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Rhetorical Objectives and Program Efficiency in Swedish Policy about Immigrants

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ABSTRACT

This paper explains differences in the policy objectives and policy programs of Swedish immigrant policy as a consequence of the fact that policy objectives tend to be evaluated in public political debates whereas policy programs are evaluated through administrative reviews within government. Given contrasting contexts, different questions are important for policy legitimacy. The public debate focuses on questions of moral values, while the audit within government deals with issues of efficiency. Policy objectives and policy programs therefore respond differently to criticisms that separate rhetoric and practice. As a result, Swedish immigrant policy rhetoric and practice were from the outset only loosely joined and have failed to converge over time.

Since an innovative decision on immigrant policy objectives in 1975, Sweden is seen as one of the most clearcut cases of multicultural immigrant policy. Before that, its policy, as in many other West European countries, had been based on an idea of assimilation (Hammar 1985b). Since then, policy objectives have been changed several times and in 1997 new measures were proposed on the grounds that previous policies had been ineffective and even counterproductive. However, since the 1960s the actual programs implementing these policy objectives have remained virtually unchanged by this ideological shift. (Government bill 1968:142; 1975:26; 1985/86:98; 1997/98:16). How did this come about?

In his ground-breaking study of the 'hidden politics of social policy retrenchment in the United States', Jacob Hacker (2004, 243) developed a framework for explaining incremental policy changes. One of his main points is that the decline in welfare state performance was a result of active interference by welfare state opponents (Hacker 2004). One could imagine that something similar happened in Sweden, implying that those with an interest in concealing the operation of immigrant programs has fostered a discrepancy between objectives and programs. That would, however, be misleading.

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Neither political parties nor organized interest-groups have deliberately contributed to the discrepancy between immigrant policy objectives and immigrant programs, if only because they were not interested enough. Contrary to the case with regulation policy of immigration, Swedish labor-market organizations have not been important in shaping immigrant policy (Bengtsson, Lundh and Scott 2005; Lindvall and Sebring 2005). With few exceptions, Swedish political parties have not had conflicting positions regarding immigrant policy. As a consequence, the immigrant issue was not politicized. In election campaigns in 1991 and 2002, different parties tried to make it an issue but only a small fraction of the election manifestos and party leader debates were dedicated to the subject (Esaiasson and Håkansson 2007; Brandorf, Esaiasson and Håkansson 1996; Dahlström 2004). Nor has the immigrant issue been an important influence on voting behaviour (Holmberg and Gilljam 1987; Gilljam and Holmberg 1993, 1995; Holmberg and Oscarsson 2004).

Another plausible explanation would be that changed immigration caused a discrepancy between policy objectives and programs. Since 1964 immigration to Sweden has both increased and changed from labor to refugee immigration (Bengtsson, Lundh and Scott 2005). This, however, only makes it harder to understand why policy programs have not been adjusted to the new conditions.

This paper seeks to explain the discrepancy between policy objectives and practice, and the gradual transformation of Swedish immigrant policy, not only by reference to models of gradual institutional transformations but also by focusing on how institutions become legitimized (Hacker 2004; Lieberman 2002; Pierson 2004; Thelen 2004; Streeck and Thelen 2005; Peters, Pierre and King 2005). Legitimacy is the result of some kind of evaluation process and in Sweden immigrant policy has been evaluated in two different settings. Objectives have been evaluated in the public debate, while policy programs have been evaluated in governmental audits. In these two settings, the evaluators have been interested in two different questions. Moral questions have been of utmost importance in the public debate, whereas questions of efficiency have dominated the audits.

Evaluation as a source of reform

Immigrant policy is only one part of the broader concept referred to as 'immigration policy'. It has two parts: '(a) regulation of flows of immigration and control of aliens, and (b) immigrant policy' (Hammar 1985a, 7). This article deals only with the second issue, immigrant policy, defined as 'the conditions provided to resident immigrants' (Hammar

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1985a, 9). The concept of 'integration policy' is often used instead of 'immigrant policy, albeit as alternative to ''assimilation'' '. However, because it refers to a specific sort of immigrant policy, it is not appropriate to describe the policy area as a whole.

As politicians create immigrant policy by way of institutional design, it is reasonable to look to institutional studies for explanations of the Swedish case (Favell 1998; Guiraudon 2002; Levy 2000; Ireland 1994, 2004). There are, however, problems with this approach. The first concerns tendencies to functionalism. Often, the point of departure in such studies is that institutions are chosen rationally to solve some pre-stated function. Paul Pierson has rightly argued that there is no reason to take a connection between the winner today and the driving forces behind the institutional design for granted. For such an analysis 'we have to go back and look' (Pierson 2004; 2000a, 264). Secondly, following the notion of path dependency, there is a distinction between explanations of stability and explanations of change. As Kathleen Thelen argues, there is no evidence that these kinds of changes are the only, or even the most common ways institutions change (Thelen 2004: 30).

