

From measuring “integration” to representing “superdiversity”

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I. MIM THROUGH THE YEARS

In September 1997, the first course in International Migration and Ethnic Relations (IMER) had its birth at the newly established Malmö University College. Lecturers from different disciplinary backgrounds had been brought together during spring to develop the bachelor's program in IMER and on the first day of the term, 80 interested students started the program. Whereas in the first years, the courses given in Swedish attracted high numbers of students, over time the IMER program in English became more attractive for Swedish as well as international students. In 2000, also an IMER master's program was established, and over the years, the programs in English have shown to be vibrant programs and continue to be so.

The 2010s were also important for the subject of IMER at Malmö University College. In 2012, MAH received the right to host a PhD program in IMER, which boosted new research at the department of Global Political Studies (GPS), where the program is situated. Since 2012, the PhD program has produced nine new doctors in IMER, and five more are currently enrolled. In 2018, Malmö University

College was promoted to the status of a full University, one of the key motivations behind this promotion being the importance and impact of the migration research conducted at the university.¹

Research in International Migration and Ethnic Relations (IMER) at Malmö University and in Sweden at large was rather limited in the beginning but grew substantially over the years. For Malmö University College, the so-called Willy Brand Guest professorship, a financial gift from the city of Malmö, contributed to increasing research activities, international contacts, and collaboration between guest professors and faculty. The strategic establishment of the Malmö Institute for Studies of Migration, Diversity and Welfare (MIM) in 2007 aimed at both developing new and strengthening existing research on migration and its consequences at the university. Since then, migration research at the university has significantly grown, and over the years MIM has become an established and reputed research centre in the field of Migration Studies, not only in Sweden and the Nordic countries but also in Europe.

Several developments can be seen as important factors contributing to this success. In 2012, the largest migration research network in Europe, IMISCOE, opened for new members and MIM and its affiliated researchers joined the network. Together, they organized the Annual IMISCOE Conference in 2013 in Malmö with nearly 400 participants and became a great success for the self-financing network. In 2019, MIM became the first research centre to organize this annual conference for the second time, with over 700 participants, the event being recognized as a great success, both in terms of participation and in terms

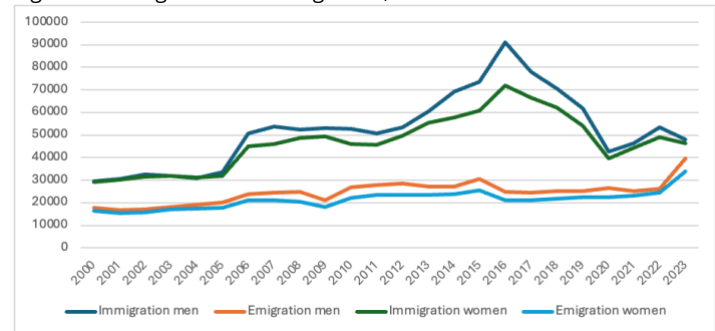
of organization. This achievement increased the visibility of the university in Europe and its research group, MIM, among international colleagues. This, in turn, enhanced the possibilities for new collaborations with international researchers in migration studies and increased the quality of in-house research. International collaborations were especially strengthened during the post-2015/16 period, during which MIM researchers participated in nine EU funded Horizon 2020 research projects aimed at studying international migration and its consequences in Europe. In a nutshell, the evolution of MIM, and Malmö University more broadly, has not taken place in a vacuum, but is strongly connected to the history of immigration to Sweden, which have increased substantially since the 1990s. Securing Swedish, Nordic and European research funds, which became available due to the societal challenges connected to immigration, has been fundamental for the growth of the institute.

II. AN OVERVIEW OF SWEDEN'S IMMIGRATION HISTORY

Taking a bird's eye view, immigration to Sweden has increased substantially over the past three decades and has become more diverse in terms of the immigrants' origin countries. In the 1950s and 1960s, Sweden received mostly labour migrants from primarily neighbouring and European countries. However, since the 1970s it has received predominantly, refugees and family reunion migrants at first from Chile, Poland and Vietnam, and in the 1980s and early 1990s from various countries afflicted by conflict around the world (for example, Iran, Iraq, Somalia and former Yugoslavia). Since joining the European Union in 1995, and especially after the enlargement rounds of 2004 and 2007, Sweden has also received considerable numbers of labour and student migrants from other EU member states. In retrospect, immigration to Sweden has steadily increased over the past two to three decades (see

figure 1), which has substantially changed the population demographically from a relatively homogeneous society into a one with high ethnic diversity.

