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FARMERS, FISHERMEN, GYPSIES, GUESTS: WHO IDENTIFIES?

ANNE BUTTIMER

The story is told of a theatrical performance in Stockholm in 1968 entitled *Zigenare* (Gypsies). After the performance the actors would engage in discussions with the audience. One evening, someone noticed that there were 20 or so gypsies in attendance but they were not contributing to the conversation. Finally a direct question was posed to them, and one replied, much to everyone's amazement: 'Lousy play . . . not only untrue but also gives a wrong picture of how gypsies are and live'. Feelings of shock and dismay pervaded the atmosphere; the attitude of these living gypsies showed not only lack of appreciation for the efforts but also did not correspond to the image projected in the play. To make matters worse, their ideology seemed to be suspiciously bourgeois, even petty bourgeois, rather than radical or politically progressive, as one had anticipated. At last one participant relieved the cognitive dissonance by shouting: 'Bloody right wing gypsies', he snarled. 'The question is whether you are really gypsies at all'.¹

MY image of gypsies, I must confess, has been shaped by theatre, film, and folk dances from central Europe. In Ireland we do not have gypsies — we have tinkers, and my childhood image of them was a mixture of fear, curiosity, and pity. 'We are the men of the rag and bone and we've come to pick the potato eyes out of the quality folk. We are the knights of the road. Some do call us that and we've come to comb the gristle out of the meat of the country folk. They are not the real gentry, you know. . . .'²

Into this farming, not real gentry, world was I born. Farmers, after many centuries owners of their land at last, had little time for tinkers. The country's conscience was finally pricked by social activists, and the tinkers were offered houses, but they were none too appreciative. 'We'd never go into a house 'cause there would be neighbours. . . .'³, they said; or 'It's only a bother to have a house and it's anyway not healthy to be shut inside them four walls with no trees in sight and only the windys to keep you half breathing'.⁴ Some use their houses in winter time and take to the road in summer; others recognise the costs and benefits of social welfare.

They want something from us. We want something from them. We want the houses and the education. We got the Catechism and we got Confession and we got the Marriage Certificates and we got dole money. They've

¹ Trankell (1975): 70.

² Weidel and O'Fearadhaigh (1976): 73.

³ Weidel and O'Fearadhaigh (1976): 86.

got our horses put away from us and they've got our cuts fenced with little gates. That's the way they wanted it. Now we want education so we can read and write but it don't mean that we're not travellers. They can't take away the blood that's rolling around in our veins now, can they, not when you have a drink taken and remember your name handed on for generations.⁵

Who identifies? How is a sense of identity formed? What role does the research world play in situations where identity becomes a problem? To be on the move, on *The Road to God Knows Where*,⁶ is as essential for a tinker's sense of identity as to be securely settled down is for the farmer's (Plate 1). National policymakers seem more comfortable with the latter; their own identity hinges on how well they measure, map, and settle the populations within their respective territories. In this EuroAmerican corner of the world, farmers, fishermen, and other folk with place-based livelihoods have fared better with policymakers than have gypsies and guestworkers; and researchers, despite their own gypsy life-styles, have been peddling myths and metaphors about mobility and identity that at best offer only partial suggestions to the policymaker.

As a native of northern Europe, insider and outsider in diverse settings, my contribution to this discussion is in the form of reflections based on experience filtered through cultural conditioning and disciplinary bias. Its aim is to explore the nature and scope of communication between natives and foreigners in migrant settings.

MOBILITY, EXPERIENCE, EXPERTISE

Few issues evoke as much passion and anxiety in northern and western Europe today as the question of migrants. Various identified by host societies as guestworkers, foreigners, refugees, or immigrants, thousands today are experiencing the pain or joy, hope or despair associated with being mobile and having an identity. Dramatic movements of population throughout the twentieth century — occasioned by wars, depressions, demographic changes, and political treaties — are all part of living memory. Since the Second World War, there has been a substantial shift of people from marginal agrarian districts of the Mediterranean and Atlantic fringes to the north and centre of Europe — lands of slower population growth and greater economic opportunity.⁷ In recent years, many have come from Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

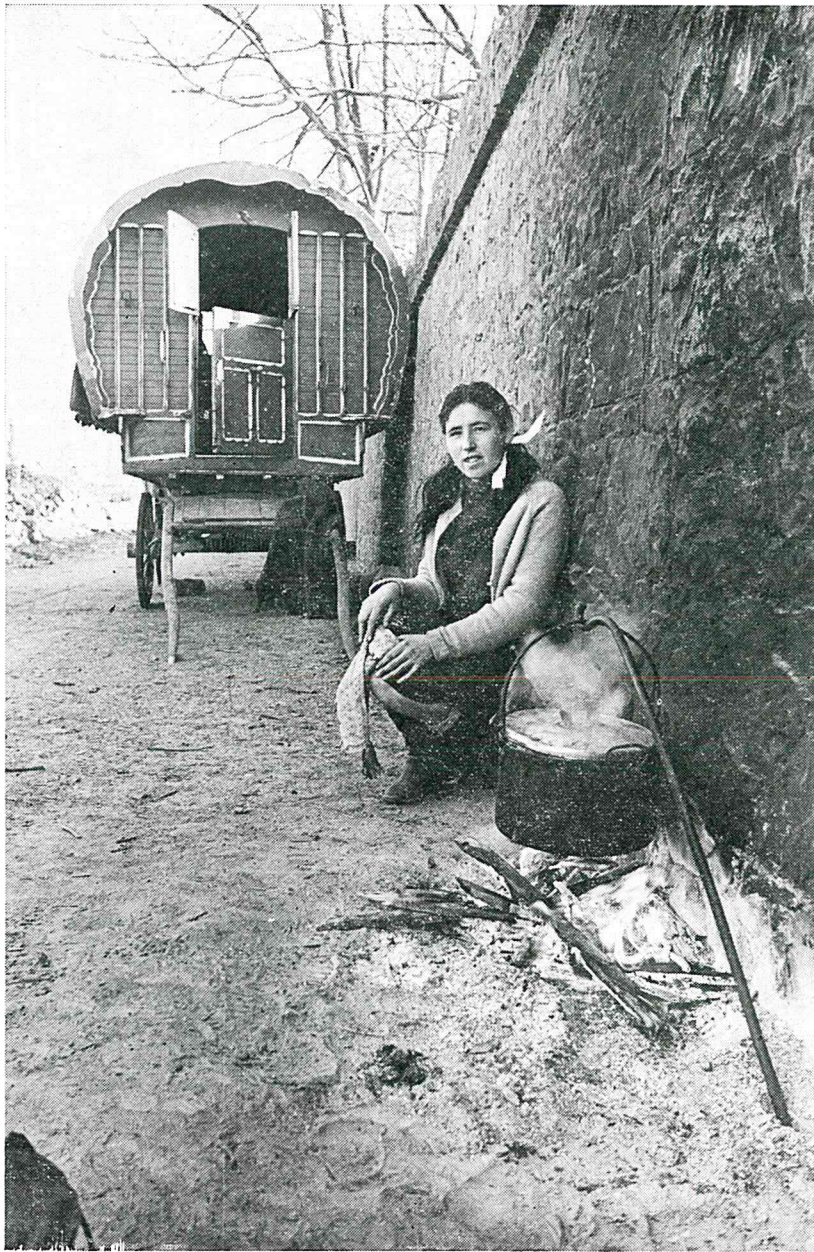
⁴ Weidel and O'Fearadhaigh (1976): 61.

⁵ Weidel and O'Fearadhaigh (1976): 100.

⁶ Maher (1972).

⁷ Kirk (1946): 242; Salt and Clout (1976); Pressat *et al.* (1973); Kosinski (1970).

ONE



Caravan of an Irish tinker.

(Photo: Janine Wiedel)

How are such patterns to be interpreted? Ever-more-refined data on the origins, numbers, apparent motivations, and life-styles of migrants are now available. The need for a population policy has spawned a priesthood of experts in virtually every host country, but to decode their statements may lie beyond either the ability or the interest of the migrant. Might questions of identity serve to unlock certain mysteries? Most modern European nations have forged a strong sense of cultural identity, and often their economic and social policies are couched in the rhetoric of national prestige and moral code. But today's new arrivals also come with a similarly strong sense of cultural tradition, and many include the children of historically great empires like Syria, Portugal, Greece, or Spain. To the policymaker in the host society these people may be inanimate numbers, resources for economic development, or objects for social welfare; to the newcomer, the folkways, prescriptions, and norms of the host country may appear to be an impenetrable maze that must somehow be survived.

I am a relatively recent migrant to Sweden, a country inhabited by 8.3 million people, about 8 per cent of whom were born elsewhere. Each individual is eventually given a personal number (*personnummer*) and in principle has legally protected rights of access to the basic necessities of life. Swedes are culturally homogeneous, whereas foreigners tend to be heterogeneous; yet given an ideology of equality, justice, and solidarity, the country's policy aspires to equal treatment for all. By international standards, there is little ground for complaint over material welfare; internally what can stir emotion these days, among both native and foreign born, is the elusive question of identity.