The third problem concerns difficulties in relating different political actors and political conflict and ideational explanations are therefore often poorly considered. Peters et al. (2005) argue that if we ignore political conflicts within institutional frameworks, we will end up with a false perception of consensus, and incremental changes will be harder to explain. Robert Lieberman (2002, 697) has postulated that institutional changes arise from 'friction' between ideational and institutional patterns. Wolfgang Streeck, Kathleen Thelen, and colleagues (Streeck and Thelen 2005; Thelen 2003, 2004) have proposed an institutional model with a two-way relationship between rulemakers, rules and rule takers, all 'embedded in a societal context of supportive third parties that makes for institutional legitimacy' (Streeck and Thelen 2005, 13). They assume some kind of institutional mismatch occurs in the legitimation process, thus giving the third party its important role.

Legitimation through legal authority is in most cases based on the idea of rationality (Weber 1983 [1921]). It has also been argued that it reflects effective institutions (Lipset 1981, 64–70). But Berger and Luckmann (1966, 111) have argued that 'legitimation justifies the institutional order by giving a normative dignity to its practical imperatives'. In other words, it is possible to convince the 'third party' to support the institution normatively. This paper assumes that a policy or program can gains legitimacy by the invocation of core values or by demonstrating effectiveness and efficiency in its operations.

The next question that requires answering is the point at which such legitimization processes occur. The moment and environment when an

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institution is established is of special importance, since this shapes the institution. After that moment some third party constantly evaluates institutions, and how institutions evolve depends upon the outcome of these evaluations (Collier and Collier 1991; Pierson 2000a; 2000b; 2004; Skocpol 1992). Thus how Swedish immigrant policy was initially legitimized generations ago will have long term effects on policy formation.

It is very important who the third party is 'that makes for institutional legitimacy' (Streeck and Thelen 2005: 13). In domestic politics it can be either some kind of public opinion, or some kind of government audit. While the mechanisms determining the evaluations are very much the same, the distinction is essential as the standards used to make evaluations, public opinion and governmental audits, are very different.

Criticism by public opinion or institutions can stimulate incremental change in institutions. Public opinion can be expressed: in the public political debate, intra-party opinion and electoral opinion (Sjöblom 1968). It is highly unlikely that everyone would be satisfied at the same time. What is seen as a legitimate objective in the public debate might not be seen as legitimate among voters, and vice versa. I assume that institutions are most likely to adjust themselves towards the opinions expressed when criticisms are most clearly articulated. Therefore, the order of priorities is as follows: (1) Institutional change accommodates intra-party opinion, if the party has a clear ideological position. If not, then (2) institutional change accommodates electoral opinion, if the question at hand is contested in the election. If not, then (3) institutional change accommodates opinions expressed in the public debate, because this is where criticism against the policy area will be heard.

Regarding government audits it is clear that a positive outcome of an audit strengthens the legitimacy of an institution. Michael Power has claimed that we live in an 'audit society' where the most important way to ensure legitimacy is by a positive audit. A favorable audit of the institutional order is essential for its legitimacy. An audit that finds efficiency lacking is a force for change and if the institution does not adapt, it will become vulnerable to unwelcome criticism. Thus, the opinions of the critics should be accommodated (Power 1997, 134; Hood et al 1999).

But what would be the consequences of having two legitimizing processes (Meyer and Rowan 1977)? Nils Brunsson's (1989, 33) has observed that this can happen because different functions are involved: one answers to moral values and the other to efficiency expectations and achieving both is not always possible. When they are in conflict, this results in the phenomenon of 'decoupling'.

Differentiating between levels of institutions is probably necessary to understand gradual institutional transformations and this article

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differentiates between a *rhetorical* and the *practical* level. At the rhetorical level, institutions are to a greater degree evaluated by some kind of public opinion. The questions asked at this level are most often moral. For example, are objectives compatible with values like justice and liberty? If the answer is 'correct', from the point of view of the audience (participants in the public debate, party members, voters), legitimacy is maintained or enhanced, but if the answer is 'incorrect', it is challenged. From this we can conclude: Swedish immigrant policy rhetoric will change according to the dominant position of public opinion.

At the practical level, institutions are more often evaluated through governmental audit systems which ask whether different production targets have been reached as efficiently as possible (Verdung 2006). Has language training for immigrants led to a sufficient number of degrees being awarded? If the answer is yes, then the institution is seen as efficient and thus legitimate; if not, it will be perceived as being inefficient and therefore its legitimacy is challenged. This leads to another proposition: Swedish immigrant policy practice will change according to the dominant position in governmental audits.

These alternative approaches have different implications for how a policy area should be reformed. Issues of moral values raised at the rhetorical level promote adaptation to predominant moral values to enhance their legitimacy, for example, the objectives of the policy area may emphasize individual rights, solidarity with the poor, or something similar. Questions on efficiency imply another kind of reform agenda: changing coordination, competence and resource allocation so as to facilitate more efficient performance, or the allocation of greater or fewer resources to the area to achieve the same goal.