Figure 1: Immigration and Emigration, Sweden 2000-2023



Source: Statistics Sweden

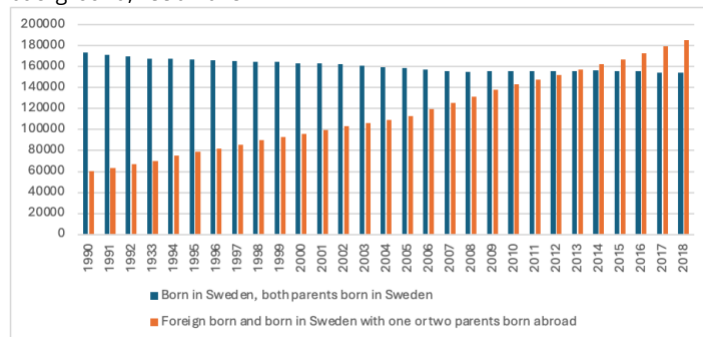
The need for more research on the demographically changing society and its consequences has been acknowledged by subsequent Swedish governments over the last 20 years, leading to the creation of several knowledge-producing organizations and research programs. For instance, the Delegation for Migration (DELMi) was established in 2013 as an independent committee that initiates studies and supplies research results as a basis for future migration policy decisions, thus contributing to public debates (and decision-making) on migration. Furthermore, in 2017, the Swedish Science Council (*Vetenskapsrådet*) has initiated a 10-year national research program with a specific focus on international migration and integration. Although only halfway through the program, research on migration and its consequences has grown substantially in Sweden, as has the number of researchers conducting migration research. Special academic calls on segregation, labour market discrimination, antisemitism and integration regularly have high submission rates.² Researchers at MIM have also been successful in this regard, having been granted a number of new research projects (see MIM website)³ over the last years. In other words, the availability of funding and the need for more research has also boosted MIM's research profile.

III. MALMÖ AS A SUPERDIVERSE CITY

The city of Malmö has experienced substantive economic and demographic changes over the past three decades. The economic crisis of the early 1990s became the starting point of a transition from an industrial economy to a knowledge- and service-based economy, which continues to this day. Investments in transport infrastructure, like the Öresund bridge to Copenhagen and the underground metro, investments in human capital, like the foundation of Malmö University College (later promoted to University), and investments in housing, such as the conversion of the harbour area into an attractive housing district close to the sea, have all contributed to making the city an attractive destination for Swedes and international migrants alike.

In line with these economic developments, the demography of the city has changed into what has been called a “majority-minority” city,⁴ which is understood as a city in which immigrants and their children together form a demographic majority (over 50 percent), while the “native” population born in the country and their children are less than 50 percent of the population. Malmö can also be depicted as a “superdiverse” city due to its population’s high rate of ethnic and religious diversity and its diversity in terms of immigration status (see figure 2 and table 1 for indication based on available register statistics).⁵

Figure 2: Malmö, Population by country of birth and foreign background, 1990-2018



Source: Statistics Sweden, Register data 1990-2018.

Religious and ethnic diversity is not registered in Sweden and thus large surveys must be conducted to measure these individual characteristics.

Table 1. Ten largest groups of foreign born in Malmö in 1990, 2005 and 2022.

1990		2005		2022	
Country	Number	Country	Number	Country	Number
Yugoslavia	6 536	Yugoslavia	8 962	Iraq	11 675
Poland	4 892	Denmark	6 497	Syria	8 669
Denmark	3 920	Iraq	6 373	Denmark	7 485
Finland	2 015	Poland	5 654	Yugoslavia	7 257
Hungary	1 940	Bosnia-Herzegovina	5 502	Poland	6 619
Germany	1 926	Lebanon	3 962	Bosnia-Herzegovina	6 374
Iran	1 556	Iran	2 871	Afghanistan	4 865
Chile	1 237	Hungary	1 837	Lebanon	4 509
Lebanon	953	Finland	1 696	Iran	4 236
Romania	909	Germany	1 625	Pakistan	3 116
Other countries	12 375	Other countries	26 481	Other countries	58 485
Sweden/1 parent foreign	12 946	Sweden/1 parent foreign	19 423	Sweden/1 parent foreign	31 589
Sweden/2 parents foreign	9 321	Sweden/2 parents foreign	22 930	Sweden/2 parents foreign	44 944
Sweden/2 parents Sweden	173 361	Sweden/2 parents Sweden	158 328	Sweden/2 parents Sweden	151 926
Total	233 887	Total	271 271	Total	351 749

Source: Statistics Sweden

IV. MIM IN THE FUTURE

MIM, the Malmö Institute for Migration Studies, will continue to contribute to a broader and deeper knowledge of migration and its consequences to the city of Malmö and beyond. The prolongation of the guest professorship donation by the city of Malmö – which in 2020 was renamed into the *Malmö City Guest professorship in Migration Studies* - has been an important factor contributing to MIM’s success. Additionally, in 2024, MIM has secured continuous university funding for research activities and infrastructure for the years 2025 to 2030. Among the many plans for the next six years, one is especially worth highlighting: the development of the *Migration Society 2.0 database*, a unique database built on a recurring survey that will help enhance our knowledge and understanding of the patterns of migration-induced diversity, inclusion and exclusion that characterize Sweden. The database will also be crucial in consolidating MIM’s position as a leading centre of excellence and as an attractive milieu for migration researchers internationally. The database will be available for researchers affiliated to MIM, other researchers and students of

migration at MAU as well as for visiting scholars. The scientific aim of the survey is to contribute to the knowledge concerning the widely debated phenomenon of 'superdiversity'. More specifically, the survey will fill a data gap in Sweden by collecting information on variables not obtainable in national registers, such as religion and religiosity, race, ethnicity and language proficiency. Through this, and by repeating the survey every two years, it will be possible to map the diversity across the country as well as over time. The survey will thus give researchers the opportunity to map the diversity and analyse its connections to inclusion and exclusion in Malmö and Sweden and compare these findings to other cities in the world.

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