Now research workers, from their conventional stance as spectators, can easily comment on the language that divides academic disciplines — just as it separates host, guest, and policymaker. But what happens if these academics recognise that they are participants rather than simply observers, their research reports simply interpretations, also reflecting lived experiences?⁸ Cast in the metaphor of storytelling, could not the academic's role be that of encouraging dialogue between host and guest, rather than that of a minstrel singing to separate worlds, claiming an objectivity akin to that of a camera? For the past several years, it has made sense to me to explore the connections between lived experience and professional expertise through autobiographical reflections on career journeys.⁹ In that context the central objective was to discover common denominators, bases for mutual understanding, between practitioners in different fields. Three themes — meaning,

⁸ Rorty (1979): 315-394.

⁹ Buttimer (1983).

metaphor, and milieu — have opened doors not only for an interpretation of texts but also for livelier communication among researchers of different persuasions. These three themes might have the same potential as aids in considering issues of mobility, identity, and policy.

Finding meaning in one's migrant situation may depend, to a great extent, on one's work or professional setting. I am a geographer, and consequently in whatever land I find myself there is the initial expectation of finding a common language spoken by colleagues following the same vocation. Assuming that the meaning of life is intimately associated with the manner of making a living, preferably with the opportunity to express and develop personal talents and learned skills, then questions of identity can be entertained with professional peers — in the machine shop, studio, classroom, or office. Equally important is the milieu, the host environment, not only at work but also at home and among different kinds of neighbours. A migrant is more likely to feel at home in new surroundings if it is possible to evolve a sense of place¹⁰ that is resonant with former milieux. Historically, migrants often try to replicate or discover a type of habitat with some critical resemblance to their previous home. More significant than the biophysical and the architectural aspects, however, are the social characteristics of that milieu — how open or closed it may be to continuity, distinctiveness, and, eventually, evolution in a migrant's social space.¹¹

Let me illustrate this and offer a clue to what follows. Swedes excelled as farmers, craftsmen, and fishermen; during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. North America provided ample opportunity for them to exercise continuity and creativity in their inherited skills and traditional social and moral lives. Physical milieux were largely comparable to those left behind; cultural values and vocational meanings could gradually evolve through the Swedish language and the Lutheran church; over time, Swedish migrants could participate with neighbours and host officials on their own cultural terms without any loss of essential values. During that first and second generation, group settlement facilitated shared norms for social structure, life-style, and gender roles when the potential for collective creativity could be rallied to make the technological and social adaptations needed for the migrants to become Swedish-Americans and to offer a distinctive contribution to the lifeways of their host society.

Reflections on meaning and milieu in less unstructured settings could simply dramatise the contrast between host and guest, who could

¹⁰ Coles (1971); Norberg-Schultz (1980); Moberg (1949, 1952, 1956); Relph (1976).

¹¹ Buttimer (1980a).

both reflect on their own identities as states of being, tied to jobs and places, without yielding much mutual understanding. To transpose the discourse on identity from states of being to states of becoming is the function of metaphor, the third theme of this trilogy. Through metaphor both meaning and milieu can be considered in terms of becoming, a process that demands flexibility between host and guest (*meta* — 'change' or 'over'; *pherein* — 'to carry' or 'to bear') can facilitate the understanding of the complex and unfamiliar by way of analogy to the familiar. The word 'flow', for example, initially referred to water moving in a stream but is now often used in the context of traffic, trade, or transfers of labour. Storytellers in any culture recognise the power of metaphor, and every tinker knows the meaning of 'long acre' or 'quality folk'. The researcher's world also contains metaphors, expressions that are eventually incorporated into the disciplinary prose — such as system, map, boundary — some of which become standard terminology in transactions between academics and policymakers. Once these words take on a literal meaning, their metaphorical element is extinguished.

Take, for example, the frontier. 'The United States lies like a huge page in the history of society', Frederick Jackson Turner wrote. 'Line by line as we read this continental page from east to west we read the record of social evolution'.¹² This is an example of one classical genre of storytelling about mobility and identity that resonated with the experiences of the migrants themselves. This style of discourse, its fundamental image of reality being organismic, has a 'root metaphor'¹³ and argues for credibility in the categories of analysis appropriate to that metaphor. The power of metaphor is to conjure up a whole picture comprehensible to both partners in a dialogue. Without such a mediating image of reality, the possibilities for dialogue become slight.

Consider, for example, visitors coming from a cultural background where the entire world, its human and physical components, are conceived in terms of an organic whole, encountering a culture where everything is construed as being parts of a machine. Again, if visitors originate from a culture where each event or happening is interpreted as unique and evaluated in its own terms, consider the gulf that opens when confronting a host who believes that general rules should cover all aspects of all situations. Conversely, how can a civil servant of the north European society, trained to follow the letter of the law, possibly understand that which is unique and special in a migrant's situation? In short, concern with meaning and milieu could unlock

¹² Turner (1894), cited in Livingstone and Harrison (1981): 103.

¹³ Pepper (1942): 280-314; see also Buttimer (1982).

some of the emotional, aesthetic, and moral dimensions of identity and mobility, whereas, ideally, metaphor should capture and communicate these experiences in an intellectually comprehensible way. It seems to me that one of the greatest challenges for any research worker is to forge fresh metaphors and thereby facilitate dialogue between guest and host.

More than a decade ago I attempted to derive some policy lessons from efforts made to relocate working-class families from slums to more modern housing, and, in subsequent reflection and teaching on urban geography, to articulate the experience of those families in a metaphor of 'home' and 'reach'.¹⁴ Home was to connote those secure and familiar contexts within which people find identity — on the one hand it could have a bounded physical extent and character; on the other it could comprise the social reference worlds (family, kin, language, culture, class) within which an identifiable 'social me' is nurtured for each individual. The 'I', however, is more than the sum of 'social me's', for everyone is on a journey through life; identity is something always in a state of becoming, shaped by horizons of reach unfolding throughout a life's trajectory. The tensions of home and reach may thus be regarded as the bass and treble voices in any individual's life-path — when they are in harmony, identity unfolds; when they are separate or in disharmony, identity becomes frozen or fractured. Such dramatic changes as a move from one place to another can pose a traumatic challenge to that balance of home and reach. If the challenge becomes too great, there may occur regression to the former identity and apathy towards dialogue with the new situation. Host and guest, moreover, may be strangers, so that the prospect of metaphors of home and reach resulting in mutual understanding is even smaller.

From this experience, I recognised the need to seek some 'zone of common reach', to use Alfred Schütz' phrase — a common ground on which strangers can find a basis for mutual understanding.¹⁵ For every group the present 'zone of manipulable reach' may be best understood within the context of its own past images ('restorable reach') and its future aspirations ('attainable reach'). Taking some liberty with the ideas of Schütz, I am suggesting that shared reflections on meaning and milieu could help in discerning conflicts as well as compatibilities between host and guest as they seek 'we relationships' and a 'zone of common reach'.¹⁶ To take my present domicile of Sweden as an example, I suggest that zones of common reach may have been possible in the past between hosts and strangers, but con-

¹⁴ Buttimer (1972, 1980a).

¹⁵ Schütz (1944); Schütz and Luckman (1973); Rose (1969).

¹⁶ Schütz (1967): 139-214.

temporary social policy, particularly that concerned with immigrants, although reflecting values crystallised around Swedish experience in history, may not be appropriate nowadays for accommodating a dialogue between host and stranger.

EXPLORING SWEDISH CULTURAL IDENTITY

During 1976, as a visiting lecturer at Lund, I led an eight-week seminar in which issues of knowledge and lived experience were shared with 60-80 participants from fifteen disciplines. The issue of Swedish identity arose at times but was regarded as rather embarrassing. 'Ten years ago', I was told, 'you could read about different cultural types in the school books . . . now all textbooks have been cleansed of anything like that. The pendulum, as so often happens here, has swung to the opposite extreme. It is now inappropriate to suggest that there exists something like national character'. Participants generally preferred to cite old authors on the question of Swedishness, to speak of inventions and achievements, or to provide newspaper clippings criticising Swedish society. One of the old authors most frequently cited was Gustav Sundbärg.

The deepest implanted trait in the spirit of the Swedish people, and which to a large extent explains our nature . . . is the strong love of nature. It is this warm devotion that has created our great naturalists, our inventors and explorers; it is the same that has given us our lyrical poets, our splendid folk melodies and the Swedish song, yes, that has given the Swedish imagination its peculiar flight. But this pronounced sense for nature has to a certain extent turned our view away from the psychological realm — why the Swede, at the same time he is a great friend of nature, rather often is a weak judge of men. Therefore we have natural scientists and engineers of rank, but not diplomats and merchants, and we have a rich lyrical poetry but almost no drama.¹⁷

One foreign-born seminar participant felt there was a strong link between Swedish attitudes towards natural science and towards socio-political life: 'I am always amazed by the discrepancy between the normative way of choosing ideals in the sociopolitical field on the one hand, and the positivist research and pragmatic solutions on the other'. Pressing for further elaboration, I was invited to 'consider the Swedish approach to institutional life — their attitudes toward institutions *per se* rather than their real content; for example, attitudes toward the United Nations, writing a new constitution as a sequel, democracy in all formalities like casting lots at parliament'.

¹⁷ Sundbärg (1911): 4-5.