Modern immigrant policy in Sweden

In comparative terms, Sweden was for a long time ethnically unusually homogenous. However, since the 1930s Sweden has been a net immigrant country, and since the 1960s immigration to Sweden has been considerable. Today, almost a fifth of the Swedish population was born in another country, or has at least one parent who is born outside Sweden, and about a tenth of the population have immigrated themselves (Bengtsson, Lundh and Scott 2005). This makes Sweden a country with a comparatively short history of immigration, but with a large immigrant population. Hence, Swedish immigrant policy started to develop first in the mid 1960s (Borevi 2002).

Sweden is often seen as a country with an immigrant policy based on multicultural institutions. Sweden differs, however, from other multicultural countries such as Canada and Australia, which have a much

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longer history of immigration. The reason most often suggested for Sweden still being in the group of multicultural countries is the strong state interventionist model of Swedish Social Democracy (Castles and Miller 2003). At the same time, scholarly studies of Sweden suggest that the multicultural model was not chosen from the start, but introduced first in the 1970s, and that the multicultural model has been questioned during the 1990s (Hammar 1985b; Borevi 2002). This makes the Swedish case interesting to study with the model presented in the previous section as there is, or at least is assumed to be, a clear institutional setting in this policy field, but at the same time a setting that has been under scrutiny.

Empirically, the analysis draws on official documents, interviews, and secondary sources. The interviewees have been influential policy makers and civil servants active during the period of 1964–1995.

The first years

Immigrant policies were only considered important from the 1960s, when immigration to Sweden increased dramatically. Until then, government officials had assumed that the majority of immigrants that moved to Sweden would only stay for a short time, with the result that immigrant policies were not on the agenda. As immigration increased and the debate on immigrant policies intensified, this changed completely (Hammar 1985b).

Interestingly, Swedish immigration policy practice was established before there were any policy objectives, or public rhetoric concerning immigrant policy. In the mid 1960s, some practical problems concerning integration of immigrants became obvious. Most of them concerned introduction and language issues. Local introduction and language programs were initiated by private firms and labor market actors to solve these problems, but there was at this point no coordinated national immigrant policy (Lundh and Ohlsson 1999; Tingbjörn 2004).

The coordinated immigrant policy started in the mid 1960s. The former ambassador Kjell Öberg was head of an agency assigned to improve information about Sweden abroad. He and his colleagues saw immigrants' personal contacts with their home countries as an important way to provide information about Sweden abroad. Therefore, the agency started an information campaign about Sweden directed to immigrants living in Sweden. 'Not for their own sake, I didn't think that way then, but for Sweden', Mr Öberg wrote much later (Öberg 1993: 233). Through this information campaign, Mr Öberg and his colleagues were involved in defining practice of Swedish immigrant policy (Jacobsson 1984).

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Öberg's agency was asked to rewrite an information book directed to immigrants, which had been presented by a government committee and harshly criticized (SOU 1967: 18). During this process, several other obstacles for immigrant integration became obvious. To deal with the growing immigrant issue the Minister of the Interior of the Social Democratic government, Rune B. Andersson, formed a special working party on immigrant issues within his ministry. Mr Öberg headed the working party, its task having been to make surveys of, initiate and coordinate immigrant policy. The working party was very active during the late 1960s, and initiated several programs, each aimed to solve the specific problems that Mr Öberg and his colleagues had identified (Jacobsson 1984).

Mr Öberg was later assigned to implement these and other immigrant programs as the first Director-General of the Swedish Immigration Board. By initiating programs to solve specific problems, such as information and language training, Sweden was in practice developing an immigrant policy before its objectives were even being discussed by the government. Most of the programs initiated by the working party were made permanent and became the backbone of Swedish immigrant policy. And, most immigrant policy programs in Sweden had been started before 1968, when the first governmental bill about policy objectives was introduced (Government bill 1968: 142).

At roughly the same time, in the late 1960s, an intense debate arose in the daily press on issues related to immigration. In the debate, two main factions were identifiable: advocates of *universalism* and advocates of a *multi-cultural society* (Dahlström 2004; Hansen 2001; Román 1994). Universalists argued that no special attention should be given to ethnic diversity in Swedish immigrant policy. Instead, immigrants should be incorporated in the welfare programs already in place. Multi-culturalists, on the contrary, advocated a more diverse immigrant policy, one that takes ethnic diversity into consideration.

The debate was intense and very polarized (SOU 1984: 55). Participants in the debate had different political backgrounds, and were united only by their concern for the future immigrant policy in Sweden. Most were politically unaffiliated (e.g. Dagens Nyheter 1964a, 1964b, 1964c, 1964d; Dagens Nyheter 1966a, 1966b, 1966c, 1966d, 1966e).

