"With 24 SEK a day I have to choose between eating or taking the bus to the language course"
R.E.M.S. Report from the Master of Arts programme in Ethnic and Migration Studies is a publication series created by the MA candidates in Ethnic and Migration Studies at the Institute of Research on Migration, Ethnicity, and Society (REMESO), Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Linköping University in the course “Critical Cases in Ethnic and Migrations Studies”.


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# TABLE OF CONTENTS’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>R.E.M.S.</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report From The Master Of Arts Programme In Ethnic And Migration Studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Editors’ Note</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lesson Learned</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Challenging Path To Reskilling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By Anna Dremina And Antoine Bodo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discrimination In The Swedish Labour Market</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By Brooke Boers And Catriona Westwood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dividing The City And Its Residents</strong></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By Rachel Dölker And Henna Paananan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moneyversum</strong></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local, Global, Private And Public Aspects Of Remittances</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By Begum Altincapa, Hanna Reichelt, Liza Mremi, Marcus Larsson, Tua-Lisa Runsten, Zillur Rahman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Do Not Go On Sick Leave!</strong></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remittances And The Covid-19 Pandemic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By Begum Altincapa, Hanna Reichelt, Liza Mremi, Marcus Larsson, Tua-Lisa Runsten, Zillur Rahman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coding The Distance</strong></td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology, Digitalization And Remittances</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By Begum Altincapa, Hanna Reichelt, Liza Mremi, Marcus Larsson, Tua-Lisa Runsten, Zillur Rahman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Belt And Road Initiative</strong></td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China’s Foreign Development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By Emma Eriksson &amp; Aidan McGirr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cryptocurrency</strong></td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By Aidan McGirr &amp; Elizabeth Wickenberg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Pandemic’s Effects On The Most Vulnerable</strong></td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By Lorrayne Tentoni &amp; Yumi Oh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A Good Night’s Sleep At Any Cost</strong></td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By Amélé Judith Amédahao And Hanna Babj</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asylum Seekers’ Allowances</strong></td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“With 24 Sek A Day I Have To Choose Between Eating Or Taking The Bus To The Language Course”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By Lubna Mousa, Fredrik Strömlind, Herbert Sina Bio</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Waiting For Better Circumstances:</strong></td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports, Costs And Integration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By Fredrik Strömlind, Lubna Mousa, Herbert Sina Bio</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Circular Migration, Linear Exploitation</strong></td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe’s Dependence On Seasonal Migrant Workers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By Matilde Veglia, Melike Iseyen, And Jonas Dreher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>‘Migrant Clans’ In Sweden</strong></td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Economy Of A Debate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By Tobias Setz And Tamara Nadibaidze</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Forced Removals, Historical Dispossessions And The Ongoing ‘Nakba’</strong></td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Cases Af Sheikh Jarrah And Jaffa “From The River To The Sea”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By Maayan Zohra Ashash</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>About The Contributors</strong></td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Remeso And The Master’s Programme</strong></td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The once-in-a-century pandemic crisis has shed a different light on the value of migrants in modern society. Their contribution in Sweden and beyond is intrinsically interwoven with daily life - from seasonal laborers to workers in healthcare, transportation, catering and more. Migrants are not the excess of a society but rather have an indispensable role in it. Nevertheless, they are often depicted as welfare tourists, criminals, ‘others’ within our communities, in a nutshell financial burdens who take advantage of host countries.

The last issue of this publication confronted the pandemic’s newly unfolding effects, posing the question of “How does one write about a storm when one is swept by the wind and an impending thunder overhead, and lighting?” After more than a year, one of the main things we can say is that when you are faced by a storm you stay put and wait for it to pass. In a world system which propels many of us towards increased dynamism and flexibility in life, the possibility to stand still relies on sound financial and social resources. Migratory experiences shaped by the lack of these resources are the epitome of the difficulty in remaining withdrawn until the crisis blows over.

This publication is indebted to the informants who shared their personal experiences and knowledge with authors. In addition, attained knowledge within the programme, and collaboration between students guided by the teachers are central to the quality of the articles.

Students at the Master’s Programme in Ethnic and Migration Studies, Linköping University, June 2021.
Zinah arrived from Iraq in 2014 with several years of experience as a telecommunication engineer. Seven years after her arrival, although she has gone through all the steps to validate her skills and educations, she still struggles to find a job that matches her skill level.

Low-skilled jobs require little to no training and are accessible to natives and migrants alike, but they are few and hard to find in Sweden. With the industrial sector counting for only 22.2% of the GDP, the trend seems to favor skilled workers with a tertiary education level. While Sweden’s strong social and labor rights help citizens secure employment and guide workers through the upskilling process to help them find jobs in preferred areas, what is done when it comes to newcomers? The last decade saw an unprecedented number of migrants with a wide range of skill levels enter the country, and they could help solve the shortage in key areas the country is facing. In Sweden, the mismatch between supply and demand in priority occupations concerns mainly the sectors of healthcare, engineering, and education. Zinah, being an experienced engineer, should have had no problems finding a job within her field. Still, when it comes to accessing the job market, there is a wide gap between theory and practice.

Working is an important part of the integration process, and it is not surprising to see that most refugees are looking for any opportunity that could allow them to start working as soon as possible. The Swedish government has tried to make things easier for them by allowing refugees to seek employment in the country while their applications are being processed. But this alone is not enough to allow them to find a job.
In a study published in the journal *Sociological sciences* in 2019 – focusing on the chances to get a job interview for those perceived to be immigrants – Sweden was second to last amongst nine countries, including Great Britain, Canada, Germany, Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands, and the United States. Only France scored worse. Nonetheless, finding a job is not synonymous with successful integration. Those who had obtained university degrees and had occupied positions with many responsibilities might find themselves frustrated, if all that are offered to them upon arrival is low-skilled positions. Although there are exemptions from the requirement to have a work permit to enter the labor market, knowledge and experience are still not easily recognized. When migrants arrive in Sweden, the first obstacle they face is the language barrier. The lack of Swedish or English language skills prevents newcomers from looking for a job or entering university to validate their qualifications.

When she arrived in Sweden, Zinah did not speak much Swedish, and she started learning the language as soon as she could to increase her chances of finding a job. Getting fluent in Swedish is the first step to follow for those who seek work. It is also a key requirement to enter any reskilling program. Several language programs already exist to help refugees in their endeavor. The most famous one, which will determine the success of their future training, is SFI, the state-funded language course for immigrants. Although it is free and accessible to all, the completion rates of SFI are low, with as few as 4 in 10 completing the program. Statistics published on Skolverket, the national agency for education in charge of the SFI courses, shows that in 2019 only 35% of SFI-students completed the education, while 25% dropped out, and 40% decided to continue the course at a later time. Furthermore, this program takes an average of three years to be completed.

Being highly educated, Zinah started SFI with an advantage. She was used to long working days, and thanks to her knowledge of English, she was able to communicate with the teachers and other students. Her previous education might have facilitated her learning experience; however, those who come from different backgrounds will undoubtedly have more difficulties. In a study conducted in Malmö, the infantilization of students, noticed in the way teachers talked to students with lower degrees of education, was reported as a reason for some to drop out. So was the feeling of subordination that exists in a classroom between those who speak English and thus can communicate with the teacher and those who do not. For the latter, the inability to talk to a teacher might deter some from pushing their education further. Some other reasons might also be connected to practicality over pure educational explanations. The classes are long and exhausting and sometimes take several hours a day; additionally, students are given months’ worth of homework to complete in the evening. In addition, the distance between participant’s accommodation and the classrooms might be problematic, especially when the students rely solely on public transportation to move around the city. In 2020, the COVID-19 epidemic might also have increased the number of dropouts. With the normalization of distance learning, those who have the least resources are the most affected. Although students do not have to worry about traveling to class, the material cost is still an issue: the equipment needed to participate in the program has become more expensive. Between the price one pays for a computer, internet connection, and the computing proficiency necessary to make the most out of the education, it would not be surprising if the next survey shows further drop in the completion rate.

It took Zinah two years to find her first job, for which she first had to lower her expectations. Although she could learn the language and was lucky enough to have her degrees recognized without undergoing further education, she still faced rejec-
We can now start to understand why many refugees and asylum seekers settle for jobs below their academic level. Even with her training, her work experience, and the motivation to get back to a job in engineering, the barriers were still too many for Zinah to get back to an occupation she liked. The labor shortages did not seem to make the situation better either, as the barriers are not only academic. For those who do not have the same fortitude, the chances of getting their former occupations back are even slimmer.

Today, Sweden still relies strongly on international migration to reduce the impact of the labor shortages it is facing. Skilled migration is organized on a model derived from the circular migration schemes that allow seasonal migrants to take up unskilled seasonal jobs, but the situation is far from perfect. Misinterpretation of the Swedish Migration Agency law routinely leads to the deportation of skilled workers, sequentially reinforcing the labor shortages. According to an article published in 2019 by the BBC, a rigorous interpretation of the law led to the deportation of thousands of skilled workers up until 2017 because they could not get their work permit renewed, sometimes due to very minor errors in the request submitted by their employers. Even though the law has been modified to facilitate the modification and correction of work permit applications, the situation has not improved as much as expected.

One way to solve this problem could be to help those who already live in the country, and do not need an invitation or a work permit, to fill in those positions. Yet, once again, the experience of foreign-born residents does not match with the outlook of the government.
DISCRIMINATION IN THE SWEDISH LABOUR MARKET

By Brooke Boers and Catriona Westwood

In 2019, the unemployment rate for native-born Swedes in Sweden stood at 4.5%, significantly lower than the rate for foreign-born citizens, which held at 15.5%. This troubling disparity reveals an inequality in Sweden and indicates a divided society, both economically and culturally. There are different theories surrounding this confounding statistic and, as with many societal issues, there are multiple contributing factors.

Discrimination is one of those factors. Research published in 2019 in the Sociological Science Journal explored discrimination in hiring practices across 97 field experiments. It found that out of the nine countries studied, Sweden was second only to France in its rates of discrimination. Moreover, their models highlighted that often, discrimination against migrants is about more than their migration status and that ethnic and religious differences are intertwined within these prejudices. They found that: white natives receive 75 percent to 102 percent more call-backs in France and Sweden than non-white minorities.