On questions of social order, there was never any lack of opinion; *ordning och reda* (order and preparedness) has an enormous appeal. Sweden has perhaps the neatest, cleanest, and most well-managed landscape in Europe. Central authorities ultimately decide all, yet there is well-organised debate and *överklagelse* (opportunity to contest) most decisions. Sectoral specialisation in most domains of life has deep historical roots, yet Swedish public life is liberal and permissive. It might be said: 'As long as you have permission, you can do virtually anything you please'. One foreign participant then added: 'You have to be the same . . . nobody in this country feels he is the Svensson [stereotypical Swede], nobody likes him . . . but everyone accepts a nearly compulsory behaviour similar to the non-existing Svensson. When the young generation made its revolt against Svensson it resulted in blue-jean Svenssons. . . . The authorities, the establishment, industry prefers Svensson — it is easier to run the country, the unions, the universities, if you have only Svenssons to deal with'.

Many a tale was told at the seminar and many attitudes ventilated, but on the whole the question of identity was carefully avoided. The reason, I gathered, was that there was a deliberate commitment to eliminating nationalistic chauvinism and to defending such basic human rights as egalitarianism, justice, and solidarity. I wondered — is there more foundation for such deeply held social values than memories of Nazi times or paranoia about demographic decline? What might there be in folk memory or historical experience that caused social visionaries to establish the welfare state? What were the similarities and differences between Swedes at home and abroad, between Swedish farmers and the academic images of them? How has Sweden dealt with newcomers throughout history and with the challenge of being migrants themselves? How, finally, have academics described this evolution?

Swedes on the Delaware

The seventeenth century — '*vere aureum saeculum*' (truly a golden century) according to Per Brahe¹⁸ — is recorded in European history as Sweden's moment of glory. Gustavus Adolphus (Gustav II Adolf 1611-1632) inherited and created many dreams, but 'one of the most precious jewels on his crown' was the prospect of a colony on the other side of the Atlantic as a base for a trading company. The idea had been sold to nobles and the Crown by a wandering Dutchman, but despite the death of Adolphus before its implementation, a colony on the Delaware river was launched in March 1638.

On America's east coast there was some rivalry between Dutch and English sovereign interests in conquering territory inhabited by native

¹⁸ Cited in Mead (1981): 94.

Indians. *The Annals of the Swedes on the Delaware*,¹⁹ first published in 1835, recorded how amicably they related to the Indians, who evidently regarded them as 'white brothers', and how loyal they remained to Swedish customs, faith, and behaviour. The instructions to the first governor, John Printz, written in Stockholm on 15 August 1642, were 'to promote by the most zealous endeavours, a sincere piety, in all respects toward Almighty God . . . , to administer justice according to the Swedish laws, to preserve . . . the manner and customs of Sweden, [and] to promote diligently all profitable branches of industry'. He was to deal firmly with the claims of Dutch and English settlers to surrounding land but to engage in friendly commercial relations, especially with the English. As for the American Indians, the governor was to sign a treaty with them, treat them 'in the most humane and equitable manner', and 'accomplish, as far as practicable, the embracing of Christianity by them, and their adoption of the manners and customs of civilised life'.²⁰ Evidently the new settlers implemented these instructions to the letter, although Printz was dispatched back home after a time because he was too strict a disciplinarian. This was not so of Campanius, the beloved pastor who translated the Lutheran catechism into the Indian language. He was there to witness a pact made with the Indians in 1654 and reported happily: 'The Swedes and the Indians are as one body and one one heart . . . thenceforward they shall be as one head — a compact body without any fissure'.²¹

How were the Swedes perceived by other groups in the host society? In a letter William Penn wrote to England in 1683, they were described as

. . . a plain, strong, industrious people, yet have made no great progress in the culture or propagation of fruit trees, as if they desired rather to have enough than plenty or traffic. But I presume the Indians made them the more careless, by furnishing them with the means of profit, to wit, skins and furs, for rum and such strong liquors. . . . I must needs commend their respect of authority and kind behaviour to the English . . . and I must in justice say I see few young men more sober and industrious.²²

Penn evaluated the Swedish settlers through his own lenses.

As a religious people they are presented to us in a most favourable light . . . an example for . . . their numerous descendants still occupying the soil so long ago inhabited by their ancestors. In coming to this new

¹⁹ Clay (1914).

²⁰ Clay (1914): 24-26.

²¹ Clay (1914): 28-29.

²² Clarkson (1811): 309.

country, they did not forget that their residence in it was to be but for a season, and there was another, a heavenly country, for which it was their duty to make preparation.²³

The *Annals* document that the Swedes' greatest dependence on the home country was for pastors, Bibles, and spiritual support. To the settlers, William Penn was none too trustworthy a character. For a pittance, the Swanson brothers had sold him 360 acres (145 hectares) on which to build the city of Philadelphia in 1682; he had used the Swedes as handy interpreters with the local Indians, and within thirty years both groups had been betrayed. Thanks to John Thelin, a conscientious postmaster in Göteborg (Figure 1), word reached Stockholm concerning the pastoral needs of the Delaware community, and the Crown was alerted to the challenge. In describing their needs, this migrant community also provided a succinct description of their situation.

We are for the most part husbandmen. We plough and sow and till the ground; and as to our meat and drink, we live according to the old Swedish custom. This country is rich and fruitful. . . . We send out yearly to our neighbours on this continent and the neighbouring islands bread, grain, flour, and oil. . . . We have great reason to thank the Almighty for his manifold mercies and benefits. God grant that we may also have good shepherds, to feed us with his holy word and sacraments.²⁴

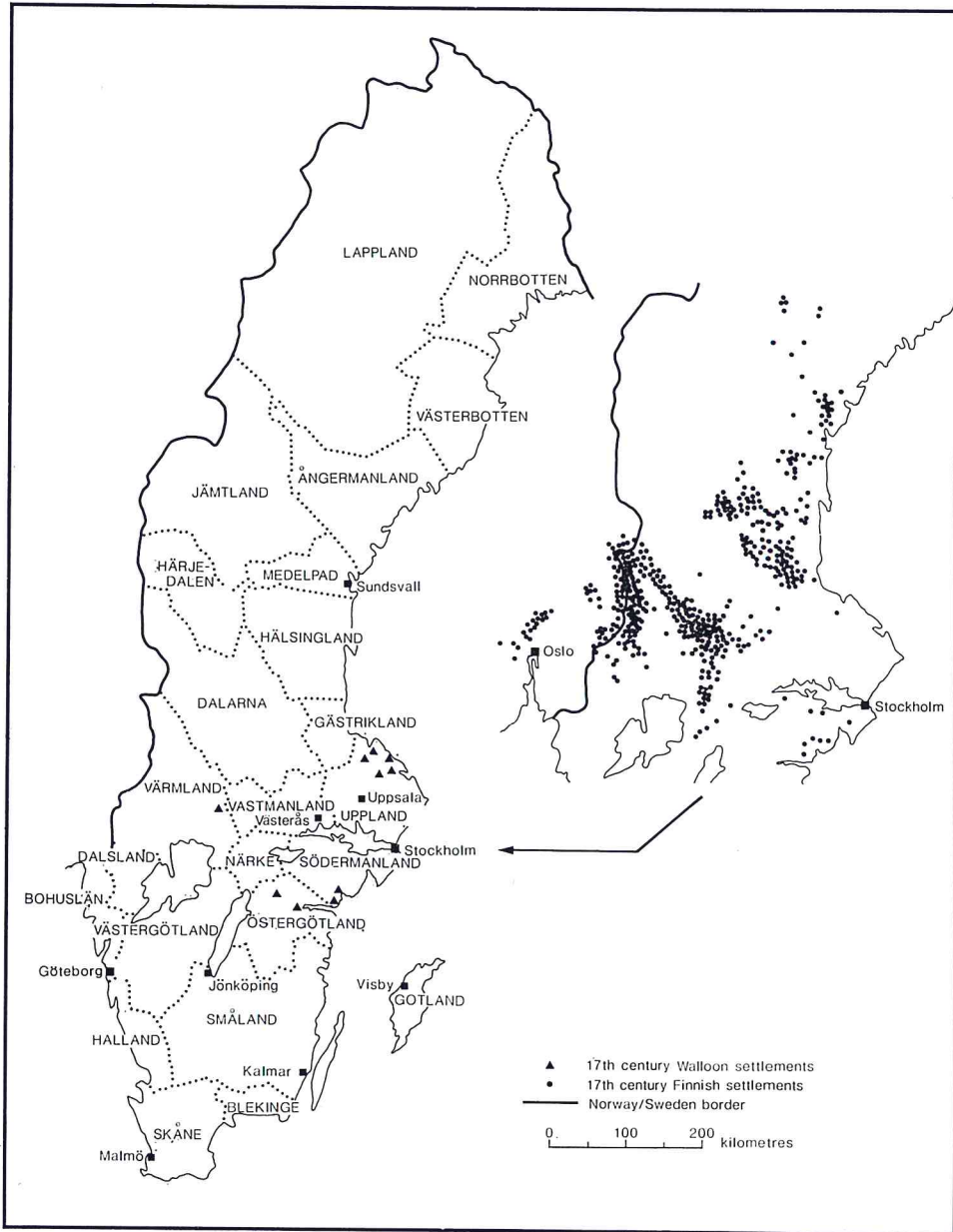
King Charles XI acceded to this request and in 1696 the bishop of Uppsala (Figure 1), Olaus Suebelius, sent pastoral greetings as well as two ministers to encourage the settlers to continue in the 'true doctrines of the Augsburg Confession of Faith, free from all human superstition and tradition'. Correspondence between these pastors and the Swedish authorities, published in the *Annals*, gives a graphic account of the seventeenth-century experience of these guests on the Delaware shores. The settlers behaved as loyal Swedes, as farmers and fishermen, maintaining a sense of identity anchored in fidelity to their homeland culture and gracious co-existence with the host groups. History records little glory for this Swedish colony, yet 300 years later the chronicle of the Gloria Dei Church in Philadelphia celebrated the story. In 1918, a headline in *The Lutheran Companion* enquired: 'Whose is the honor of having made our first American national flag?' Not Betsy Ross, as legend has it, but the ladies of the *syförening* (sewing circle) of the Gloria Dei Church! 'May we', the church paper continued, 'descendants of a later immigration from the Northland, be equally steadfast in our devotion to the flag of our country'.²⁵

²³ Clay (1914): 35-36.