When this debate began it was clearly dominated by universalists, but this would soon change (Dahlström 2004; Hansen 2001; Román 1994). In October 1968, the government sent a bill to Parliament. For the first time, the basic design of the state's immigrant policies was discussed by the government (Government bill 1968: 142). Before the bill was sent to Parliament, a government committee – *Utlänningsutredningen* – had

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pointed out a need for a determined effort in this area (SOU 1967: 18). The committee said that the so-called 'adjustment issues' required that the government declared its position. The committee discussed whether adjustment should aim for the assimilation or the integration of immigrants. Assimilation as defined by the committee, was a matter of 'incorporating them linguistically and culturally' whereas integration was defined as a matter of 'fitting them into society with a preserved linguistic, cultural and religious distinctiveness' (Government bill 1968: 142, 106).

The Minister of the Interior discussed these two alternatives and suggested a compromise (Government bill 1968: 142). Mr Andersson argued that immigrants should be able to maintain affinity with the language and culture of their countries of origin, but that the state should bear only limited responsibility for this. Therefore, immigrants should be required to accomplish this on their own (Government bill 1968: 142).

The bill also emphasized that immigrants should have the opportunity to have the same standard of living as the rest of the population (Government bill 1968: 142). This was seen as an *equality objective* of immigrant policy, which would be realized through the universal welfare state. The equality objective, as defined in 1968, rested on the assumption that the state was not responsible for nurturing any particular cultural community in Sweden. The Swedish welfare state needed neither cultural assimilation nor special arrangements for ethnic diversity to be created and sustained – i.e., this position corresponded to the alternative favored by advocates of universalism.

This position earlier defined as a universalist immigrant policy position was identical with the dominant tenor of the public debate. This will be discussed later in greater detail. At this juncture it is enough to note that immigrant policy rhetoric emerged in a time of harsh conflict about policy objectives and this was done only after policy practice was established (SOU 1984: 55). It is important to note, more over, that rhetoric was, from the outset, a way to legitimize the immigrant policy institutions and there was much effort to avoid or settle conflicts surrounding the institutions.

To conclude, immigrant policy in Sweden began by trying to solve different problems from two different settings. Swedish immigrant policy practice was established before its rhetoric, which goes against rationalist theories of policy formation. There were no policy objectives in place when the immigrant policy practice was established. All this makes it possible to draw the conclusion that the timing and the conditions for rhetoric and practice were very different. They aimed at solving different problems right from the very start.

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Defending core values

To be able to analyze changes in immigrant policy rhetoric, we must first decide the kind of public opinion to which we should expect the rhetoric to be adapted. If institutional change should derive from intra-party or electoral opinion, the immigrant issue must be politicized. As such, policy differences between the political parties must exist, and immigrant policy has to develop into an issue of competition in elections.

This has not yet happened with immigrant policy in Sweden. The political context in which Swedish immigrant policy took form has been characterized as 'The Apolitical Tradition'. Hammar argued that there has been a broad consensus on immigrant issues among the Swedish elite up to the 1990s (Hammar 1999). It has also been observed that all ministers responsible for immigrant affairs in Sweden have supported the same idea of integration of immigrants independent of their party affiliation (Demker and Malmström 1999).

The strongest argument supporting the notion of a non-politicized immigrant policy rests, however, on studies of political issues in election manifestos and party-leader-debates in Sweden. A Swedish research team has coded all election manifestos, and the ending party leader debate in all Swedish elections between 1902 and 2002 (Esaiasson and Håkansson 2007). Their data discloses that virtually no space or time in either manifestos or debates is used for this policy issue, not even if we use the more inclusive concept of immigration policy. In the elections between 1964–2002, the immigration issue was not on the agenda in the election manifestos and was not an issue in the party leader debates. The immigration issue only occupied about 1 per cent of the election manifestos during this period, and with two exceptions the same fraction of the party leader debates (Brandorf, Esaiasson and Håkansson 1996; Dahlström 2004).

The two exceptions from this overall pattern are the party leader debates in 1994 and 2002. In the election 1991 a new populist party – Ny demokrati – entered the political scene in Sweden. On a political platform combining new liberal critique of bureaucracy and economic policy, and a critique of immigration policy in Sweden, Ny demokrati took 6.7 per cent of the votes in the 1991 election. It has been argued that this was the end of the apolitical period of Swedish immigration policy (Hammar 1999). However, the empirical evidence based on election manifestos, and party leader debates suggests otherwise. In 1991 the immigration issue occupied about 2 per cent of the material analyzed, suggesting that none of the established parties took on the challenge from the populists. During the following three years, up to the election in 1994, the populists' immigration rhetoric was radicalized. The election

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manifestos were not influenced by this radicalization, but in the party leader debate, about 10 per cent of the time was dedicated to an argument between Ny demokrati on the one hand, and all other parties. The 1994 election was also the end of Ny demokrati. They only got 1.2 per cent of the votes, and have not recovered after that (Brandorf, Esaiasson and Håkansson 1996; Dahlström 2004, Rydgren 2004; Taggart 1996).