Demonstrating a double layer of disadvantage and discrimination against those who are non-white and foreign-born.

Norrköping Byrå mot Diskriminering i Östergötland (Office Against Discrimination in Östergötland) reported a similar story. They described how the difficulties in entering the labour market don’t stop at the first generation. Indeed, many individuals of migrant descent who, despite being born in Sweden and being native Swedish speakers, still suffer similar issues as newly arrived migrants.

– Even if you are Swedish-born, like myself, with foreign parents, you are very prone to be on the other side of the discrimination practices, the wrong side...there are employers and HR personnel more prone to factor in bad experiences with a person that might have the same looks as the person in front of them, when it’s a foreigner, rather than a Swede or someone who is in the majority of society, explains Elias Ibrahím from Byrå mot diskriminering i Östergötland.

Despite studies such as this one and organizations raising awareness, discrimination is not always acknowledged when talking about unemployment. An OECD report, for example, fails to recognise the role
discrimination plays as it describes: “Migrants’ labor market outcomes continue to lag behind those of other Swedes, notably because of low educational attainment and literacy proficiency.”

Upon reading the whole report you are left with a feeling of oversimplification and overgeneralization. To put it crudely, migrants are under-educated and poorly suited to the advanced Swedish Labour market. Given this perspective, it recommends the familiar magic wand of giving Swedish lessons and skills-training to transform and reduce this unemployment inequality.

As discrimination is often unconscious, systemic, and not always comfortable to admit, it is easy to see why reports, such as this one, don’t acknowledge discrimination as a factor. Preferring, instead, to focus on external issues such as war leading to lower education attainment than the discrimination present in Sweden. The trouble with this is that it quietens an issue that has very real consequences for people.

Hammam, a Norrköping resident of Palestinian/Syrian background, told us his experience of the Labour market here and what discrimination has meant for him:

– I’m coming to the conclusion that we can’t get all of the cake...can’t be full members of [Swedish] society.

Having come to Sweden over ten years ago, with an undergraduate degree in English Literature and a knowledge of four languages (Arabic, English, Spanish, and German), he has since become fluent in Swedish, obtained a master’s degree and established freelance work. However, despite these achievements, he describes the difficulties he has encountered in entering the Swedish Labour Market.

His experiences provide a window into the ways in which discrimination creates barriers. Beginning with his encounter with the unemployment office, he recalls feeling siloed based on preconceived ideas of migrant employment opportunities. Ignoring education, desires and skills, the jobs predominantly suggested are within the service industry, warehouses, and private care work. Leaving him feeling frustrated and as if his previous hard work had somehow become unacceptable and unrecognized. It becomes clear how unacknowledged cultural differences begin to take a detrimental effect, exposing exactly how a migrant from Palestine is perceived to fit into the social structure.

Upon the completion of his masters, like any graduate, he began the process of applying for a plethora of jobs. Despite his language ability, Swedish education, and a medley of work experience, he continued to encounter barriers. He eventually felt the growing necessity of employing tactics to combat issues of discrimination:

– First I was applying as a Palestinian but then when I got naturalized in Sweden, I started applying as a Swede, but then I got no response, so then I removed my picture from the C.V...Same... so last thing I’m thinking, obviously, to change my name...

The conversation blossomed into a discussion about the psychological toll this takes both for himself and for those around him. In talking about the repetitive action of applying for jobs he was overqualified for, he divulges a state of frustration to the point of apathy. This, he reported is a growing sentiment within his community.

– Many migrants who have been here maybe at least 5 or 6 years say “No, no, no there are no jobs, they don’t employ us”...they [migrants] apply for jobs but they say “we don’t get a response” there’s like a general realization among young migrant men.

He depicted a cycle, as the experience of discrimination sowed seeds of doubt – making interviews a challenge. A nerve-wracking experience for all of us, but made that much worse when, through your experiences, you’ve begun to wonder ‘to what extent is my Swedish vocabulary and accent being stringently evaluated?’ ‘are they going to recognize my education?’ and ‘how likely are they to apply erroneous and racist stereotypes to me based on my name and appearance?’

Although he at no point indicates having been defeated by this process, his account illuminates how discrimination, both on a structural and individual level, is not only an issue of barriers being created by employers and organizations but also how these barriers create an uneven playing field when entering the job market. Hammam’s story stands in direct opposition to the common narrative told by the OECD report. More than this, what comes to light is that by neglecting to acknowledge
discrimination it becomes easier for its harmful effects on employment to be perpetuated.

Byrån Mot Diskriminering corroborated Hammam’s story and exposed this further. They disclosed the common issues that they and their clients encountered in the Swedish labour market. These issues included employers not valuing education from migrants’ home countries in the same way they would value Swedish education. A tendency to act on presumptions about a migrant’s background or beliefs, resulting in irrelevant questions during interviews, e.g., “Do you value women?” Finally, an issue of language barriers and measuring how good the potential employee’s Swedish is. By harshly questioning language skills, employers use this as a way to automatically disqualify people. Ultimately, reporting another type of cycle:

- Discriminating practices definitely perpetuates these other problems or these views that maybe foreigners are bad for Swedish society because discrimination can lead to a person leaving work or taking sick leave, and then you find that others at the workplace maybe view this person as lazy or someone who uses the Swedish welfare system, says Elias Ibrahim, Byrån mot diskriminering i Östergötland

Discriminatory narratives and experiences create self-fulfilling prophecies, as they slowly wear down their victims. The cycle produces fuel for anti-migrant agendas, as discrimination fails to be identified as a cause behind work absence, revealing the necessity for wider awareness of these issues. In recognition of this, Byrån Mot Diskriminering do a lot of educational work in the community of Östergötland, bringing attention to the ways in which people are discriminated against and the effects it can have.

However, even with educating the community, there is still work to be done as the Office sees rising cases of racism in the region of Östergötland. It is unclear whether this increase has to do with higher awareness of the Office or not, but regardless, it certainly and sadly does not indicate that there is a reduction in discrimination.

When asked to elaborate further on the intricacies of how discrimination is perpetuated in Sweden, they began by explaining how the law is fairly rigorous. For example, the 2008 Discrimination Act meticulously defines discrimination and harassment. However, they divulged that there is a disparity between the law and its implementation, as not everyone feels they have the economic resources to access the law – disincentivizing people and making the law inaccessible.

Furthermore, the legal system is often employed when it is already too late and the discrimination has already happened. Steering the interview to the less tangible dynamics at play, Pranvera Bahtiri from Byrån mot diskriminerings i Östergötland, reflects on obstacles harder to pinpoint:

- It’s a matter of power...we need more diverse representation of people in power but that means a transfer of power and people aren’t willing to do that. Sometimes in Sweden we do want to work with inclusion and against discrimination, but we aren't really willing to take the measures that are necessary, that actually make a difference. We take some steps but, actually, in real life they aren’t effective, it only looks good on paper.

This leads to the conclusion that to see an improvement in discrimination rates and the linked unemployment rates there needs to be greater awareness, better access to the legal system, and a fairer redistribution of power.
The place of living influences well-being, affects the experienced level of security, and is fundamental for participation in society. In 2020, the Swedish Migration Agency adopted changes in the Reception of Asylum Seekers and Others Act. The motivation behind the amendment is to counteract social segregation and encourage the integration of asylum seekers. This approach to integration shifts the responsibility to asylum seekers and forgets historic and social interconnections that have shaped the segregation situation to what it is today.

– Politicians who want to solve the problems in society do not understand how things really are in these neighbourhoods. They make solutions, they make laws, but without talking to the people. When you make a solution for people, you have to talk to them, you have to enter a dialogue, you have to know what they want, possibly the solution to this problem, they have it. And they don't need the solution from you.

“Khaled”, Swedish teacher in Norrköping, 8 years in Sweden

Since the summer of 2020, asylum seekers who choose to arrange their own accommodation in Sweden have been affected by the changes to laws concerning self-arranged housing, known in Swedish as EBO-lägen; EBO referring to “eget boende” – own accommodation. According to the new rules the asylum seekers who move to addresses that have been reported as socially and economically challenged may lose their right to daily allowance and special grants.

As the primary rule, the right to daily allowance and special grants is lost when moving to a reported area. However, exceptions to the rule can be made if, in the individual assessment, it is considered unreasonable to remove the right. An example of such a situation would be a family with children who are attending school in a reported area. If they decide to move within that neighbourhood, they suffer no consequences.

The law is a measure to restrict the freedom of movement and housing for asylum seekers. EBO as a housing option was established in the 1990s when refugees from Bosnia and Somalia came to Sweden and it turned out to be cheaper and more convenient for the state to let them live with relatives or friends. Since 2015, different arguments have arisen around EBO, mainly about fast
entry into the labour market and the development of ethnic enclaves. EBO asylum seekers are more likely to settle in the bigger cities, living with their relatives or friends. As housing there is scarce, segmented, and racialized, often their only possibility is illicit subletting where they suffer from poor living conditions, being overcharged, and are sometimes kicked out with short or no notice and without legal ways to defend themselves.

In Norrköping, municipality-owned Hyresbostäder i Norrköping is the largest housing company. There, Nicola Westerberg is responsible for aggravation issues between tenants and the property owner. She is hesitant to give a comprehensive assessment about the black housing market in Norrköping. In 2019, new regulations in the Tenancy Act criminalized the selling and buying of rental contracts, unreasonably high rents, and unauthorized contracts. Still, in 2020, Westerberg’s department had 345 unauthorized subletting cases under investigation and 74 cases terminated. According to her, the housing company is obligated to inform the police about the cases, and for the sake of the tenants who immediately lose their accommodation, they alert social services. This policy is paradoxical – in attempts to protect asylum seekers, it renders them vulnerable.