²⁴ Clay (1914): 46.

²⁵ Gunderson (1918); Forsander (1918).

ONE



Counties of Sweden.

The Homeland in the Seventeenth Century

Sweden had other preoccupations in the seventeenth century — a population of 900,000, 90 per cent of whom were peasants, supported a Crown with ambitious dreams of empire building.²⁶ More than a quarter of the cultivable land was owned by noblemen and virtually all agricultural production was taxed to support military campaigns abroad. Mead describes the character of this baroque age as one in which the imagination of the Renaissance was tempered by the discipline of the Lutheran ethic.²⁷ At one extreme was the monarch as hero; at the other, the frontiersman who 'prays with his hand upon the plough'. Oxenstierna, Chancellor of the Realm, dreamed of the northern woods as a 'new India', while military campaigns continued to secure the entire Baltic, maintain outlets to the Atlantic, and play defender of the 'true faith' in the Thirty Years War on the continent.

Although it was still primarily a land of farmers, food supply in Sweden scarcely kept pace with population. Grain imports from across the Baltic, together with local sources of fish, maintained a reasonable level of nourishment (\pm 2000 calories per capita), substantially richer in protein than that enjoyed by other Europeans. Forest and fisheries supplemented an agrarian life-style. Inflated prices for lumber in western Europe made forestry a profitable enterprise, soon clearing coastal areas; and the proceeds from tar, pitch, and resin could easily justify the transport costs to customers. In the seventeenth century, such primary livelihoods yielded the basic elements of a Swedish farmer's identity. He was also characteristically a devout Lutheran, and his parish office had charge of keeping records on births, marriages, and deaths, as well as literacy and moral conduct. The clergy, represented by the local pastor, constituted one of the four 'estates' in the Swedish realm, the others being nobility, burghers, and *bönder* (farmers).

Thus the Crown and its nobles and court had international notions about Swedish identity, the church dutifully upheld responsibility for the nation's material and spiritual welfare, and the *bönder* existed, as best they could, in a life-style shaped by generations of toil in the northern climate. Burghers, however, were a more diverse lot. Ever since the twelfth century, Hansa traders from Germany had been welcomed in Gotland, had built the towns of Visby and Kalmar, and later had established such cities as Stockholm and inland satellites like Västerås and Jönköping (Figure 1). In all these towns the elite of traders and businessmen was predominantly German speaking. These Germans were a valuable, if sometimes resented, foreign group. In

²⁶ Roberts (1973).

²⁷ Mead (1981): 74.

1420 only one in twenty of Stockholm's citizens and lawyers were Swedish. Respected for their superior talents in international trade, traders especially perceived the opportunity to link Sweden, with its vast reserves of ore and forest products, to the wider European economy.

Seventeenth-century Göteborg also welcomed other visitors, notably Scottish sea captains, merchants, and artisans, who played a significant role in the East Indian and Carnegie companies, which provided a crucial link with New Sweden in Delaware. In succeeding centuries the Dutch, French, and Russians arrived to participate in Sweden's commerce and trade. Not all foreign elites, however, met with unequivocal welcome — the history of the Swedish Jews reveals much ambivalence,²⁸ and right up to the twentieth century there has been little sensitivity in the treatment of Lapps, whose ancestral hunting territory was steadily claimed for the Swedish Crown and Lutheran creed.²⁹ With gypsies and 'knights of the road', moreover, Sweden has done little better than Eire. In terms of seventeenth-century history, two groups deserve closer scrutiny: the Finns, who cleared the Swedish forest on the margins of existing agriculture, and the Walloons, who helped develop metallurgical enterprises in Uppland and the south-east (Figure 1).

The Savolaks Finns

Between 1556 and 1809 Finland was a Grand Duchy of Sweden, fated to be a battleground during the Swedish-Russian war of the late sixteenth century.³⁰ An exasperated group of Finns, having made the long trek to Sweden in 1597, fitted usefully into Karl IX's vision of pushing back the forest frontier. New 'settlers' would be exempt from taxes for six years, there were no legal requirements to enter the country, and the physical milieu of Värmland, Dalarna, and Hälsingland counties (Figure 1) were not at all unfamiliar. The Finns could make a home in the Boreal forest, by lake and stream, as they had done in Savolaks in their fathers' time.³¹ Even more significantly, they had a special skill to offer — a special slash-and-burn method of forest clearance — and they were masters of the art. There would be no need to adapt inherited conceptions of habitat, livelihood, or milieu; it was simply a matter of transposition (Plates 2 and 3).

²⁸ Ehrenpreis and Jensen (1920); Olan (1924); Valentine (1964).

²⁹ Turi (1917); Bylund (1956); Laestadius (1838); Ruong (1967, 1975), *Statens Offentliga Utredningar* (1975).

³⁰ Arnstberg and Ehn (1976).

³¹ Nilsson (1950); Broberg (1953, 1967).

Thus the scene was set for people to live and work according to prior experience and expertise, through forest clearance supplemented with herding, hunting, and fishing. This practise had a marked seasonal rhythm — at different times, and with distinct ritual, they skied after wolf or lynx, moose or bear. A culture laced with symbols of hunting and fishing, of burning and clearing, of *trölldom* (magic), of *näcken* (fiddler in the river) and of *skogsra* (elusive maiden in the forest), could reinstall itself on new ground.³² These symbols, not unfamiliar to Swedes in these hinterlands, held for the Finns essential meaning in everyday experience. Celebrating their own identity, the new settlers could for a time also be convinced that they were contributing something positive to the host society.

The Finns intermarried, socialised their young in Finnish ways, and learned enough Swedish to negotiate public matters of law and trade.

³² Broberg (1953); Arnstberg and Ehn (1976).

TWO



People known for clearing forest (*Svedjefolk*) at Eno, Finland.

(Photo: I. K. Inha, courtesy of Finnish National Board of Antiquities, Helsinki)

THREE



Seventeenth-century Finnish migrants (*Svedjefolk*) in Värmland, Sweden.

(Photo: courtesy of Nordic Museum, Stockholm)

Finns and Swedes lived side by side, but in territorially and socially distinct worlds. Only visiting hunters from Finland ever caused any competition over resources between host and guest, and out of this evolved a *shieling*, a common ground where herds belonging to Swedish farmers could find pasture. However, in public affairs — ecclesiastical or legal — the Finn characteristically felt like a second-class citizen.³³ Nature and the national economy ultimately set limits to forest clearance, and the agricultural value of marginal forest lands and hill country was steadily outrivalled by the value of their mineral deposits. With appropriately humanitarian apologia, Sweden adopted the cost-efficient course suggested by a mercantilist era, developing mining resources to strengthen the economy and expand the empire. Efforts were made to ‘civilise’ the Finns through church, language, and formal schooling, preferably — but not always — through persuasion. Any refusal meant they were deemed a legal burden on society (*ofredig för var svensk*).³⁴ At one point the Crown intervened in the question

³³ Gothe (1845): 95.

³⁴ Gothe (1845): 95; Arnstberg and Ehn (1976).

of civil rights³⁵; however, the source of the tension was a profound fear, based on moral and cultural convictions, of the Finn's *trölldomsförmaga* (magic ability) — beliefs in a spiritually animated world that could bring curse as well as blessing, death as well as life, within that northern forest land. The Finns survived and are still the overwhelming majority of immigrants in Sweden. Yet after 250 years they present an enigma to their host society; few become Swedish citizens and many still dream of returning home.

The Walloons

If the Delaware community thanked divine providence for John Thelin, who was instrumental in supplying them with pastors and Bibles, so should high officials in Sweden have rejoiced that in the early 1600s such enterprising Belgians as Louis de Geer and the deBesche brothers were willing to depart their homeland and establish manu-

³⁵ Arnstberg and Ehn (1976) : 28-29.

FOUR



Traditional charcoal burning (*charbon du bots*) in southern Belgium.
(Photo: courtesy of Jacques Denis, Namur)

FIVE



Charcoal burning (*kolning*) at Walloon settlement in Ullfors, Sweden.