The other exception occurred during the election campaign 2002 when the Liberal party suggested that passing a knowledge test in the Swedish language should be required in order to become a Swedish citizen. But even though the Liberal party tried to make immigration policy an issue of competition, only about 2 per cent of the election manifestos and about 5.5 per cent of the party leader debates were dedicated to this issue. This could be the beginning of a polarization of the immigration policy issue, as it was the first time an established party competed on this issue, but judging from the data from the 2002 election the other parties did not take on this challenge (Esaiasson and Håkansson 2007).

One could object to the above thesis on the ground that if the electorate reacts to differences between political parties, then the issue must be seen as politicized even if parties do not support either side in their electoral campaigns. However, there are no indications that this has been the case in Sweden. Studies show that Swedish electors consider immigrant policy as a relatively unimportant issue and the co-variations between immigrant policy and party preferences are very low (Holmberg and Gilljam 1987; Gilljam and Holmberg 1993, 1995; Holmberg and Oscarsson 2004).

There has been almost constant pressure to change immigrant policy rhetoric in response to the public debate. Let us recall how the first policy objective was introduced, to bridge two very different opinions in the public debate as reflected in the governmental bill on immigrant policy 1968 (Government bill 1968: 142). In May that same year another government committee, *Invandrarutredningen* (IU) had been summoned, its task being to study the living conditions of immigrants and minorities (Government bill 1968: 142). The committee would, 1974, present the guidelines for immigrant policies that the earlier committee, Utlänningsutredningen, and others had asked for (SOU 1974: 69).

During the period leading to 1974, when IU presented its report, public debate on immigrant policy had changed. Demands for equal treatment of all cultural and ethnic groups became stronger, and the universal position was abandoned in the public debate.

David Schwartz, a multiculturalist and an important participant in immigrant policy debate in Sweden at that time, has described the shift in the public debate since 1964. 'At first, it was seen as a foreigner's

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problem, concerning themselves for the most part. Starting around 1968 schooling for immigrant children became an issue, and now we are beginning to see it as a classic minority issue' (Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfartstidning 1972). The reason for this change in the debate was that the multiculturalist position was seen as the only one that respected the right of immigrants and minorities to choose their cultural identity. No one defended universalism in the public debate from the end of the 1960s and onwards (Hansen 2001). This influenced the IU: its position was decidedly multiculturalist (SOU 1974:69). In its final report, it suggested three objectives for immigrant policy: equality [jämlikhet], freedom of choice [valfrihet], and cooperation [samverkan].

Equality was partly the same objective as the one proposed already in 1968, but there were some differences on matters of principle as compared with the earlier objective. The IU's definition of the objective stated, among other things, that immigrants and their children should be offered 'real opportunities' of maintaining 'and, in the same way as the majority population, keeping and developing their languages and their traditions' (SOU 1974: 69, 95). The objective also emphasized that the ethnic coherence of the minority groups and immigrant groups could not be disregarded and the state was responsible for creating 'real' opportunities for the continued existence of these groups.

In formulating the objective *freedom of choice*, the break with the earlier rhetoric became even more apparent. This objective meant that members of linguistic minorities residing in Sweden should be able to choose the extent to which they would wish to preserve and develop their cultural and linguistic identities and, also, the extent to which they would wish to be adapted to the Swedish culture. The IU wrote: 'This requires that the different immigrant groups receive financial support and other kinds of support to develop cultural activities of their own' (SOU 1974: 69, 96). The ethnic communities received attention once more, selective policies were taken for granted, and the ethnic groups were declared to have acquired legal and civil rights.

Finally, the objective of *cooperation* came to mean 'a fruitful cooperation should ensue between immigrants and minorities and the majority population' (SOU 1974:69, 96). The issue was no longer a matter of creating a common civil community, but about making different groups in society work side by side.

Unanimously Parliament adopted these objectives in 1975. With the state's rhetoric of immigrant policy; the importance of creating cultural social institutions was emphasized (Government bill 1975: 26). The rhetoric of immigrant policy was, thus, adapted to the ideas that were dominant in the public debate at the time (Borevi 2002; Hansen 2001; Lundh and Ohlsson 1999). This notion is supported by interviews with

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politicians and civil servants active at the time. The Social Democratic Immigrant Minister, Anna-Greta Leijon, has said that the objective was 'to emphasize that policy was not about assimilation, but about co-operation on equal terms' (Interview with Anna-Greta Leijon). Mr Öberg, then expert in the IU, has written that 'the government probably wanted to protect it self against accusations about assimilation' (SOU 1984: 55, 35). Yet another policy expert, Rolf Witrén from the Liberal Party, member of the IU and later Immigrant Minister, maintains that 'the big debate of the 1970s was about assimilation . . . and we thought that was wrong' (Interview with Rolf Wirftén). It seems as if the committee and the government alike wanted to distance themselves from what they considered to be an illegitimate position.