The city of Norrköping welcomed the restrictions for EBO housing. The risk of losing the right to financial assistance has not, however, stopped asylum seekers from moving to the reported areas of Norrköping. By the end of April 2021, 37.9 % of the asylum seekers with EBO housing in Norrköping had moved to a reported area after the changes to the EBO housing rules. As the allowance is at most 71 SEK per person per day, the sum may not be of any major significance to many asylum seekers. However, as was expected, the Swedish Migration Agency has observed a general increase in the amount of asylum seekers who choose not to arrange housing on their own but to take Migration Agency’s accommodation. Accommodation offered by the Agency is the alternative to searching for own accommodation, but it does not grant the asylum seekers any opportunity to choose their location of living. However, it is an option for those asylum seekers who do not have any income nor savings because housing with the Migration Agency can be paid for them, unlike EBO housing.

Norrköping is one of the municipalities that has been granted the right to report challenged areas to the Migration Agency. Norrköping has used this right and has reported parts of several neighbourhoods around the city, such as Hageby, Haga, Ljura, Klockaretorpet and Åby. In the report to the Migration Agency, Norrköping justifies the choices based on the residents’ below-average income, higher dependence on financial assistance, lower level of education, worse school performance, and lower participation in elections. In addition, the higher number of foreign-born and rental properties contribute to the areas becoming reported.

In Klockaretorpet, Marco Briones runs Kunskapens Hus, a local association of Hyresbostäder i Norrköping, working for a sustainable community. He describes how asylum seekers who have taken the Migration Agency’s accommodation instead of finding their own accommodation have been placed in reported areas, mainly because housing there was cheaper, and the Migration Agency had temporary dwelling available. These quarters, such as Navestad and Hageby, have been connected to social housing and to the Million Programme – “MILJONPROGRAMMET”

The Million Programme was a government response to the growing housing queues in the early 1960s. The Programme had an intention to build one million new affordable apartments between the years 1965 and 1974. During those years, 1,005,578 apartments were built, and the buildings varied from detached houses to high-rise apartment buildings. As a result, the housing queues were dissolved, and it can therefore be argued that the programme did what it was designed to do, but it has also been criticized for segregating areas.

Million Programme houses were intended to provide housing for all, but they failed to attract the planned variety of people. Early on, the Million Programme received criticism on creating sterile living environments. Characteristically for the programme that aimed for cost-efficiency and speed, the needs of future residents were not heard in the planning of the houses and the residential areas, which directly affected the attractiveness of the quarters.

The demand for housing was overestimated, for example, in the Gothenburg area. Intense building combined with unexpected developments such as demand-lowering economic depression in 1970s resulted in excess housing and hard-to-fill apartments that would accommodate basically anyone who would take them. With residents who could afford it leaving, the quarters became the destination for those who did not have the assets to compete for access to any other neighbourhood.
Programme. Social service’s tendency to accumulate people with drug and alcohol problems to these areas has increased social segmentation, which has worsened their reputation. The agglomeration of social challenges made wealthier residents leave the areas. Even today the perception of insecurity and social stigma prevails, making it difficult to find tenants, which is revealed by lower rents in the areas, Briones explains. Late in May 2021, most of the studios and three-bedroom flats at Hyresbostäder i Norrköping were in reported addresses. Sweden’s largest private real estate agency Rikshem on the other hand had no studios or 3-bedroom apartments available outside of the reported areas in Norrköping during the corresponding time. The areas also have difficulties in keeping their residents. Heidi Westell from Hyresbostäder’s community organisation Portalen in Hageby claims that after successful integration to the labour market, residents leave vulnerable areas. Therefore, the new wealth does not stay within those communities.

Marco Briones continues describing Klockaretorpet’s situation. According to him, low education, lower salaries, and challenges within the labour market are problems all of the inhabitants are facing. The language gap may be the major difference between foreigners and Swedish-born there. The question of lingual integration is often raised – that ethnic segregation will prolong the integration process and prevent migrants from working.

– They don’t want to segregate but at the same time there is no alternative, Khaled says.

According to him, segregation may be an economic necessity for some, but asylum seekers also come with families and move where they have bonds. Indeed, ethnic networks can provide first job opportunities, and navigation support through the bureaucracy. The geographical closeness to people who share the same language and similar traumatizing experience like war and flight can have protective potential and be a shield against racism and discrimination.

The changed EBO regulation questions the rationality of asylum seekers and their own consideration of what is beneficial for them. Instead of improving EBO conditions, regulating the housing market, building affordable apartments in more neighbourhoods, or financially supporting the host families, the law reproduces a mindset that integration has to originate mainly from the side of the asylum seekers. The role of other actors in strengthening integration and reducing segregation is forgotten.
Moneyversum
LOCAL, GLOBAL, PRIVATE AND PUBLIC ASPECTS OF REMITTANCES
By Begum Altincapa, Hanna Reichelt, Liza Mremi, Marcus Larsson, Tua-Lisa Runsten, Zillur Rahman

Remittances – money sent to and from migrants across the world – involve more than one billion people and are much more than simple money transfers across geographic boundaries. Remittances reflect diverse life stories, people’s eagerness to support their loved ones, the impact of currencies and the borderlessness of money. Just like everything else, remittances have been influenced by technological development spurred on by market demands. What role do technologies and digital solutions play when borders and restrictions are harsher than ever? How are remittances affected by Covid-19? In three articles below we have tried to answer some questions related to this crucial aspect of the global migratory landscape and to migrants’ lives. We have conducted interviews with people with personal experiences sending remittances as well as with Professor Melissa Siegel, an expert on the topic.

Money on the move – Understanding remittances and their significance
International migration does not only affect the welfare of the migrant, the household, and the community left behind, but it also affects the host community of the destination country. Global welfare gains from an increased cross-border labour mobility could be several times larger than those from full trade liberalization (World Bank 2018, 2006). Amer Ahmed (2016) estimates the gain from eliminating restrictions on South-North migration at $706 billion by 2030, bringing a rise in world gross domestic product (GDP) between 11.5% and 12.5% on the article titled as Global migration revisited: short-term pains, long-term gains, and the potential of south-south migration. Moreover, the numbers show us the importance of the financial contribution of officially recorded remittances to home countries’ economies. According to estimates that the World Bank-KNOMAD conducted in 2017, remittances sent to Low- and Middle-Income Regions (LMIR) will surpass more than $700 billion by 2019, 2020 and 2021.

Data from the World Bank (2018) points out that official global remittance was estimated at about $530 billion. It was more than three times the volume of official development assistance and comparable in size to flows of foreign direct investment. Remittances can be accepted as a stable source of funding, which remains constant or increases income in the migrants’ home countries, although private capital flows tend to decrease.
WHAT ARE REMITTANCES?

Usually ‘remittances’ mean migrants sending money back to their family or friends in origin countries. These transfers can be reversed as well with the migrant as recipient and the family as sender (e.g. parents sending money to students abroad). Moreover, money transfers do not have to cross borders. The term remittances often implies international remittances but they happen domestically as well. Remittances do not only include money-sending but also private goods-sending (e.g. medicine, electronics) and social remittances (ideas or norms, e.g. more equal gender roles). Remittances can be sent through formal/official (e.g. banks, money bank transfers) or informal/undetectable (e.g. travel with cash) channels.

Siegel discusses this pattern of resiliency seen with remittances but not with foreign direct investments (FDI) and overseas development assistance (ODA). This is not only a result of the personal attachment inherent to a vast majority of remittance sending but also other factors.

– On the other side in a Covid-19 situation we also saw that ODA and FDI really tanked. For some countries they are shifting money away from development funding to their own reserves. Some countries like the Netherlands for instance, the absolute money for ODA is tied to Dutch GDP. If Dutch GDP goes down, ODA goes down.

Siegel expresses that it is important to recognize that sudden decreases in FDI and ODA have made remittances look more resilient than they actually are. Remittances were simply not as harshly hit as other forms of foreign monetary flows.

As remittances are becoming more and more important for the economies of the Global South, sometimes representing a third of a country’s total GDP, there is still uncertainty as to the numbers on remittances being sent from Sweden. The government agency that produces statistics, Statistiska Centralbyrån, does not publish their numbers since the details are of too low quality.

According to the annual remittances data from the World Bank (May 2021), Sweden has an inflow of around US$ 3.1 billion in remittances while having an outflow of only approximately US$ 1.8 billion during 2020. However, the totality of these sums might be more significant because it is often challenging to officially register sent or received money through informal channels. Yet, it can be argued that the often-heard media and political arguments in Sweden against remittances are quite unnecessary and misleading since Sweden is a majority inflow country in terms of remittances and more money flows in than out.

Reflecting on receiving remittances in Sweden, Alma from Syria told us that she knows other migrants who receive money from their relatives living outside Sweden. They get money from family members to launch their own business because it is difficult to get a loan in Sweden, especially if someone is not a long-term resident or if they have experienced unemployment. However, as Alma claimed, it is not an easy and smooth process to receive this money, especially in the recent years when there are many scandals around money laundering in some banks.

Alma’s explanation touches upon the various debates around remittances, making it challenging to approach this topic. The research paper titled as Private money, public scrutiny? Contrasting perspectives on remittances by Horst et al. (2014) points out three common debates: remittances as driving forces for development; contributions to terrorism and international crime (e.g., money laundering, tax evasion); challenges in terms of integration questioning one’s loyalty and sense of belonging in the host country. In other words, these contrasting perspectives, used in the media and politics, are being critiqued in this study since they label remittances either as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ for the societies. Thus, neglecting the complexity of personal stories and the freedom of migrants to make individual financial choices.
Alma shared her story that outlines the individuality and agency behind money transfers.

– As a migrant myself who sends money to my parents who only have me and my brother to provide for them along with a very small pension, it is important to have secure and less expensive ways to send money. I feel responsible for them, which means that I cut on leisure expenses to help them out. It also gives me a good consciousness that I am helping them and less guilt about having a good life here, said Alma.

She also expressed how difficult it was to support her family before she received a stable job with a decent salary and her eagerness to achieve better career choices in Sweden to be able to help her old parents who live in a country of war.

As for Jacob from Ethiopia, remittances play a crucial role in his familial bonds.

