or more than two)?



# Focus Group: Being the "Other" – a general problem

- Ovdje se govori o Hrvatskoj, ... dodjes, kazu tvoja domovina..fora...ko ba...ti si stranac...pa te fata za jezik, prvo dodje Zagorac da vidi koji ti govoris akcenat i odmah te tu..., drugo da dokazes sta si radio, sta si studirao, koji fakultet...Na kraju krajeva sve ti je to isto, Svedsko iskustvo, iz Velike Britanije, iz BiH kada sam tamo zivio sve je isto u stvari.
- Mom stricu se isto tako desilo. Bio je profesor i doktorirao u Ljubljani. Ja sam tada radio u U. i on dodje kod mene. On i zena, koja je bila medicinska sestra...I sad, nadju mu na nekom institutu, NIC (Naucno Istrazivacki Centar) u U. a njima je trebao jedan doktor nauka da bi mogli od Republicke vlade dobiti neka sredstva, neke pare pa im je trebao jedan doktor nauka po kljucu....I sad, oni njega uzmu tamo, on je doktor nauka... ali covjek nema sta da radi, ne zna sta ce..ne daju mu nigdje da se ukljuci, jer njima treba samo njegova titula ... A on je za njih ipak stranac, iz Bosne...
- U Sarajevu, predjes li iz jedne ulice u drugu stranac si....Cim si napustio svoju kucu, ti si izbjeglica, stranac ...



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# Case study: Politically active Bosnians in Sweden

- 10 respondents, in-depth interviews
- 5 women, 5 men.
- All except one (born in Sweden from Bosnian parents) refugees from the Balkan Wars.
- All elected to posts representing political parties at the municipal, regional, and national level.
- 6 socialdemocrats, 2 "Moderaterna" (liberal/rightwing), 2 "Centerparty" (centrist/liberals).
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# Preliminary results

- Do not consider themselves to represent immigrants or Bosnians.
- Chose partisan affiliation out of ideological conviction
- Do not work with integration issues, but issues related to their occupational competence.
- Recruited through contacts at work.
- Swedish social networks



# Integration: how to understand it?

- Acceptance; to accept the new country as your own, to accept the loss of the old.
- Reciprocal process; will and acceptance.
- To work, to pay taxes.
- To be treated as everyone else, not better, not worse.



# How to achieve integration?

- Mental turning points: to decide to stay not think about returning. "This is your country now and you have to commit" (learn language, find work, engage politically).
- To accept what you lost.
- To live also mentally in Sweden, not in Bosnia.



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