During the period after the decision on the new immigrant policy objectives in 1975, the public debate on immigrant policy changed once again. Already evident from the initial responses from organizations and institutions to the IU proposals, there were fears that the different objectives might end up in conflict with one another (Government bill 1975: 26).

At the end of the 1970s and in the early 1980s, criticism mounted, especially against the objective of freedom of choice, which was thought to give rise to unrealistic expectations, and to be unclear as to what laws and rules of conduct were valid in Sweden (SOU 1984: 55). In the public debate several participants pointed to conflicts between cultural freedom of choice, and the rights of women and children. Rhetorically they asked: Is it possible to choose a traditional patriarchal culture? The President of the International Immigrant women Association wrote an article on this theme: 'One says that this is in the immigrants' 'culture', and the police says the same thing. Also, the perpetrator refers to the 'culture of their motherland' to defend himself when he beats his wife. We say that violence is never culture' (Dagens Nyheter 1980; see for example also Dagens Nyheter 1979).

From the end of the 1970s this position dominated the public debate, and that critique led to a new period of committees and surveys. Two parallel government committees were formed: *Invandrarpolitiska kommittén* (IPOK) and *Diskrimineringsutredningen* (DU). In their final reports, these committees stated that the objective of freedom of choice was unclear. It was open to several interpretations, since the studies that preceded the decision of 1975 had lacked discussions about the content, limitations and conditions of freedom of choice. The committees gave a more precise definition of the objective by addressing its limitations (SOU 1984:55, 58). The Immigrant Minister, Anita Gradin, explains how she thought at the time: 'I was only prepared to go so far regarding culture. One example is if it is said to be culture to beat one's wife. It is neither a part of the

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Swedish, nor any other culture, but it is sometimes claimed to be' (Interview with Anita Gradin). The bill that emerged from these committee reports stated that the cultural freedom of choice was limited by the fundamental norms of Swedish society (Government bill 1985/86: 98).

The rhetoric of immigrant policy was again adapted to public criticism (Soininen 1999; SOU 1996: 55). The 1975 objectives were kept but the culture-preserving ambitions of immigrant policy were lowered (Government bill 1985/86: 98). Tensions between the cultural and civil institutional models had become apparent in immigrant policy, and Sweden had begun to walk down the path away from the multicultural institutional model introduced in 1975 objectives. The three objectives remained in place until the late 1990s, although several suggestions were made as to how to make them clearer (Government bill 1989/90: 86; 1990/91: 95). Before they were permanently changed, however, the tenor of the public debate altered again.

In the late 1980s, and through the early 1990s, immigrant policies were criticized strongly, as government policies were seen as stigmatizing. They were preserved as contributing to a division into categories of 'us' and 'them' (SOU 1996: 55). This post-colonial critique was widespread in the public debate, and with a near consensus on immigrant issues of the mid 1990s that Swedish immigrant policy suffered from misleading analyses. Some influential participants in the public debate maintained that such policies were not only inappropriate but also counterproductive (Dagens Nyheter 1992; Aftonbladet 1995; Gür 1996; Dagens Nyheter 1997).

A new committee was formed – called *Invandrarpolitiska kommittén*, like its predecessor in 1984 – and suggested new policy objectives. Immigrant policy therefore became integration policy. The earlier objectives of the policy area were changed, and the biggest difference, compared to the earlier rhetoric of immigrant policy, was that the role of universal policies became crucial (Government bill 1997/98: 16). Groups of immigrants were not to be singled out as beneficiaries of selective programs, but incorporated into a system of universal policies. The population should not be divided into the 'us' and 'them' that critics had condemned. This also had consequences for the idea of the community as a whole.

The ideas of the 1970s, when society had been seen as a system of ethnic groups participating on equal terms, were now finally abandoned. In the bill the idea of the common national history as the cement of society was discarded. Instead, 'the participating in contemporary Sweden, and support for the fundamental values of society' were emphasized (Government bill 1997/98: 16). The premise of immigrant

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policy in Sweden was, again, a civil community. Ironically, the term that summarized these developments was 'integration', one of the two concepts of which Rune B. Johansson, in 1968, warned.

Judging from this case, the legitimizing process seemed to follow a specific procedure: Moral questions about immigrant policy became part of the public debate. These criticisms compelled the government to form a committee to analyze immigrant policy. The committee then responded to moral criticism and adopted it in order to disarm policy opponents. In this way, the criticism worked its way into the bill, delivered for Parliament and became a component of policy objectives. It is also important to note that this causal process did not involve policy practice. Changes only derive from the public debate, which explains why no convergence between rhetoric and practice seems to occur.

Creating an efficient policy practice

Important immigrant programs begun in the 1960s included information about Swedish society, training in Swedish, support for immigrant organizations and adult training. As mentioned, these programs were initiated, or consolidated by the special working party on immigrant issues (SOU 1967:18). Swedish language training and information directed to immigrants has since remained an important feature of Swedish immigrant policy.