– For me, it [remittances] really means a lot because I have been taking care of my family for a very long time, since I was 16. It is something that gives meaning to my life, it is my responsibility. I have a brother who is 12 years old, and I am way older than him, so I feel like I am his father, and his future depends on me. I feel like my mother and my whole family depend on me. As long as I am alive, I have to do it. It is my responsibility to help them, said Jacob.

When asking him about how sending money home affects his financial situation, he responded,

– I don't think ‘affect’ is the right word to use. Supporting my family gives me a reason to go harder, to make more money, to be the person who I am. It affects me positively, it gives me a reason to focus, to live. It makes me avoid wrong things because I feel like if I do something wrong, I am risking their lives. It makes me have a dream.

Farid from Syria living in Malmö also sends money home to support his family regarding their health, education, food, and other expenses.

– I feel very well when I send money to my family. Also, I feel that I can make them smile and bring happiness to them.

Importantly, Alma brought up some of the obstacles that many migrants need to overcome in terms of money transferring.

– I think many migrants want to help their families, especially parents who had to leave their children and are the only providers. Unfortunately, family reunion is so difficult now and this puts extra pressure on parents to provide for themselves in Sweden, and for their children in home countries or in refugee countries. Parents who are the sole providers are challenged to integrate, learn the language, find a job and at the same time do their best to provide for their children.

As for Afran, a 50-year-old Kurdish man living in Sweden, he does not frequently send remittances to his family back home at the moment. He has three siblings left in Kurdistan, but six siblings live in western countries, and they all share the responsibility for the other siblings back home. Afran tells of the difficulties of sending home remittances before the fall of the Saddam regime.

– We used to put money in our underwear with many layers of underwear and made pockets in our belts. This was before 2010, but after the airport finally opened in Kurdistan. Politics affected how we had to transfer money and behave. We also created a system where, instead of sending money or risking having your money being taken from you during transit, we would give money to Kurds that they could spend while visiting Sweden, which they would pay back to our families once back in Kurdistan.

Commenting on the significance of remittances, Siegel argues that remittances can also give individuals and different members of society a different stance in the society and can also make their voice heard. These aspects of remittances can be indeed important.

CONTROVERSIAL TOPIC: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REMITTANCES AND DEVELOPMENT

Often (monetary) remittances appear in the context of development which measures mostly increased income, better living standards, better education and job opportunities. While development can be observed for individuals (e.g. higher education), it is much harder to understand development in whole societies in the long run; since many factors interplay and often the data is missing (e.g. for remittances and poverty).

CONTROVERSIAL TOPIC: MOVING FROM PUBLIC TO PRIVATE RESPONSIBILITY AND HELP

Migrants send remittances to support their loved ones. In some countries with bad governance (e.g. corruption, unfair policies) this can lead to less government spending on social sectors (e.g. health and education). Whereas some families may find, and even prefer, private solutions for their basic needs (e.g. education, health) through received remittances, the resulting reduced pressure on governments to support all citizens puts the remaining population in a more vulnerable position.
Needless to say, as the Covid-19 pandemic has affected most aspects of our everyday life, it has also shaped the possibilities and frequencies of sending and receiving remittances among migrant communities. Afran from Kurdistan has had his theatre projects cancelled during the pandemic, and many of his Kurdish friends have lost their businesses and restaurants. Additionally, maintaining the system of sending remittances through other Kurds when traveling back and forth has been challenging with less direct travel options. However, the will to keep supporting has persisted, and Afran has found ways to still send some of the lower salary he now has from having to go back to working in an elderly home.

Among the most instantaneous impacts of the pandemic were the restrictions on not only human relations but also national and international mobility in order to prevent spreading of the disease. Closing national borders, introducing new regulations and obligations for inter/national travel, delaying, and canceling transportation affected migration worldwide. When considering the general picture of the impact of the pandemic on migrants, we can briefly summarize that many people were not able to go back to their home countries, many migrants were forced to leave the host countries unexpectedly by the authorities, others lost their jobs or were obliged to work fewer hours. Alongside with the biological effect and financial problems due to the pandemic, migrants were also subject to stigma, xenophobia and discrimination because they were pointed out as vectors of the disease and as the main contribution of the spread of the virus.

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, migrants sent an average of 15% of their income to their home countries. It was a significant amount, considering that the total amount of all remittances can equal to 10-30% of the GDP for smaller economies. Migration and Development Brief 34 conducted by the World Bank Group-KNOMAD (2021) shows that remittances decreased to US$540 billion in 2020 (from $548 billion in 2019) during the Covid-19 pandemic in the low-and middle-income regions and fell to US$702 billion (from $719 billion in 2019) globally.

The Gambia, which largely relies its economy on tourism, has suffered greatly during the pandemic. Fatoumata tells of her Gambian friends in Sweden, who had to send double the amount of remittances compared to last year.

Although Aida from Ethiopia has not lost her job during the pandemic, her salary has still been affected by the number of sick days she has had due to the much harder rules about staying home when sick. The loss in salary has affected how much she has been able to send home in remittances to her elderly parents in Ethiopia.

In 2020 the World Bank estimated a massive, 14% shrinking in remittances by 2021. This was due to the outcome of the pandemic involving rising unemployment, health risks, increasing return migration, projected fall in oil prices and inflation. However, while the World Bank estimated a 7% drop in remittances by 2020, the reality took a turn for the better, and remittances fell only 1.6% below the 2019 total of remittances. In other words, the difference between the received money in low- and middle-income countries was only $8; 548$ in 2019 and 540$ in 2020.

Siegel emphasized that the only 1.6% dip in remittances registered by the World Bank did not reveal the full truth. According to Siegel, Covid-19 facilitated an increase in formal remittance transfers. Previously, large sums of money would be hand-carried on visits or sent through family members and friends. When that form of mobility stopped, the possibility to send remittances through that channel also ceased to exist. This meant that migrants were forced to switch to formal mechanisms of monetary transfers.

Siegel further argues that this phenomenon simply means that,

– We might just be capturing now in formal remittances what was being sent previously in informal remittances. It might actually be that globally, remittances did decrease more, but we are not good at measuring the informal side of it. If a lot of that informal side has now switched over to the formal side, there might still have been quite a decrease, we are just not seeing it on the formal remittance side. Siegel continues,

– We know that formal remittances have hardly dropped, but some estimates say that as much as 50% of all remittances are sent informally.

Siegel argues that it is the personal attachment inherent to remittance sending that makes it such a sustainable and resilient practice and states that migrants often reduce their own standards of living to have enough money to send to their family and friends abroad.

Inaya, a woman from Pakistan who has lived in Sweden for the past four years shared her experiences of sending remittances.

– Yes, I sent money to my family during the pandemic because in my country there is no government aid for the people. My father had to close his business because of the countrywide lockdown. During the pandemic, I have sent double the amount of money that I usually send.

Further reasons behind the trends of remittances during 2020 and 2021 come from the increased government stimulus packages and benefits as explained by Siegel.

– A lot of governments did things where they gave stimulus to small and medium-sized businesses and others to try and make sure they could keep their doors open and keep people employed. That also trickled to migrants. Siegel continues,

– We also know that when there are crises, migrants do everything they can to send remittances. For instance, when natural disasters struck Bangladesh, Bangladeshi migrants would continue to send remittances to help those in need.
Farid, a Syrian man from Malmö, mentioned the factors that are considered by migrants when deciding which platform to use when sending remittances. He does not prefer one company over the other, but he usually follows the money exchange rate and which company is giving a higher rate than other companies. Farid then brought up Azimo, ACE, Remitly, World Remit, Revolute, and Transferwise these companies provide the customers with prompt services that are often cheap or, in some cases, free of charge.

Siegel touches on this by stating,

"Digital forms of sending money just became much more important since informal mobility wasn’t there. We saw a switch to these more formal ways that are also very much digitized."

Siegel mentioned that while there is an increased use of digitized forms of remittance sending, much of the world still cannot access these services. Access to electricity and the internet is non-existent for large parts of the world’s population. However, the increased importance of sending money digitally can potentially stimulate development in this field.

Due to the pandemic and worldwide lockdowns, tech companies have been driven to respond to the urgent need of expanding their companies to meet the demand for digital money transfers in a time where remittances have come to play an even more important role in surviving. The pandemic has driven well-established companies such as Western Union and Financial Technology companies such as WorldRemit to grow, and what was assumed to have taken four years of digital growth has been compressed, according to a Forbes (2020) article, into two months.

A decade ago, digital money transfers were barely part of the discussion and amounted to about 2% of the transactions at the dominating company: Western Union. In mid-March 2020, during the initial phase of the global lockdowns, the company reported its digital transactions to be 32% of the consumer business. As for the Fin-tech companies, already ahead digitally, WorldRemit reported its digital growth in new customer activations镂.© Tua-Lisa Runsten
to be 150% since the beginning of the pandemic. This leaves us wondering how this cash-to-technology shift will change the ongoing and future business plans of these money transfer companies? Will consumers continue relying on digital technologies, or will they go back to cash once they have the opportunity to do so?

Siegel weighs in by saying,

– I think the majority of migrants who are going to send remittances formally are still relying more on some kind of money transfer operator and not really traditional banks for that. Or, the people who do rely on that, are the very highly skilled migrants or people who have a bank account in one country and just send an extra bank card home so people can withdraw the money directly.

Siegel is quick to mention that the portion of ‘very highly skilled migrants’ is an incredibly small subcategory of the general migrant population. The reliance on different types of money transfer providers is still visible. Siegel states that using services of such companies as Western Union, one can do everything online. However, Siegel was adamant about making the point that in order to have access to these services, one needed computer literacy, connection to the internet, and access to a computer or a smartphone. Despite these challenges, the barriers to remittance sending are slowly disappearing, and increasingly widespread money transfer apps make them more accessible.

There is no need to go as far as Silicon Valley to witness the boost in digital remittance services in 2020 and 2021. Transfer Galaxy, a Swedish-based start-up, has the goal of “making remittances as they should be. For immigrants. By immigrants” as they state on their website. It all started with a group of friends taking matters into their own hands after years of being frustrated by high fees and bureaucracy involved in money transferring through their local Western Union agent. All they wanted was to support those whom they genuinely love, miss, and care for through a cheaper, smarter, and fairer platform.