(Photo: courtesy of Anders Mossberg, Sjukarby)

facturing and commerce there. These Walloons had excelled in blacksmith and foundry work, having supplied weapons for the 1589 war between Spain and the Netherlands. About 1,000 families were enticed to settle in a land where their talents were welcome and their Calvinist religion would perhaps be free from persecution.³⁶

Diverse were the skills of the Walloons, ranging from smelting to bar-iron moulding to charcoal burning (Plates 4 and 5); among them were found wheelwrights, designers, and business managers. The terms of contract for prospective labour migrants from Walloon country

³⁶ Dahlgren (1921); Kilbom (1958).

were straightforward — the master would pay travel expenses and guarantee lodging for all coal burners and wood cutters, together with their families, if they agreed to serve ‘with complete obedience, veneration, and without contradiction or opposition to anything he would ask them to do . . .’.³⁷ No one had the right to work for anybody else in the kingdom, which meant that Walloons often stayed for generations in the same *bruk*, or company town (Figure 1: inset). Wages were good and there was freedom to practise their religion ‘within their own walls’.³⁸ In fact, the better qualified among them attracted higher salaries than Swedish *bruksarbetare* (workers in the town).

There were several different social classes among the Walloons — noblemen, artisans, workers, firm owners — yet ethnic identity seemed a far stronger force than class identification. Because of the diversity of their skills and expertise, they interacted with Swedes at various levels. Belgium was held in high esteem by the business elite; among small farmers and industrial workers there were opportunities to cooperate or compete for water, food, coal, and ore. The possibility existed for a shared zone of common reach, but the immigrants were by no means clamouring for admission. In fact, the reverse was closer to the truth, for the Walloons were considered culturally superior — they spoke a world language (French), many had good education, they boasted poets and musicians, and they held feasts — at weddings, for instance — far more elegantly than the Swedes.³⁹ Walloon children were socialised in the Calvinist creed and the French language, and as long as de Geer remained alive the Lutheran establishment was tolerant. Attitudes hardened after his death in 1652, and by 1670 Calvinism had virtually disappeared from the *bruk*, although it was still practised by the lords and nobles. By the time the Freedom of Religion Act was passed in 1741, it was virtually meaningless for the Walloons, most of whom had already converted to Lutheranism.

From the standpoint of identity Finn and Walloon were notably different, and much of that difference can be attributed to host attitudes towards them. All Walloon names were registered in church records, but Finnish never were. Both married within their own groups for the first two generations, but the Walloons later mixed freely with Swedes. Most critically, however, the talents provided by Finn and Walloon had a distinct historical and territorial reach. Physically, socially, ecologically, and economically the zone of manipulable reach for the Finn was similar to that left behind, and a Finnish world could be

³⁷ Kilbom (1958): 235.

³⁸ Arnstberg and Ehn (1976): 31.

³⁹ Hillgren (1929): 4.

recreated in central and northern Sweden as long as it served the interests of the host nation. Consequently, for a short period in history Finns were able to fuse their zones of manipulable and restorable reach. Difficulties with identity arose in the context of their zone of attainable reach, for this required adaptation and innovation in basic skills, which was scarcely conceivable given the attitudes on either side and the lack of a language, faith, or culture in common. Walloons, on the other hand, began with a certain level of cultural respect and not only had varied skills that could be maintained and furthered in a mercantilist context, but also could easily become Walloon Swedes without any perceived loss of identity. Like the farmers and fishermen in the Delaware valley, these industrial geniuses were welcome guests in a land with the space and time for them to adapt graciously.

Seventeenth-century Sweden thus illustrates the first part of my thesis. It hosted merchants, forest workers, and talented experts in an era when the collective and national identity of the host was intimately connected with economic development and imperial expansion. For newcomers, the key criteria for successful negotiation of identity and mobility were the prospects for continuing and enhancing their talents and skills (meaning), and an environmental context whose biophysical features were not too unfamiliar and whose legal and institutional structures admitted the prospect of a shared social world (milieu). These key criteria also explain the opposite experiences. Nomads, gypsies, and other minorities followed lifeways that were not widely comprehensible, not useful to the society and polity at the time, and not morally acceptable within the reference frame of a host society comprised of farmers, fisherfolk, and selected guests.

MAPPING THE RESEARCHABLE RECORD

Let us now turn to the research world and the daring deeds of the eighteenth century to examine the second part of my thesis. That century witnessed the flowering of the physiocratic ideal throughout Scandinavia, at a time when political arithmetic was in vogue. Linnaeus (1707-1778), his disciple Per Kalm (1716-1779), and several economic societies began to document the physical, economic, and social character of places both at home and abroad. The *Tabellwerk* (1748) made clergy responsible not only for vital statistics but also for periodic surveys of crop yields and animals⁴⁰; *Geometrisk Jordböcker*, initiated by the Central Land Survey Office, date from 1628.⁴¹ Censuses enumerating diverse facts to facilitate domestic stocktaking, assess military strength, aid revenue authorities, and estimate food

⁴⁰ Heckschner (1949); Hannerberg (1971); Arosenius (1928).

⁴¹ Helmfrid (1959).

requirements in case of famine — all of them written in patriotic prose — constituted the research climate following the '*vere aureum saeculum*'.⁴²

Malthus, visiting Scandinavia in 1799, concluded that the central issue was food — he felt that at that time Sweden and Finland could support nine or ten million persons if agriculture could be improved.⁴³ The scholarly imagination rallied around slogans of political arithmetic — '*La terre produit à proportion au nombre des bras qui la cultivent*' (Rousseau); or 'An army marches on its stomach' (Napoleon). Eighteenth-century research thus focussed on population and resources, which were policy issues of domestic and imperial import.

The saga of nineteenth-century Sweden receives scant coverage in school history books. Tales of Vikings and of empire are inevitably more exciting than stories about poor farmers, landless workers, or social democracy. Until Moberg's novels of the 1950s, the forgotten drama was emigration to North America — 1.2 million Swedes lost to another land between 1860 and 1910. At first local scholars paid little attention; later emigration was described as a 'safety valve for a situation of overpopulation' and economic crisis.⁴⁴ I believe this chapter in Swedish history could provide insight into the most important underpinnings of official social policy down to this day.

Something to Write Home About

The collection of letters assembled by Gustav Sundbärg, supervisor of an impressive Commission on Emigration (*Emigrationsutredning*) during the first decade of the 1900s,⁴⁵ documents issues of identity involved in the drama of emigrating to North America. Sundbärg reported to the Commission in 1913: 'There were perhaps very few if any who emigrated to America because of the denial of political suffrage', but he conceded that 'Without doubt emigration might have been discouraged if manhood suffrage had been introduced in 1880 instead of 1909'.⁴⁶

Issues of social and political equality were central in letters written home by migrants,⁴⁷ for many had been overwhelmed by the inability to attain their ideals in Sweden, where freedoms of speech, press, and assembly were denied. Some young radicals — often members of the intelligentsia, artists, and journalists — were also misfits in the new

⁴² Mead (1958, 1981); Roberts (1973).

⁴³ Guteland *et al.* (1974).

⁴⁴ Guteland *et al.* (1974): 54-83.

⁴⁵ Sundbärg (1913).

⁴⁶ Sundbärg (1913): 836.

⁴⁷ Janson (1931).

society and ended their lives in suicide.⁴⁸ Most, however, were farmers or landless workers, who sought in the prairies the opportunity to create a new life.⁴⁹ Many peasants and crofters from northern Sweden felt their own sense of personal worth being threatened by radical changes in agrarian life.⁵⁰ To Americans, these Swedes were among the most desirable of immigrants. J. H. Diss DeBar, the Commissioner of Immigration for West Virginia, wrote unsuccessfully to Sweden to encourage prospective migrants to choose that state rather than Wisconsin or Minnesota, arguing that the climate was better and their talents would be highly appreciated. Weighing climatic considerations against social feasibility, most Swedes decided to join their compatriots in the northern states⁵¹ (Plates 6 and 7).

⁴⁸ Janson (1931): 18.

⁴⁹ Lindberg (1930); Janson (1931); Moberg (1956).

⁵⁰ Magnusson (1907), cited in Janson (1931): 329.

⁵¹ Janson (1931): 10.

SIX



Swedish farmers ploughing with team of oxen in Ostergötland, c. 1908.

(Photo: Viktor Wiborg, courtesy of Västra Kinda Kommunbibliotek)

SEVEN



Abandoned farm of Swedish settlers, north of Amasa, Michigan, U.S.A.
(Photo: courtesy of J. F. Hart, University of Minnesota)

Helge Nelson has advanced the thesis that Swedish migrants sought physical milieux similar to those of their homeland.⁵² Ample cartographic and photographic evidence exists that the Swedes in North America replicated familiar habitats, even in natural surroundings that were vastly different.⁵³ In the San Joaquin valley of California, Swedish customs, festivals, and folkways had to be adapted to desert conditions; earlier they had survived the changeable climate of the Delaware valley. However dear to the geographer's heart, the key issue may not be one of biophysical setting. Probably more critical was the social atmosphere that allowed space for moral, emotional, and economic foundations for identity to evolve. For a newcomer a sense of place is important, but so equally is the viability of the social space, free to be established initially according to the norms and values of inherited culture but able gradually to accommodate to the new situation. The evolution of migrant identity thus depends greatly on how open or closed the wider context of social and physical space is.