The government attempted to create what was seen as basic conditions of adjustment to the Swedish society. Free training in Swedish was offered to adult immigrants, and at an early stage also in public schools. The adult language training was first initiated on the local level, often by private firms, and through cooperation between the labor market partners (Lundh and Ohlsson 1999; Tingbjörn 2004). The special working party consolidated this program, and made it a part of the national policy. It has since been taken for granted as being part of immigrant policy, and has been conducted in much the same way ever since it was conceived. One might use the term 'residual' to describe them, as they look to the need of specific groups all the while *not* considering cultural differences (Government bill 1966: 1, app. 10; 1967: 1, app. 1).

Even when taken for granted, Swedish language training has often been criticized for its poor results. At the end of the 1980s and beginning of 1990s, Swedish language training underwent a series of changes (Lindberg 1996), with the objective of making them more efficient, while core values in the program remained constant (DO 1989; SÖ 1989; RRV 1989, 1990, 1992). Efforts to inform immigrants about Swedish society were intensified after the establishment of the Swedish Immigration

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Board, *Statens invandrarverk* (SIV) in 1969 (SIV 1972). The purpose was to disseminate information about Swedish society and Swedish political institutions, objectives that have remained the same since. The Swedish Immigration Board and its successor, the Swedish Integration Board, *Integrationsverket*, release such information routinely (Cf. Dahlström and Möller 2004). Language training and information efforts rested on similar principles. The idea of both was to incorporate immigrants in a civil community where they could claim individual rights. I have called these programs residual policy programs.

Another program intended to widen the scope of immigrants' rights in Sweden was the so-called interpreter and translator service – *tolk- och översättningsservice* (SOU 1972: 83). The availability of and right to interpreters and translators has received significant attention (Government bill 1975: 26; 1975/76: 100, app. 10; DsU 1982: 10). The right to interpreters has been evaluated and also changed during the period covered in this study. However, the authorities have always maintained the right to determine who has a right to an interpreter. That right has existed only when the authorities have deemed an individual's command of the Swedish language to be inadequate (SFS 1986: 223, §8). The interpreter service has thus been guided by the same principles as training in Swedish and information efforts.

The early experimental programs also contained programs based on principles of multiculturalism (Government bill 1967: 1, app. 13; 1968: 1, app. 13). Support for religious and other organizations became part of an experimental program in 1966 and was made permanent in 1975. Organizations for immigrants and minorities thereby received support for their regular activities (Government bill 1975:26). This has been evaluated many times; however, the basic framework of the program has never been challenged (Government bill 1975/76:100, app 13; 1978/79, app.15; 1985/86:98; 1997/98:16). A modest degree of support for immigrant culture was initiated. Foreign-language libraries and literatures were supported from 1967. This support was augmented during the 1970s, but eliminated from the budget during the fiscal year 1985/86. Since then, only support for foreign literature has been retained (SOU 1984: 58). At the end of the 1970s, the government initiated a special program for supporting newspapers and journals in languages other than Swedish (SOU 1974: 69; Government Bill 1975: 26). A special program for supporting such publications was started in 1977 (Government bill 1976/77: 99). This program was terminated in 1986, upon the recommendation of the committee on immigrant policy IPOK (Government bill 1985/86: 98).

Among immigrant policy programs, mother tongue education has held a special position. It has been considered the jewel in the crown among

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culturally-supportive immigrant policies (DsU 1975: 13; Hyltestam and Toumela 1996; SOU 1971: 51; 1974: 69). Already in 1971, it was offered in selected environments, but after the so-called 'mother tongue education reform' of 1977, municipal governments were obliged to offer mother tongue education from pre-school through secondary school. Mother tongue education has undergone re-evaluation on numerous occasions and has been subject to both budget cuts and administrative restructuring since then. The evaluations have never questioned, however, whether the objectives of these programs are desirable; they have only considered their efficiency. The right to training in one's mother tongue has been limited, both through a stricter definition of entitlement and because municipal governments were in some cases exempt from their obligation In the early 1990s major cuts in this area were also implemented (Government bill 1990/91: 100, app. 10).

One reform that received a great deal of attention internationally was the suffrage reform. The Swedish Parliament decided that in 1975 foreign nationals residing in Sweden would be given the right to vote and to run for office in municipal elections (Government bill 1975/76: 23). To attain this right, foreign citizens would have to have lived in the country for at least three years; aside from this, the laws were uniform to Swedish citizens. The right for immigrants to vote in municipal elections was regulated into law, and with the exception of the 1997 legislation making it easier still for EU citizens to vote, these laws have not changed. Since 1976, the authorities have worked to increase participation among foreign citizens in elections. Like other policy programs, this has been re-evaluated several times. Again, the evaluations have then only dealt with policy efficiency without ever discussing policy objectives (Dahlström and Möller 2004).