With great ambition and tireless effort to dream beyond conventional monetary frameworks, they founded Transfer Galaxy in 2014 to simplify and digitalize remittances and make people feel one step closer to their loved ones. In 2020, regardless of the Covid-19 pandemic, they had reached a milestone with 3 billion SEK sent in remittances. That is to say, they surpassed the results they achieved in 2019 by 2 billion SEK. Besides, they also expanded their business outside the Nordic countries and opened an office in Germany.

Fatoumata, a woman who sends remittances every month to her relatives in Senegal, used to pay 250 SEK for every 2000 SEK she sent home, whereas with Transfer Galaxy, she now has to pay only 17 SEK in fees for the same amount. Now, she says,

– They [Transfer Galaxy] have a faithful customer, and I will never use anything else.

When asked if the digitization has decreased the costs of sending remittances, Siegel responded,

– To some extent, yes. If you look at the most recent World Bank report that came out, remittance prices did still decrease in the fourth quarter of last year. Maybe not at the rate that we are hoping it would. But, because so much of remittance sending was being done, because people were relying more and more on these electronic transfers, perhaps we are still seeing some pressure being set on the market to also innovate.

Siegel provided a subtle warning for what was to come,

– They often reduce their own standard of living to make sure they can still send money back. They draw on their savings and do other things. Now, for how long they are able to do that is a question. What we see this year in 2021 is also really up in the air... and we are probably not going to be able to see that same return again this year that we saw last year.

Whether Siegel’s prediction proves to be true or not, it seems evident that remittances have a significant role in many migrants’ everyday lives, in transnational family relations, and they also shape the global financial as well as digital trends, and future tendencies. Perhaps, this complexity around remittances – that they play a part both in local and global structures – is what makes this topic so interesting and important to understand. They not only shape the very intimate, personal bonds but also stir up the public economic, political, and media discussions.
The Belt and Road Initiative

CHINA’S FOREIGN DEVELOPMENT

By Emma Eriksson & Aidan McGirr

From the 2nd century BCE to the 18th AD, the ‘Silk Road’ created the world’s greatest trade routes to unify countries’ goods, cultures, and peoples. These routes died out in the age of modern globalization and nation-states, but an initiative from China seeks to recreate the old network of infrastructure under the ‘Belt and Road Initiative’ (BRI), the Silk Road’s modern-day successor. China is not only aiming to rebuild the old Silk Road but to expand it across the Asian continent and beyond. This expansion includes the original Silk Road route, as well as expansions by land through Europe and by sea through Africa and the Arctic. Necessary to this expansion are infrastructure developments along the route, which China has been happy to furnish for countries such as Libya, Ethiopia, Kenya, Kazakhstan, and Zambia through what China has dubbed, “no strings attached” loans.

But it remains unclear whether these innocuous loans help or hinder their receiving countries. On the one hand, countries benefit by receiving much needed infrastructure. On the other hand, countries are hobbled to Chinese loans and labour migration schemes. Thus, one must question whether the BRI is primarily concerned with global cooperation or political power-grabbing.

China is one of the lowest ranked countries in The Economist Democracy Index, placing 151 out of 167 and firmly cemented in a grading of ‘Authoritarian.’ For comparison, Russia ranks at 124, Zambia at 99, the United States at 25, and Sweden at 3. Yet, economically speaking, China has been and continues to be one of the most prolific, active nation states in the international market. Where this is felt most poignantly is in China’s foreign investments around the BRI. In 2020, China invested roughly $47,000,000,000 into countries for the BRI - down 54% from 2019. These investments focus on building strategic assets - such as bridges, ports, etc. - for China and host countries around the world. In fact, the BRI currently has 3,176 outstanding projects in foreign countries for Chinese development.

Chinese investments first and foremost have a salutary effect upon host countries. Namely, investments for the BRI help develop existing infrastructure for a region while also allowing that country to further access the global trade market. Furthermore, for developing countries, this agreement means that the country may focus on other aspects of development rather than funding the large-scale projects needed for participation in a project such as the BRI.

However, there is a darker side to entering a loan agreement with China. Namely, Chinese foreign investment can lead to a ‘debt trap,’ wherein host countries are indebted to China both economically and politically. This debt
trap plays out in the long-term hobbling of countries’ economic growth should China ever seek to be repaid for its generous loans. Furthermore, the investment paradigm has already had effects within the political arena. For example, the magazine Omvärlden berättar notes how countries with economic ties to China were far less likely to critique China’s highly controversial Hong Kong security laws in the United Nations Human Rights Council. To understand whether the BRI is an economic blessing or a curse for human rights, it is best to look at a region heavily invested in the Chinese economic scheme: Zambia.

Zambia is not a new economic partner for China. In fact, in the 1970’s Zambia accepted over 13,000 Chinese labourers as well as Chinese investment to build the Tazara Railroad. History repeats itself now, where Zambia is a major partner in China’s BRI development. During the construction of the Tazara railway, Chinese migration to Zambia increased rapidly - mainly due to the demand for labourers. Many of the migrants chose to stay in in the country, leading to approximately 80,000 Chinese nationals living in Zambia according to the UN’s Population Division. While this 80,000 only accounts for ~4% of the Zambian population, The New Humanitarian writes that these Chinese control the majority of the Zambian manufacturing sector. Consequently, there is a growing polarization in Zambia between the Zambian people and Chinese migrants as well as Chinese descendants. Deutsche Welle states that many Zambians are critical to China’s investments. This is because these investments, also known as Foreign Direct Investments (FDI’s), are presented as loans which haven’t equated to an increase in the job market for Zambians - because the work is contracted out to migrant Chinese labour. Furthermore, many Zambians also question the quality of the Chinese infrastructure projects. These two factors have led to tension in Zambia between the natives and the Chinese migrants. This has spiraled into a situation wherein many Chinese in Zambia are harassed and many Zambian leaders are called out for corruption to the benefit of China.

Conversely, some in Zambia are ecstatic for the opportunities which the BRI brings. Sande Ngalande, the director at the Belt and Road Joint Research Center at the University of Zambia, says that the Zambian people are grateful for the cooperation between the Zambian and Chinese governments. Ngalande does not deny that there are tensions between Zambians and Chinese. However, their opinion is that there will always be conflict at the intersection of cultures, language, and traditions. Thus, Ngalande states that the Chinese people doing business in Zambia are helpful to the Zambian economy both because they pay taxes to the Zambian government and because they provide work and infrastructure for the locals. Furthermore, Ngalande remains confident that the conflicts will be resolved in a decent manner. Thus, China’s role in Zambia remains equivocal as Zambia debates the effects of having a foreign power so thoroughly entrenched in its infrastructural and economic outputs.

Zambia illustrates how China’s foreign investments have poignant ripple effects on the local economy and labour forces within a country. However, the implications of such a debt system are equally extreme. As described by Peo Hansen in Modern Monetary Theory, a country which does not issue its currency, or stands in debt to another currency, sacrifices a great deal of its domestic policy space. This is because the country is now permanently financially constrained; until the debt is gone, the country must always concern itself with ensuring it has enough of the secondary currency or else it risks insolvency. Countries which have indebted themselves to China must run this same risk - if China chooses to collect on these loans then the entire economical infrastructure risks collapse. Thus, countries must hobble themselves to China and ensure they remain in China’s good graces for fear of ruining their economic systems.

Beyond the complications which China’s scheme engenders into the markets of specific nation states, there are also much broader ramifications for this BRI: China is undergirding its international hegemony by placing countries under massive debt loads and then using this hegemony to influence the international community. While national political/economic/sociological trends have changed as a result of this investment, much more concerning are the implications for the broader international community. As China continues to provide poorer countries with loans and gifts, they increase their ability to act with impunity at home as well as abroad. This can be seen in the Hong Kong vote mentioned prior. More gravely, it is also felt in China’s ongoing mistreatment of Uighur Muslims and other Turkic Muslims in China’s Xinjiang province. Human Rights Watch has documented ongoing crimes against humanity in the province, including offenses which may amount to genocide. But in an October 2020 statement regarding the matter in the UN General Assembly, only 39 countries of the UN’s 193 total spoke out against China.

As a result of China’s foreign investment, the country has achieved three major political outcomes: China has created infrastructure to expand its international influence; China has created a system of enormous debt which will hobble countries to China long into the future; and, China has insulated itself from international critique as a result of its incredible influence. These concerns lay parallel to the equally intense ramifications felt by countries experiencing China’s foreign investment, as exemplified by Zambia. While China’s actions are not particularly novel in the grand scheme of colonial powers advancing themselves, they are extremely concerning nonetheless. After all, it becomes difficult to find justice and moral clarity when billions of dollars’ worth of money are being tossed around. For the international community to hold itself with credibility, and for the human rights of workers and vulnerable populations the world over to be protected, China’s foreign investments must be controlled.
The first cryptocurrency, Bitcoin, was created by Satoshi Nakamoto as an alternative to traditional currencies. The idea was to create a currency that was independent of financial institutions, non-inflationary, and could easily be used internationally in an increasingly global economy. Like most modern currencies, cryptocurrency has no inherent physical backing. Rather, it holds value because the market chooses it to. However, unlike modern currencies, cryptos are not supported by a government institution. Instead, cryptocurrencies rely on supply and demand in an electronic market. This has led to inflated demand and extreme price volatility. Furthermore, the ‘high-risk’ nature of cryptocurrencies, coupled with the high cost to create the currency - through a process known as ‘mining’ - effectively precludes the most vulnerable and poor from accessing the market.
Despite the current issues with cryptocurrency, crypto has been praised as a solution to many of the problems for modern currencies. These solutions range from increased financial security due to cryptos' digital nature, to fiscal independence, meaning that people are in control of the money rather than an institution or government. Furthermore, cryptos are hailed as a stable solution to many unstable currencies. For example, the Venezuelan bolivar underwent 53,798,500% inflation between 2016 and 2019 - cryptos, on the other hand, are supposed to offer a sustainable, non-inflationary alternative to such instances. A similar scenario can be seen in Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwean dollar is quite unstable; thus, Bitcoin has been used by the populace to protect civilians and businesses despite being banned by the government. As a result, cryptocurrencies are claimed to be a solution for modern day, global workers. Cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin may help labourers trade and protect their assets, empower them with control over their currencies, and stay secure while interacting with the global market.