⁵² Nelson (1943).

⁵³ Fjellström (1970).

POPULATION POLICY IN THE
TWENTIETH CENTURY

The fascinating question is: how much was learned in Sweden from this episode in history? To what extent did issues of collective and national identity enter into the forging of population policy in twentieth-century Sweden? 'American fever' claimed more than one-fifth of the total Swedish population — a human haemorrhage with enormous import for collective identity, including that of those left behind. In characteristic fashion, the government appointed the previously mentioned *Emigrationsutredningen*, chaired by Sundbärg, who edited a voluminous report along with the collection of migrants' letters.⁵⁴ Attempting to relate issues of emigration and national character, he claimed

The Swedes . . . lack national instinct and tend to downgrade what is theirs. They also lack historical sense and are somewhat nonchalant. They are friendly and appreciative toward foreigners but somewhat envious of their fellow countrymen, whom they regard as kind but lazy. They are equally duped by Danes and Norwegians and show little appreciation for their own great men, not even for Gustav II Adolf. The Swedes in America, five times as numerous as Swedes in Finland, keep no cultural connections with their home country, and there is no publisher who cares about them. On the other hand, they do infinite damage to 'Swedishness' (*svenskhet*) by propagating that pejorative attitude which is expressed in letters home from America. In this respect we believe that not even the young socialists have caused our people so much evil as our 'patriotic' countrymen in the United States.⁵⁵

During the latter half of the nineteenth century in Sweden, there were other priorities on the national consciousness, a fresh ideology and value system in the making, as the country underwent transition from a preindustrial to an advanced industrial society. Economic liberalism was in the air, traditional privileges and controls were ousted, and the guiding metaphor was 'the market'. Technological progress, industrial growth, and an individualistic philosophy had begun to monopolise political debate; the assumption was that, given reasonable material conditions, any person could succeed. Measures to counteract emigration came in the form of grants to individual owners of agricultural holdings rather than in terms of industrial development.⁵⁶ Late in the century living conditions improved, mortality rates declined, and the total population increased, but many Swedes still lacked the basic conditions for individual improvement.

Population movements within Sweden, growing industrialisation, and the awareness of emigration helped create the atmosphere that spawned

⁵⁴ Sundbärg (1908, 1910).

⁵⁵ Cited in Henrikson (1966): 837-839.

⁵⁶ Guteland *et al.* (1974): 78-79.

several folk movements. These, in turn, laid the foundations for Sweden's political climate in the early twentieth century. Among the oldest were such free religious movements as the *Evangeliska Fosterlandsstiftelsen* of the 1850s and the *Svenska Missionsförbundet* led by Waldenström. All expressed naturalistic piety and many also reflected influences from North America, having been founded by returned migrants — for example, the *Svenska Baptistsamfundet*, the *Orebro-missionen*, and the *Filadelfiaförsamlingen*. The temperance movement was still linked with organised religion, but such bodies as the *Godtemplarorden* (International Order of Good Templars) also had Swedish-American connections. Other groupings, without explicit association with religion, were more closely tied to the rising labour movement. In 1876, the famous Sundsvall strike of 500 sawmill workers marked the country's first major visibility in the international labour movement and became the catalyst for the establishment of unions. In 1898 the *Landsorganisationen* was formed; and other advocates for civil rights, like the *Svenska Arbetarförbundet*, attracted followers and produced a platform with an antireligious flavour.⁵⁷

The demise of patriarchal forms of employment, guilds, and other means of mutual aid left a great structural gap within society that the unions sought to fill. From the policy standpoint, however, another tension existed between what might be labelled liberal and socialist ways of prescribing for human well-being. A liberal humanitarian view would consider the individual the cardinal concern, yet terms like 'poor relief' had many negative connotations. Why should particular individuals have to undergo the humiliation of 'need assessment', and why should they sacrifice pride or personal integrity to accept 'public assistance'? These were burning questions for a farming civilisation whose members had invested brain and brawn in attempting to live decently. On the other hand, socialists argued that poverty and distress were products of economic and social conditions; they were remediable, particularly through formal education. Eventually, relief from socio-economic problems should be available as a fundamental and legally established right rather than being based on a humiliating assessment of personal need.

The human values propounded during this period of Swedish history and the social policy that emerged revolved around such guiding slogans as *jämlikhet* (equality), *solidaritet* (solidarity), and, most of all, *trygghet* (security) — principles that are still cherished elements in the national identity. A more controversial issue, however, was 'integration' — to many outsiders the prototypical quality of Swedish identity. For many late-nineteenth-century labour activists, this notion

⁵⁷ Henrikson (1966).

had a bourgeois or liberal tone — social democrats preferred to speak of a more radical transformation of society.⁵⁸ Once they were in power, semantic transformation became necessary and the term 'integration' acquired both an offensive and defensive meaning, on the one hand denoting the gradual removal through reform of the bases of social discontent and on the other hand representing a defense against excessive change and against Nazism, along with an offensive strategy for achieving political goals.

But how could a state in full swing towards industrialisation and economic growth afford such a generous welfare package? In the theory of neoclassical economics, welfare expenditures were a kind of sacrifice, a debt never to be repaid. There emerged from the Stockholm School of Economics an alternative view, in which human welfare was an integral part of economic policy and measures could guarantee both economic efficiency and humanitarian concern.⁵⁹ Now the slogan 'integration' could imply both the incorporation into and the transformation of society — a bold stroke for international visibility.

As long as foreign exports, coupled with a leading and productive efficiency in engineering and technological innovation, enabled Sweden to realise its social dream, the EuroAmerican world gazed in awe and prospective migrants from marginal lands viewed it as a utopia. Sweden could lead the choir of United Nations proclamations about human rights, social justice, and aid to the Third World. The symphony was credible, for the country had erected an impressive system guaranteeing equality of income, access to health and social services, environmental protection, and social integration. To implement this grand vision of society — which bears many resemblances to a religion — a new priesthood of experts was spawned. Each sector, with hierarchical blessing, busied itself with rationalising life's conditions, and the results — the standardised components and the moral imperatives of functional specialisation — reveal the fruits of that radical transformation.

Much of the liturgy also echoes Swedish history — the state building of Gustavus Adolphus, the administrative machinery designed by seventeenth-century officialdom, the unimpeachable civil servant, the spirit of laws. The rituals of Swedish contemporary life, the tone of editorials and committee reports, of graduation ceremonies and residence permits — all echo the moral consciousness of a people with deep historical roots. Some observers remark that the postwar situation is radically different from anything that preceded it, and

⁵⁸ Samuelson (1973).

⁵⁹ Myrdal (1940).

that the transformation of society, now virtually complete, places education, health, law, and public service in the hands of the civil servant. Thus not only the migrant but also many a native finds it difficult to identify with these realities; as in so many religious movements in history, the structures have shrouded the ethos.

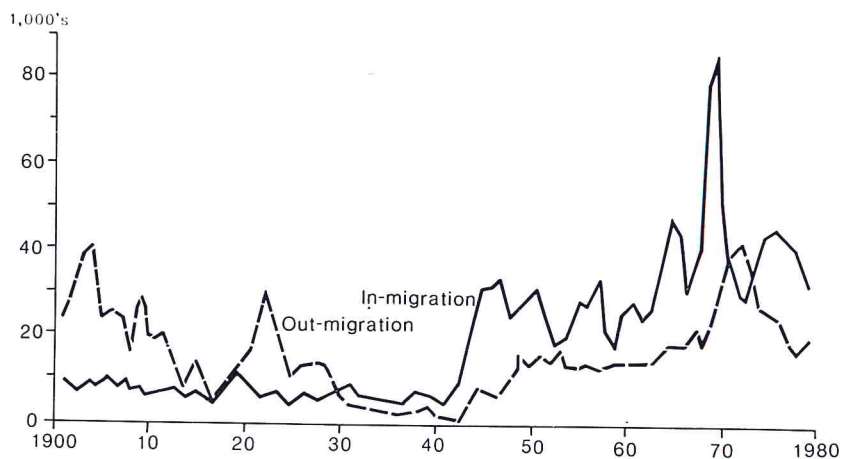
CONTEMPORARY MIGRATION AND IDENTITY

For the past eighty years, Sweden has witnessed both in- and out-migration, the two curves crossing as recently as the 1930s to produce a consistent annual surplus of immigrants (Figure 2). Between 1944 and 1970, 650,000 foreign nationals entered the country, constituting 8 per cent of the total population and accounting for 22 per cent of its growth. These newcomers included political refugees, labour migrants, and foreign experts and consultants⁶⁰; in 1982, 5.4 per cent of the Swedish workforce was reported to be 'foreign citizens'.⁶¹ If the estimate that only half of all 'foreign born' have become Swedish citizens is accepted, the striking differences in demographic profile between native and foreign populations suggest that these proportions will continue to change in favour of the immigrant (Figure 3: inset).

⁶⁰ Rundblad (1975): 268-269.