Three other immigrant policy programs have become increasingly important over time: labor market policies, adult education and support for 'troubled urban areas' [utsatta bostadsområden]. These programs were initiated in the 1970s and have become more broadly implemented in the 1990s (Government bill 1992/93: 100, app. 11; 1993/94: 100, app 11; SOU 2000: 28). Several different kinds of labor market policies have been attempted – such as 'firm introductions' in the 1970s, 'public works' in the 1980s and 'practice jobs' in the 1990s (SOU 1984: 58; 1995: 76). Unlike these labor market policies, adult education for immigrants has taken place within regular programs: through basic education, supplementary secondary education and job training (SOU 1982: 29; 2000: 28). The support for certain urban areas, which has increased from the mid-1990s, has in practice been implemented through labor market policies and through education and training (Integrationsverket 2000a, 2000b).

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Adult education and the voting rights reform were the most obvious examples of attempts to build universal institutions in Swedish immigrant policy. Through these programs, the state assumed responsibility for civil community and this was accomplished through the introduction of immigrants – as individuals, and not as representatives of ethnic groups – within the legal and policy frameworks that already included other individuals. Labor market policies and support for certain urban areas rested on what I have called the residual principle.

Overall, immigrant policy programs have demonstrated remarkable stability. No new programs have been implemented since 1977, and all existing programs except one have remained. However, some changes have occurred in ambition and in efficiency assessment. During the 1960s and early 1970s, government raised policy ambitions. It was then that the mother tongue education had begun and training in the Swedish language expanded. The authorities implementing the programs, such as the National Board of Education, the Swedish Immigration Board and the National Labor Market Board made evaluations that were often directed at one specific part of the program, resulting in its enlargement. Starting from mid 1970s, evaluations changed. From then on, they were more directed at efficiency. Many immigrant policy programs were evaluated in the late 1970s and early 1980s. One of the most frequently evaluated programs was training in the Swedish language. At the end of 1970s the program was criticized by a government audit. The pupils' results were not satisfactory and immigrants were criticized as having spent too much time in this program. Therefore the government assigned the National Board of Education to evaluate the whole program, it noted inefficiencies and proposed reorganization. The government then formed a committee, the so-called SFI-committee, to make a broader evaluation (SFI is a Swedish abbreviation for the education program Swedish for Immigrants). In these evaluations, the conclusions were critical regarding efficiency, while the principles behind the programs were left unquestioned. The conclusions for policymakers were, therefore, that they were doing the right thing, but just not enough.

At a first glance the feedback mechanism, through government audits, seems clearly negative. Government audits are on several occasions critical considering policy efficiency and this decreases legitimacy. This leads to re-organizations, but it doesn't explain why policy principles remain the same through out the period. I suggest, that the legitimizing process concerning policy practice can be interpreted as a positive feedback procedure. While evaluations are critical, they provide new hopes. This would be a confirmation that the right things are done, even though not as efficiently as one would have hoped. With this argument, policymakers rule out new and different programs. There is no need for

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a new start, only for more efficient implementation. 'An organization undergoing reform inspires hope; the very attempt staves off despair' (Brunsson 1989, 225; cf. Brunsson and Olsen 1993).

Language training in Swedish is one example of this. In spite of three different and major reforms between 1986 and 1994, policy principles were not even discussed in the evaluations. Instead evaluations and reforms focused on technical and administrative issues in an attempt to increase program efficiency.

Conclusions

Four conclusions follow. First, there were important differences in the initial conditions of formulating rhetoric and practice. The important actors shaping immigrant institutional practice were civil servants connected to the working party on immigrant issues, experimenting to solve particular problems concerning integration. Their trial-and-error strategy formed immigrant policy in Sweden by defining in practice what immigrant policy *is*. Policy success was from the start defined by its efficiency. Politicians in government determined policy rhetoric, striking a balance between two different standpoints within a polarized debate. The ideas introduced in this early stage, efficiency on the practical level and moral considerations on the rhetorical level, were subsequently important for institutional legitimacy.

Secondly, rhetoric has changed to accommodate moral criticisms in the public debate. These moral criticisms have become the important third party upon which the rhetorical legitimacy hinges. As the government needs policy legitimacy this led to re-considering objectives by government committees and incremental changes. The cause and direction of change can only be understood by identifying who the relevant third party is.

But thirdly, there is a lack of change in principle at the practical level. While opinions of critics have been accommodated, criticism has focused primarily on the efficiency of existing policy programs and not on the principles behind them. When efficiency determines legitimacy, changes have been aimed at *how* things are done and not *what* is done.

Finally, stability is maintained when positive feedback mechanisms constantly confirm (or do not challenge) policy objectives. Thus, critical audits at the practical level have supported the actors' assumption that right things are done, just not enough. This gives rise to a stable set of programs, even though they may be re-organized from time to time. Each re-organization infuses legitimation with hope for a more efficient tomorrow (Brunsson 1989; Brunsson and Olsen 1993).

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