Yet, to understand if these claims are true, one must first understand the implications of using a cryptocurrency. To do this, it is necessary to know where cryptos originate from. Cryptocurrencies are electronically ‘mined’ in a process which creates new coins and tracks crypto transactions across cryptocurrency markets. While anyone can mine cryptocurrencies, provided they have a computer with the sufficient materials and computing power, the vast majority of mining is done in massive ‘cryptofarms’ - typically in China. Imagine thousands upon thousands of computer GPUs (Graphics Processing Units - required for mining coins) all plugged into a central grid and with several workers to maintain their status. Yet, the miners running these cryptofarms do not typically get paid for their work by whoever invested the funds for the GPUs - rather, the workers have a chance of being rewarded cryptocoins by successfully mining the crypto. Bitcoin, for example, is mined through solving computational puzzles, also known as blocks. When you solve a puzzle/block, you are rewarded with a new fraction of a Bitcoin. The rate that Bitcoin can be mined depends on the rate that these computational puzzles can be solved. The more computing power/GPUs, the better the chances of solving the puzzle. You only get rewarded by successfully mining, and the miners are therefore in competition with each other. This in turn increases the competition to have more GPUs and computing power. Thus, mining Bitcoin is only a worthwhile endeavour for those that can afford the computing power needed.

Since cryptomining requires considerable amounts of energy, miners need to have access to cheap electricity. The vast majority of mining has been localized in China, accounting for 65-75% of the world’s Bitcoin mining. China’s massive push for cryptomining is then followed by the United States of America (~7%), Russia (~7%), and Kazakhstan (~6%). But with this much mining comes extreme energy requirements. Consider China’s Xinjiang province, which accounts for 36% of the world’s Bitcoin mining. According to Digiconomist, the province experienced massive blackouts from April 17th and 18th due to cryptomining. Furthermore, the energy needed to mine this crypto comes directly from coal sources. According to The Guardian, the energy consumption of Bitcoin alone exceeded the energy consumption of entire countries - Ireland or Argentina, for example. Moreover, it currently costs more than twice the amount of energy to mine one dollar of Bitcoin compared with the energy cost in mining one dollar’s worth of gold, copper, and platinum. But these metals hint at cryptos’ twofold impact on the environment. Not only is there the tremendous energy cost associated with mining cryptocurrencies, but these currencies also rely on the earth’s already exhausted resources (energy sources and precious metals). As mentioned, cryptomining uses GPUs. And GPUs are manufactured from gold, silver, zinc, aluminium, copper, and tin. Ironically, cryptocurrencies must be physically mined before they can be cryptomined.

Ecological ramifications aside, the mining industry has a well-documented history of abusive labour practices, child labour, and vio-
lence. And because of the con-
siderable rise in cryptocurrency
prices over the past year, exac-
terated by the global pandemic,
electronics and gold are in ex-
tremely short supply even though
there is massive demand. In an
industry already rampant with
worker abuse and exploitation,
cryptomining has only worsened
the problem. From a 2005 report,
ILO estimates 1,000,000 children
are engaged in the gold mining
industries across Africa, Asia, and
South America. Furthermore, in
early 2021 three accidents in coal
mines across China - one of which
left 12 dead and 21 trapped - were
seen to correlate directly to a de-
crease in Bitcoin cryptomining.
This correlation comes from the
fact that Bitcoin mining predicates
constant energy from coal mining
- when the physical mining stops,
so too must the cryptomining. The
resources for cryptomining must
come from somewhere, something
that often isn't considered when
talking about cryptocurrencies.
That 'somewhere' is too often the
labour of children and exploited
adults in poorer countries.
Furthermore, with all of this
mining comes dire ecological
consequences. Cryptomining
and regular mining require co-
pious amounts of energy and
significantly pollute the envi-
ronment through greenhouse gas
emissions. In fact, according to
Forbes, the situation has become
so severe that China's entire en-
vironmental plan will be derailed
if cryptomining rates continue as
they are into the future. What this
means for the rest of the world
is an increased global tempera-
ture and a closing-in on critical
climate change numbers which
will devastate modern humanity.
Already in 2020, the UNHCR
estimates that 20,000,000 peo-
ple were displaced as a result of
climate events. EcoWatch warns
that this number will rise to
1,000,000,000 by 2050 if current
trends continue. Moreover, the
people who will be displaced by
climate change are not the ones
that are most at fault for the cli-
mate changing! Environmental
refugees will be focused around
regions with poorer infrastruc-
ture and less developed sustain-
ability efforts. Consequently,
while the wealthier countries
have burned energy incessantly
to produce their own wealth, it
is the poorer countries that will
suffer.
Not only will these poorer coun-
tries suffer ecologically, but they
are also locked out of the wealth
produced by cryptocurrencies. If a trader had purchased
$100USD of Bitcoin in 2009,
that $100 would now be worth
~$36,000,000 (an inflation of
35,999,900% over eleven years
in comparison with the bolivar's
53,798,500% over three years - the
US Dollar's inflation rate hovers
around 2.5% annually.) Howev-
er, the only ones in a position to
make such purchases were those
with excess wealth in the first place.
Furthermore, it is impossible to
gain more bitcoin without mining
it - an expensive and energy taxing
process. In effect then, crypto-
currencies export metals from the
world's poorer countries to produce
exorbitant wealth primarily for
already wealthy countries. This ex-
treme inflationary wealth excludes
the world's poor and creates a new
system for the hegemony of billion-
aires.
The supposed benefits of crypto-
currencies have yet to be seen; however,
the negatives are already being felt
by the world's poor. Cryptocurrency
is a digital currency that currently
relies on the exploitation of work-
ers and the earth. For crypto to be
a viable alternative to traditional
financial tokens, cryptos first and
foremost must be mined via a more
sustainable energy source. This may
come soon, as many are beginning
to realize the adverse climate ef-
fects of cryptos. But to reach the
considerable expectations which
have been ascribed to cryptos, these
currencies must also be mined with
more sound labour markets and in a
more stable circumstance. Without
a more ecologically friendly front, a
more worker-friendly atmosphere,
or a stabilized market, cryptos will
remain a novelty and a hindrance to
global cooperative growth.
Crisis usually impacts societies and makes them evaluate things from a different perspective. It can also show behaviours and some cultural conducts that need to change. The Coronavirus pandemic caused a worldwide crisis and made people readapt their ways of living.

Each country has been hit in different respects, and its effects have exacerbated existing economic, medical, and social disparities worldwide. During the first half of 2020, governments and media widely discussed the origin and the cause of the virus. Some attributed the rapid spread of disease to the result of ignorance of basic sanitation rules, i.e. washing hands frequently or keeping social distance. It led to the conviction for some western countries that they themselves would never be hit by the virus fatally, but they also considered closing the borders to China so as not to be contaminated by an externally generated virus.

Once the disease started to spread, and casualties began to rise, north-eastern Asians became the target for an increased amount of racial discrimination and hate crimes as they were considered to be responsible for the disease and its transmission. As we witnessed the stigmatization toward Africans when it came to HIV transmission in the late 90's in Sweden, foreigners were once again blamed for causing yet another catastrophe in the civilized Western world.

In Sweden, not only north-eastern Asians were blamed for the spread of the disease but also foreigners in general were associated with it. Healthcare workers were particularly blamed for the high death toll in elderly homes. Reading between the lines, it implied that migrants and minorities were highly responsible for the deaths of the Swedish elderly population.

In Sweden, around 20% of the population has a foreign background. They represent 47% of the taxi and bus drivers in the country, and they were 4.8 times more likely to get infected by the Coronavirus. In healthcare, 34% of the doctors, 12% of the nurses, 26% of the assistant nurses, and 60% of the cleaning staff are foreign born, and they are at least twice as likely to get Coronavirus. Both groups represent a part of the Swedish society's workers who provide essential work and therefore cannot work from home. Many of them receive low wages or have precarious working conditions that impact their and their families' quality of life.
Due to several factors such as culture or low income, many need to live in a multigenerational household, making them more likely to get sick with such diseases as coronavirus. This happens for many reasons such as the eventual necessity that one or more family members work in multiple jobs, the job positions require contact with many people, or that more people in the same household can increase the possibilities of one being sick and spreading the virus to the others. Not having a permanent contract or being paid hourly is also a common form of work for many foreigners, in these cases if they get sick and do not go to work, they do not receive an income which negatively impacts their lives.

Still, the high death toll in elderly care homes in the early stages of the pandemic was directly connected to the workers as they were the ones spreading it. What was not drawn much attention was the lack of supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and that many of these workers receive such low wages, that they need to have more than one job to pay their bills. Also left unexplored was that the death toll in elderly homes corresponded to 45% of the deaths and that the elderly who received some form of support at their own home represented only 23% of the deaths.

The lack of clear and transparent information increased the tension between Sweden’s migrant communities and Swedes. Outcomes such as job losses and the impacts of sickness for those in the most precarious work conditions were not addressed. These groups suffer overwhelming pressure from both Swedes, who blamed them for the deaths of the elderly, and from their lack of income and the need to pay their own living costs. Whilst the media and government continued to focus their blame for the high death toll on one group, other impacts were neglected, such as medical reforms and structural changes made in 1992. Ingalill Hallberg, a researcher at Lund University explains that one of the changes that happened with the reform is that the “Health Care and Medical Services Act was made subordinate to the Social Services Act” and it considers that “the problems of older people, in terms of what the Act addresses, are primarily regarded social and not health issues”. This positioning caused a change in the elderly healthcare structure and when the Coronavirus pandemic hit the elderly, there were not enough economic resources allocated for their care.