⁶¹ Statens Invandrarverk (1982).

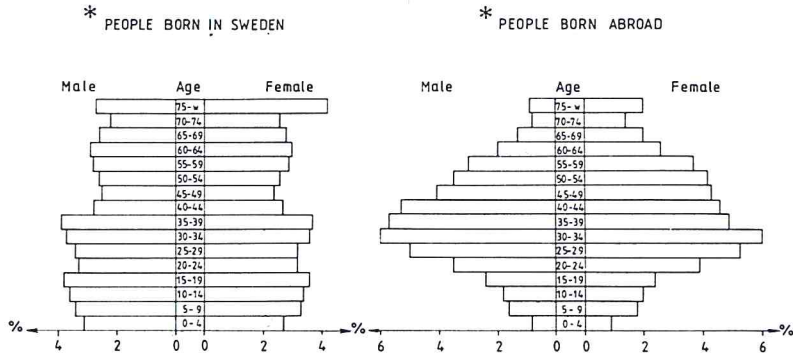
TWO



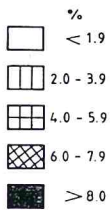
Source: Statens Invandrarverk (1980)

In- and out-migration, Sweden, 1900-1980.

THREE



* 31 December 1981 Source: SOS Folkmängd.



Source: Statens Offentliga Utredningar (1974/1; 1981/4s)

Foreign citizens resident in Sweden, 1970 and 1980.

What is the significance of these facts for the identity of the host society? Despite a deliberate policy attempt to avoid segregation in the 1960s, immigrants tend to concentrate in the large cities of Stockholm, Göteborg, and Malmö (Figure 3; cf. Figure 1). Focussing upon the postwar experience of immigration may help promote a broader understanding of identity and the potential bases for dialogue between the hosts and guests, natives and foreigners, insiders and outsiders inhabiting the land of Sweden today.

Four out of five immigrant workers are in manufacturing or public service, where working conditions are deemed less desirable. Many work overtime, on weekends, or at night on jobs typically most vulnerable to depression, reclassification, or automation.⁶² Few consider it worthwhile to acquire new skills to secure better positions. Some immigrants are overskilled, taking jobs beneath their level of competence and having higher stress and risk of heart attack.⁶³ In 1981, the rate of unemployment among immigrants was twice that of Swedish-born workers, with the incidence even higher among younger age groups.⁶⁴ Despite such bleak statistics, few host societies rival Sweden in its concern for immigrants.⁶⁵ Language courses and interpreters, television and radio programmes in various languages, employment agencies, news bulletins like *Ny i Sverige* (New in Sweden), and government grants for voluntary associations all owe their origin to the findings of research teams with impressive expertise. Labour unions have organised education programmes for both refugees and guest-workers, and since 1973 employers must grant a foreign worker up to 240 hours of salaried leave to learn Swedish. In short, since at least 1974 the Swedes have made a deliberate attempt to reduce or eliminate differences between native and migrant.

And the meaning of all this for identity? In any European country official reports by immigration authorities identify a migrant in terms of employment, housing, consumption patterns, perhaps even access to legal and political power. Commentators on the identity problems of labour migrants might use starkly different terms: 'It is not men who immigrate but machine-minders, sweepers, diggers, cement mixers, cleaners, drillers . . . to become a man (husband, father, citizen, patriot) a migrant has to return home. The home he left because it held no future for him'.⁶⁶ The United Nations and the International

⁶² Statens Invandrarverk (1982).

⁶³ *Svenska Dagbladet* (April 13, 1984): 1, 13.

⁶⁴ Statens Invandrarverk (1982).

⁶⁵ Schwartz (1971): 32-33; Statens Offentliga Utredningar (1971/51, 1973/83, 1974/69).

⁶⁶ Berger and Mohr (1975): 58.

Labour Office may categorise that home as an 'underdeveloped region' or 'marginal area', but what if the educated migrant transposes such adjectives to transitive verbs? Then 'to underdevelop' or 'to marginalise' may be construed as an integral part of a broad economic process whereby certain world regions are placed in a perpetual state of dependence.

Host societies generally classify people by country or state of origin, but migrants may identify themselves with a particular region. Whereas most modern societies hesitate to categorise people in terms of race, creed, or ideology, many a migrant will select these as the primary bases for personal identity. To render a map of social conditions sociologists and demographers enumerate people according to access to income, food, housing, education, health services, or political vote, but migrants writing home about their situation might display different priorities — health, food, and shelter might be mentioned, but relationships with neighbours on the street, on the job, or in public life might be far more salient indicators of 'social condition'. Policy research, in short, frequently devolves around numbers, distributions, employment, social costs and benefits; questions of identity arise mainly when violence, housing pressure, or unemployment become news.

As noted in a recent news magazine, Sweden would be paralysed were all immigrants suddenly to depart for their homelands or to go on strike.⁶⁷ Graffiti writers, often teenagers, blotch hostile slogans on benches and underground stations. Recent economic depression throughout Europe has brought unemployment of alarming proportions and immigrants are often the first involved. An alarmist tone can be detected in contemporary Swedish film, art, and literature, portraying growing feelings of racism and xenophobia among native youth — the alienation and paranoia that characterise many large cities in Europe.⁶⁸ As investments by host societies in pertinent research and policy measures yield to the increasingly articulate and large populations of guests, prospects for achieving those values of integration seem to recede; the possibility of improved communication and mutual understanding between native and foreigner seems at times remote.

In 1969, when postwar immigration peaked (Figure 2), the Commission on Immigration and the State Employment Agency undertook an attitude survey of both hosts and guests.⁶⁹ Unlike the early-twentieth-century commission chaired by Sundbärg, this one did not seek to blame the victim or to use such *ad personam* arguments as personality or national identity.

⁶⁷ Litell (1982).

⁶⁸ Kristal-Andersson (1982).

⁶⁹ Statens Offentliga Utredningar (1974/69): appendix 3.

It is the insecurity out of which prejudice arises that is the evil we have to identify and rectify. The intrinsic evil is not the feeling of insecurity but the material or existential foundation of that feeling. . . . In all of these instances the evil factor is identical with . . . the threat to their own existence which cannot be controlled and which overwhelms people at the same time as they are criticized and are themselves ashamed on account of their feelings. To liberate them from this evil we must create a security which is the property of Everyman, i.e., a social and economic equality which goes much further than that we are familiar with today. . . .

But prejudice . . . can also be rooted in an insecurity due to *our ignorance*. Lack of insight concerning the character of the world and ourselves makes us a defenceless prey to superstition and all kinds of delusions. . . . The eradication of this evil demands a widespread improvement of educational standards in our country. This does not mean supplying Swedish households with brochures containing information on the background and social circumstances of immigrants, which we vainly hope will be read and assimilated by the uninformed. Instead it means letting the educational revolution go on, opening up the universities on the grand scale, allowing more and more people to climb higher and higher through the various storeys of the education system and finding new ways of taking care of those who fall by the wayside or believe themselves too old to benefit from a better knowledge of the world and themselves.⁷⁰

This statement echoes the unequivocal faith still professed in the guiding values of Swedish social democracy — security, equality, education, and rationality. The volume of recent publications on migrants, however, gives cause for concern about how well it works.⁷¹ There is an ironic gap between dream and reality for both host and guest, native and foreigner. The social and cultural divide between insiders and outsiders of various worlds is widening; opportunities for dialogue shrink as the job market dwindles; membership requirements for admission into distinct social worlds become tighter.

MEANING, METAPHOR, MILIEU

This paper has argued that sharing reflections based on experience can offer a zone of common reach not only between immigrants and natives of countries but also between insiders and outsiders inhabiting the sector-specific worlds in Sweden. Issues of identity and mobility, moreover, may be elucidated through the notions of meaning, metaphor, and milieu.

Meaning

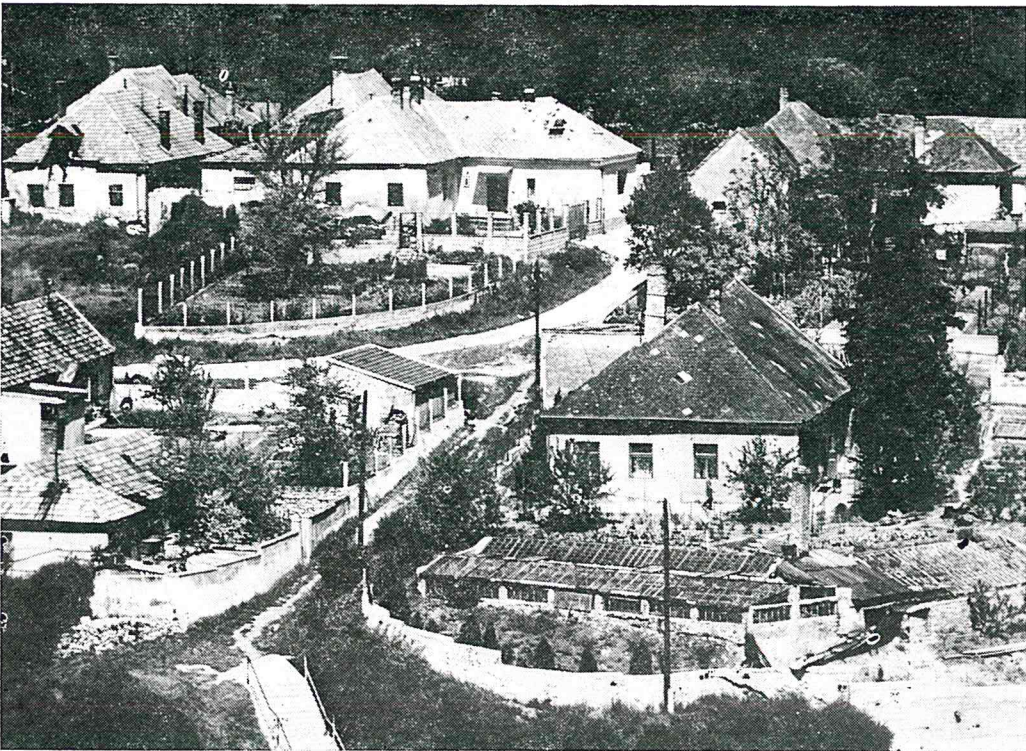
Vocational skill provides not only a primary feature of personal and group identity but also the avenue through which a meaningful encounter with the world of the host might occur. In the open spaces of

⁷⁰ Trankell (1973), cited in Statens Offentliga Utredningar (1974/69): 31.