In the early 1980’s, when HIV first hit Sweden, homosexuals were blamed for the spread of the disease. Later on, in the 1990’s, the responsibility was transferred to migrants especially to Africans. As Anna-Maria Sörberg points out in her book Det Sjuka, this happened when a medical doctor published an article associating the HIV spread with Africans. In the same book, she examines several stories in which foreigners received heavier criminal sentences than Swedes for their potentiality of spreading HIV to others. She also points out that the media is more prone to report crimes committed by migrants, for example. However, the media is not the only one responsible for the spread of prejudiced information. A question made by a judge to the accused during an HIV-related trial whether she was not aware that 70% of the black population has HIV explained how foreigners, back in the 90’s, were already seen as the responsible ones for spreading diseases.

Both pandemics helped to show the recurrent tendency to blame others for the spread of disease. It is just a glimpse of the hidden discrimination that migrants face daily. It also shows that it is much easier to blame others than to take control of the situation and accept the consequences of previous actions, revealing the need to understand that everything is interconnected in society, all jobs are valuable and necessary for it to function successfully.
According to Støjberg when revealing the new plan in 2018, the new centre on Lindholm Island is not a prison, residents are free to leave during the day, only it will be difficult for them to do so. Moving the centre to a small island will be triple the cost of keeping it on the mainland but considered to be worth it, as it will give the Danes a good night’s sleep.

However, a year later, the government decided to halt the project, which was estimated to cost $115 million, as the new minister for immigration and integration, Mattias Tesfaye, compared a new centre on the island to a luxury hotel, claiming that it will make it harder to get the rejected asylum seekers to leave the country because they will enjoy the luxury of being on a hard-to-get-to island. He asserted “it is expensive to put criminals on a boat to and from the island, one night on the island costs the same as one night in a luxury hotel. Will this make them want to travel home? No! It is money thrown out of the window. We must come up with a cheaper plan, Criminal foreigners are not welcomed in Denmark. They must leave”. This new project on Lindholm Island will cost $160,000 a year per person, whereas the current centre on the mainland costs almost $50.00 a year, per person.

Mads Fuglede who is a member of the Folketing Venstre political party, criticized the termination of the project because it has caused the Danes to again have to worry about where the new centre will be placed, fearing that it might become their new neighbour. However, Mattias Tesfaye has promised the Danes that he will make sure that a suitable location is found, adding that he will go far to assure this happens, impressing his understanding that nobody wants to be a neighbour to the centre.

The current centre on Kærshovedgård, on the red arrow, is in the process of being moved further out, possibly to East Africa, as the two previously agreed locations on Langeland Island and Lindholm Island have been terminated. The former because the location was resisted by “local” residents and the latter because of the cost.
As he promised in 2019, Mattias Tesfaye has recently announced a new plan. Which will solve the resistance and outrage against the deportation centre that locals are fighting against and refuse to welcome to their area.

Tesfaye recently revealed the new plan; A Denmark-Rwanda deal. Not only will Rwanda take the responsibilities of Denmark’s deportation centres, but the whole asylum application process will take place there. It is suggested that this will save Denmark’s economy and solve the difficulties of finding suitable locations for asylum centres in Denmark.

Rasmus Stoklund, a government spokesman told the Danish broadcaster DR in June 2021 “If you apply for asylum in Denmark, you know that you will be sent back to a country outside Europe, and therefore we hope that people will stop seeking asylum in Denmark.” Denmark will get rid of its deportation centres and will be saved from having to provide for every rejected asylum seeker who refuses to leave the country.

However, this deal is still in process and will take a few years before it is ready. In the meantime, Tesfaye has come up with a temporary solution for the current problem, moving the current centre to a bigger and easier accessed island, Langeland Island. He claims, housing them on Langeland instead, will cost half than housing them on small, hard-to-get-to Lindholm Island as it was previously planned.

Tesfaye admits that this is not the best solution but reassures local residents that extra funds will be put towards police, and locals will receive funding for security measures so they can have a good night’s sleep. The location for the new deportation centre was revealed on the 19th of March 2021 and, within just a few hours, a local resident had put his house up for sale, and in an interview with the Danish broadcaster TV2, the local resident asked, “who is going to buy our houses now?”, while another local resident added “why did they drop the plan for Lindholm Island? It is a perfect place... now we have to live with this”.

There are currently 257 residents at the deportation centre on Kærshovedgård. Most are on a so-called “tolerated stay” which means, they have overstayed their permits or have had their Asylum application rejected but cannot be deported because their home country is considered unsafe.

Some are just waiting for their case to be reassessed.

Residents have a curfew between 10pm and 6am, and there have been complaints that they are treated like criminals with some claiming that not enough food is served. However, Inger Støjberg, former minister of immigration, rejected these claims in 2017 saying “I have visited the deportation centre, many times, it is not as bad as the residents claim, I have even eaten the food they serve there. Many of the residents are on tolerated stay and are not even supposed to be in Denmark.”
The difficulties of finding a suitable location for the deportation centre could help justify Mattias Tesfaye’s deal of moving it to Rwanda altogether, because as he claims, “nobody wants to be a neighbour to a deportation centre”. If residents of the deportation centres put local residents in danger, as he claims, how will this problem be solved if it is moved to Rwanda?

Sweden Democrat leader Jimmie Åkesson is applauding Denmark for its tough immigration policies to reach zero asylum-seekers and in June 2021 said, “Sweden will get much tougher on immigration… Denmark was the same way as Sweden, and then it just changed overnight, and this will happen to Sweden too.”

Åkesson then goes on to suggest that Sweden’s situation has become out of control for accepting too many asylum seekers and that the problem is too big now because it was not acted on soon enough. He suggests Sweden should take its immigration policies even further than Denmark which only accepted a few. “We actually in Sweden need stricter policies than Denmark because we have a much bigger problem. I don’t think it is possible to just decrease immigration to Danish levels anymore.” But how much further can Sweden take it than Denmark?

In 2016 Denmark had 86 asylum centres. Now only left with 14 centres, Denmark is continuously reducing that number, and now planning to get rid of their asylum application system and relocate it outside the EU. In Denmark, Syrian refugees are receiving letters informing them that their resident permits have expired and cannot be renewed because they must go back to Syria. Denmark is the only country in the EU that claims Syria is safe for refugees to return to.

One of the affected refugees is the 19-year-old Aya Abu Daher who was 3 months away from graduating gymnasium when she received the letter informing her that she will be sent back to Syria because it is now regarded as safe, Aya Abu Daher explains “I received a letter informing me that my application to extend my residence permit has been rejected and my current permit is no longer valid... I have tried to integrate as much as possible, I feel that everything I have built in these five years I have spent in Denmark is being taken away from me.”

Aya Abu Daker, who has been in Denmark for five years, has worked hard to learn the language and has a job to support herself. She is planning on becoming a dentist. In an interview with the Danish broadcaster DR on April 2, 2021, she asked “We are safe here, why send us back to danger?” Her situation has sparked both national and international outrage.

On the same day of her interview, Tesfaye responded in a separate interview with the Danish broadcaster TV2, saying “Some politicians have tried to single out her case from other similar cases, but we must keep our principles. She has to accept her situation because the plan to send her back is set in place. It does not matter whether she is working or studying, she will be sent back because the law is equal for all, and she should not be treated differently just because her case has reached international news.”

These new laws have sparked outrage among Danes, both pro- and anti-immigration groups have criticized the new laws.
Asylum seekers’ allowances

“With 24 SEK a day I have to choose between eating or taking the bus to the language course”

By Lubna Mousa, Fredrik Strömlind, Herbert Sina Bio

According to the Swedish Migration Agency (Migrationsverket) asylum seekers without residence permit yet, receive between 12 to 71 SEK per day depending on different factors, such as age or if they are offered food or not. Many asylum seekers are placed in remote camps away from city centres where most of the integration activities take place. The time waiting for a residence permit may last up to two years, for many of them experienced as a complete waste of time, as there is little they can do. In case they want to learn the Swedish language or participate in any activity they need to rely on public transport which is not affordable for many of them.

Othman from Syria who was interested in learning the language and integrating in the Swedish society said.

– I have waited for my residence permit for about two years, during this time I succeeded in learning the Swedish language. We rarely meet people from the outside. We were in an isolated camp away from the city and most people around us spoke Arabic or other languages, but not Swedish. We didn't feel that we needed to learn the language. But now when I try to find a job I realize how much precious time I lost in the camp.

Ahmad reflected on his current situation by saying that “if we had enough money at that time, we may be able to get a job now”. He regrets the long time he wasted in vain while he was staying in the camp, but it was difficult for him to do it in another way because it was expensive to take a bus and go somewhere at that time.

After getting residency permit and starting on the establishment program, asylum seekers get more money, the daily allowance then is 308 SEK per day, per adult. In addition to some extra benefits such as (Child allowance, housing allowance, parental benefits). Those allowances are part of the SD debate in which they ask for less benefits for non-Swedish people. Fouad and Maryam Alameen, who have three children, were asked about how they manage their household budget. Their way of organizing their economy is impressive.

We ask him about what he knows about the Swedish society.

– It has been times that we forget that we live in Sweden. We rarely meet people from the outside. We were in an isolated camp away from the city and most people around us spoke Arabic or other languages, but not Swedish. We didn't feel that we needed to learn the language. But now when I try to find a job I realize how much precious time I lost in the camp.

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They must think about each penny they spend, there is no place for extra spending or unplanned costs. They buy their groceries from certain places, and they keep following the weekly coupons for discounts. They spend so much time trying to meet their needs at the best prices, this requires a lot of time and effort. Their success in keeping a balanced budget brings them happiness at the end of the month. Maryam comments smiling:

– Now I become an expert in the Swedish food stock market, and I know which time of the year a certain good becomes affordable.

Maryam and her husband keep trying to learn the language to get a job because they know that they cannot live like this all the time. But learning a language takes time and requires concentration.