⁷¹ Rundblad (1975); Heyman *et al.* (1975); Statens Offentliga Utredningar (1981).

the midwestern prairies and the pre-unionized bays of the Pacific northwest, Swedish farmers, lumbermen, and fishermen found meaning in a new milieu. So likewise did the seventeenth-century Walloons who hearkened to the calls of de Geer and deBesche to transform the vast iron reserves of Sweden's north. Savolak Finns, experts in forest clearance, could successfully make their way to those woodlands that Karl IX wanted replaced by farming. In all these cases, vocational meaning for individuals, groups, and families could be sustained and elaborated in the host milieu. Today the Chilean and Turk who arrives in Sweden cannot follow a similar course. The biophysical milieu may contrast starkly with that left behind, and the vocational setting on some assembly line at Saab or Volvo admits little expression of previous expertise (Plates 8 and 9). Even more critically from the standpoint of identity, contemporary migrants dare not imagine or help to initiate the bases for creative evolution that the Swedes believed necessary when they themselves were in an analogous position.

EIGHT



Everyday milieu in Vespřem, Hungary.

(Photo: Rudolf Laszlo, University of Lund)

NINE



Everyday milieu in Malmö, Sweden, for immigrant families.

(Photo: Rudolf Laszlo, University of Lund)

Metaphor

It has long been assumed in the Western world that knowledge is the most effective basis for communication, that rational discourse can overcome difficulties of comprehension and mutual understanding. Human history also suggests that the communication of basic knowledge is best conducted through metaphors, analogues that transfer meaning and significance from one context or another. However, the key metaphors through which scholars have sought to comprehend the movement of people throughout history echo not only the apparent realities of this process but also the worldviews of professional peers and sponsors.

In Swedish intellectual history, the political arithmetic of the eighteenth century was well served by maps, counts of population, and surveys of resources. In the same way the nineteenth-century orientation to market forces was well represented by metaphors of system and mechanism. The social engineering of the social democratic utopia is still neatly articulated through metaphors of system, map, and legal process. From the middle of the nineteenth century, theories of move-

ment were based on metaphors of push and pull forces without always seeking the policy implications. Of course there were exceptions and many alternative interpretations to such prevalent metaphors.⁷²

Although in EuroAmerican settings the persistent melodies of map, frontier/organism, and mechanism have become deeply impressed in the minds of researcher and policymaker, their resonance with the life experience of new arrivals from other milieux is questionable. Migrants may have neither time for nor interest in the larger picture; what register in their consciousness are particular events and happenings for which taken-for-granted categories are suddenly inadequate in the new situation. Characteristically today's arrivals in western Europe and North America are temporary visitors, their duration of stay defined by either host economy or guest intention. Thus the challenge to the research worker and policymaker is to evolve new metaphors and cognitive categories that strive towards a contextual understanding of migrant identity, and in this a focus on key events might be a critical beginning.⁷³ The zone of common reach is one such metaphor and suggests a meeting ground for strangers, a focus on dialogue, and the 'becoming' of identity as well as policy.

Milieu

Throughout Swedish history, migrants found or sought to replicate physical milieux comparable to those left behind — consequently their relation to nature, to climate and landscape, did not involve radical questioning. A culturally specific style of habitat could be created that, for the first generation or two, was the essential basis for evolving a new identity. The social milieu of the host country was sufficiently open, legally and institutionally, for the migrant group to anchor itself securely before venturing into a strange and bigger world. For migrant Swedes to America and migrant Walloons to Sweden, denominational affiliation to a particular church was central to life, providing the cultural home from which reach was possible. For Walloons the *bruk*, the forge, the charcoal pile, and the executive business meeting all provided contexts in which the host society could be encountered, communicated with, and eventually understood. That was the secret of the frontier, not only for Swedish migrants to America but for many others who discovered new identity in another land. The American frontier of the 1880s, unlike the European ones of the 1980s, could be regarded as open in terms of legal, economic, or physical barriers. Upon scrutiny, today's host milieux for the Turk, the Chilean, or the Caribbean migrants to Sweden may appear completely mortgaged, for

⁷² Nordström (1981).

⁷³ Buttimer (1980b).

institutional rules and unwritten norms govern every conceivable aspect of time, space, and interaction with the host society. And complaints about that are also voiced by some of the natives!

Identity and Policy

Sweden has played an admirable role as host to groups with the expertise to promote or complement its own basic set of vocational meanings — skills that in the seventeenth century could expand its agrarian frontier into the forest wilds or its industrial frontier into the marginal lands of mineral deposits. Today Sweden still welcomes the foreign expert — the specialist in trade networks, the technological innovator, the research worker, the genius of business management — and also extends a compassionate hand to political refugees or victims of injustice. What Sweden, Ireland, and other fundamentally agrarian societies have failed to do, however, is to understand or welcome the gypsy or tinker, the Lapp or nomad, the temporary worker or short-term resident. My central thesis is that such societies have failed to graduate beyond metaphors of security, settlement, establishment, and system towards metaphors of journey, hospitality, and excitement about becoming. Improved definitions of meaning, attitudes, or types of people are not the issue; in the long run neither physical milieu nor professional talent are that significant. Rather, finding identity relates far more to human openness and the energy derived from a mutual recognition of people as fellow travellers embarked on a journey.

Host, guest, researcher, and policymaker may each come with a subjective sense of identity derived from previous experiences; confronted with a common and unfolding problem, all three face the challenge of allowing a fuller and richer identity to emerge. This challenge can scarcely be met without an atmosphere for dialogue, a zone of common reach devolving around a common set of issues in which all insights are welcomed for their relevance rather than their authors' credentials. Whether on the shop floor, at the railroad station, theatre, or seminar, each world of vocational meaning offers scope for sharing creative insight and talent. Atmosphere, however, is the key, since the physical proximity of bodies cannot become a creative encounter unless all participants have the courage to permit relaxation of previously learned rules and norms.

In contemporary Sweden, one such common concern might be the meaning of human identity in a technologically transformed world. Rules and norms guaranteeing personal rights may be convenient and gratifying, but may also become a prison if questioning, critical thought, and discovery are stifled. The secret of identity, for human beings as distinct from robots, lies not in previously learned rules but in the innate capacity to grow beyond them. Any artist, dancer, or farmer

can attest that identity evolves through spontaneous playing with the rules, with free-flowing action rather than rule-bound reaction. Growth in personal identity, unlike adaptations of expertise or policy, proceeds organically and not mechanically; life evolves through the tensions and trials of discovery.

Today's temporary wage worker has little in common with the Swedish settlers on the American frontier. Uncertainties about past and future — whether they will be welcome back home or whether they are destined always to be exiles — add up to a quite different set of identity challenges. This does not mean, however, that most contemporary migrants can or wish to divest themselves of their culture and humanity while on this journey; in fact, church, language, art, and song, as bases of cultural identity, may be far more important when on foreign soil than when at home. Official Swedish tolerance for new arrivals is a necessary, but by no means sufficient, condition for the future. People need to feel proud of their cultural identity, to share it freely to a diverse audience beyond their own. Swedes, the most tolerant of all people, need to learn the art of playing audience as well as actor; to regard solidarity as give and take and not simply give; to understand equality as incorporating the emotional and spiritual as much as the material conditions of living. Migrants, on the other hand, must cherish and give freely of their talents and see their present situation in terms of its intrinsic challenge, rather than making judgements according to the past or future.

Similarly, research workers need to graduate from the role of observing identity as a state of being-in-the-world, so readily indexed through demographic rubrics, and to participate far more courageously in the dynamic of identity that derives from becoming-with-worlds. The challenge confronting every migrant — to establish new dimensions of personal and group identity — may parallel the need for the host society to identify both itself and immigrants in ways no longer subject to the tyranny of its own demographic and economic calculus. Mobility and identity, like adventure and security, home and reach, are an intrinsic part of life itself — a journey rather than a destination.

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