Anti-migration parties are blaming those who cannot learn Swedish and get a job fast, saying that they are not willing or unable to integrate in Sweden. The question is how people living under circumstances as those conveyed above should be able to concentrate on learning new a language while being busy trying to adjust their slim incomes to their expenses. Does the SD party expect that people can live on less than 12kr per day?
Waiting for better circumstances: SPORTS, COSTS AND INTEGRATION
By Fredrik Strömlind, Lubna Mousa, Herbert Sina Bio

Sports have long been highlighted for their major social contributions and for creating venues and opportunities for people to come together. However, to participate in sports can many times be expensive, limiting the chances of participation for people who cannot afford to cover the costs. In 2016, Swedish Television (SVT) examined the costs of ice hockey in Sweden and highlighted that the expenses for a fifteen-year-old on a national average was around 13 500 SEK. When different hockey and summer camps were included into the calculation, the cost could increase up to nearly 50000 SEK annually. Hence, the integrational benefits of sports, so often emphasized by various social and political actors, could be missed out.

For the Al Ameen family, moving to Sweden a couple of years ago, the cost of sports has in many ways turned out to be an obstacle for them and their three children. While the family understand sports to bring much good for their children, the Al Ameen’s have decided to only allow their youngest to play fotball in their local association. However, while hoping this to be only temporary, the family stress how the expenses of allowing their children to participate in a team is a challenge. Additionally, as parents they also face the problem of, not only obtaining necessary equipment, but of buying the so-called right ones.

– The fees for joining the club are not always the problem, but it is what comes after. […] Children are not supposed to be aware that they are different from their peers, so we [have] tried to buy them the same equipment as their friends.

Sweden’s relation to sports and its emphasis of its great variety of benefits goes a long way back in history. Magnus Dahlstedt and David Ekholm, professor and lecturer at Linköping University, explain in their book Idrottens kraft? (The power of sports?) how sports became an important key in the creation of the Swedish welfare state. Not the least, sports were viewed as a way to lower the poverty rates. To this day, participation in sports is still a vital part of Swedish society. Much like before, sport is widely regarded as something advantageous, allowing people to engage in meaningful activities. In addition, social actors have, according to the authors, increasingly
drawn attention to the integrational aspects of sports as it gives opportunities for people to interact, which makes the participants feel included in society. Hence, in 2016, the former Swedish minister for Public Health and Sports Gabriel Wikström stated how important sports is for integrating people who newly came to Sweden. Sports were seen as a key way to welcome, integrate and teach Swedish to asylum seekers who came in large numbers in 2015 and 2016.

However, while sports and its various integrational benefits have been stressed for many years, statistics show that far from all are participating in sports. For instance, in the ages of 12-18, people with a Swedish background are more likely to participate in a sports association. 61% of these Swedish youngsters are regularly engaged in sports, whereas this figure is only 49% for those with a foreign background, and most likely with far lower numbers for those who arrived recently. Here, one important factor often highlighted is the expenses sports today often entail. Statistics from the Center of Sports Science (Centrum för idrottsforskning), which is responsible for monitoring governmental funding given to the domestic actors within the field and for following up on the latest scientifically approved reports, conclude that Swedes on average spend approximately 8800 SEK annually on sports-related activities in 2019. This figure represents an increase with 1200 SEK compared to the statistics of 2017, thus following the trend noticed for a significant period according to compilations from the Center of Sports Science. Moreover, the statistics implies that disparities in income and socio-economic background are influencing possibilities to spend on sports activities, showing how households with a higher disposable income can spend the most. Consequently, the indication of the social inequality is something Riksidrottsförbundet, the national association of sports, emphasized in their report from 2020 when pointing towards how economic disparities directly affected the participation in sports. Following this, the report also highlighted how sports to a large extent follow the same patterns as society at large, underlining how the statistics picture an increasing stratification of Swedish sports associations.

For the Al Ameen family, fotboll is, besides the obvious fact that their children love playing it, also a sport suitable for their current situation since it is one of the less expensive options. Hence, the family hope that their two children will be able to join their sibling in organized football when their financial condition improves. Currently, both parents are taking part in the Swedish establishing program, a program provided for the newly arrived migrants for a maximum of two years. In the program, the amount of financial support for newly arrived is, for example, graded according to the number of household members living in the same residence. If so, one may apply for further economic support. Furthermore, according to the Swedish Social Insurance Agency Försäkringskassan, every participant in the Establishing program has the right to receive 308 SEK per day. In other words, a family with three children living in their own residence could, if fulfilling all requirements, apply for an additional 8400 SEK monthly. Yet, despite the financial support, it is not enough for the Al Ameen family to let all three children engage in sports. But when their circumstances change, the family will reconsider the current priorities.

– We decided to register only one of our children this year and the rest of them can join later when the circumstances are better.

Although a lower socio-economic background in the form of, for example, lower wages or less welfare support does affect the possibility of participating in sports activities, there are also reports on how various sporting organisations function as central meeting grounds today. Statistics covering the number of times one has participated in a respective sport, show that football clearly is the most popular sport in ages 7-25, followed by floorball, ice hockey, gymnastics and handball. Football as well as athletics, gymnastics, floorball and basketball are also showing strong membership numbers. At the same time, according to a 2019 report from Riksidrottsförbundet, martial arts are one of the most popular sports amongst newly arrived youth. Furthermore, basketball is a particularly popular meeting ground for people with foreign backgrounds, with over 40 percent participating. A high number in comparison to other sports according to Wetterbygden Basketball and their Project Reach. But even though sports today attract a considerable number of people and while there are sports associations working to reduce costs (The Swedish newspaper Expressen reported in 2017 on sports associations providing clothing and equipment), reports and statistics are indicating a further stratification in sports, which have a direct effect on the participation in sports and thus reveals inequalities in society.

Dahlstedt and Ekholm argues that the Swedish welfare state has in the last decades developed into more of a liberal welfare model, where welfare is increasingly regarded as an individual concern, with more emphasis on personal freedom and less on redistribution of resources or equality. This has contributed to the increased socio-economic inequality of today. In this, Dahlstedt and Ekholm stress, sport simply follows a general movement towards increasing inequality as society at large.

Sports affects many people’s lives in creating opportunities of a common meeting ground and in allowing participants to share their interest in sports, leaving other crucial benefits regarding health and general life satisfaction to the side. Yet to fulfil the many positive aspects of sports for integration, it seems necessary to remove obstacles for families to participate in sports, starting with a closer investigation of financial and other obstacles for wider participation in sports. At least, this would be of interest to siblings all around Sweden currently not participating in sports, but forced to wait for better circumstances.
Circular Migration, Linear Exploitation
EUROPE'S DEPENDENCE ON SEASONAL MIGRANT WORKERS
By Matilde Veglia, Melike Isleyen, and Jonas Dreher

While many Swedish families are gearing up to make their favourite jams and cakes as the berry season is about to begin, seasonal migrants from Eastern Europe and Thailand are working hard to supply households with all the blåbär, lingon, and hjortron that is a specialty of the Swedish cuisine. But not just in Sweden – the border closures made in response to the coronavirus pandemic last year have revealed the entire European agricultural sector’s dependence on seasonal migrant workers.

The Coronavirus pandemic has made the European agricultural sector’s reliance on seasonal migrants palpable, as member-states reported a lack of hundreds of thousands of seasonal workers due to last year’s border closures. Spain and France, who both nurture seasonal migration agreements with Morocco and Tunisia, reported a shortage of 80,000 and 200,000 seasonal workers respectively. In Italy, the lack of seasonal migrant labour led the National Confederation of Agricultural Producers to warn that “40% of fruit and vegetables are at risk of rotting in the fields”. Similar concerns were voiced by the German agricultural lobby, which led the government to roll back border closures a mere two weeks after imposing them, and even to charter airplanes and schedule emergency flights, so that 80,000 mostly Romanian migrant workers could swiftly enter the country.
The reason for this dependence on seasonal migrants lies in the simple fact that agricultural work is extremely strenuous while offering little pay. Accidents, injuries, and illnesses are commonplace due to the intensely physically demanding tasks that take place in all weathers, sometimes also while being exposed to toxic chemicals. Paired with short-term contracts and very limited social security coverage, agricultural work tends to be shunned by local workers. Being classified as a ‘low-skilled job’ and receiving little social recognition, farm work also tends not to open further career opportunities, making nationals choose other options in which they receive training or education that gives them an edge in the job market.

As such, there is a chronic lack of workers in the agricultural sector – but this is not an isolated case, as professor of political science Peo Hansen illustrates in his 2021 book A Modern Migration Theory. Demographic projections by the EU expect the European working-age population to decline by some 52 million people by 2050, leading to a crisis that the EU aims to solve mainly by ‘importing’ migrant workers to make up the difference. Between 2005 and 2020 alone, 25 million labour migrants need to be added to the European labour pool, according to the 2005 Policy Plan on Legal Migration. In 2010, former president of the European Commission Cecilia Malmström succinctly summed up the EU’s understanding of the situation: “we need migrants to ensure our economic survival”.

So, starting in the 2000s, a set of labour migration directives entered the drafting process that sought to fix the EU’s need for workers. But crucially, Hansen explains, the aim of these directives was never to be for the benefit of the migrants, but solely for that of the EU. There was in fact no interest in importing the migrant since that was perceived to be an additional cost; the goal was merely to import their labour. The directives therefore aimed to keep the ‘costs’ of supplying migrants with fundamental necessities such as food, shelter, and basic social security as low as possible.

Directive 2014/36/EU on seasonal migration explicitly allows member states “to exclude family benefits and unemployment benefits from equal treatment between seasonal workers and their own nationals”. The Directive continues by banning family reunification and requiring seasonal migrants to have sufficient resources to sustain themselves “without having recourse to their social assistance systems”. This all comes in addition, of course, to the temporary nature of seasonal work, which allows for the periodic removal of people and seeks to prevent permanent stay by design.
This is all not to mention that, according to the International Labour Organization, 61.2% of EU agricultural workers have no formal working agreement whatsoever, so what little protection the state offers may not even apply to them. And even when the work is contractual, this does not always protect from exploitation, as a report by Deutsche Welle demonstrates. Udom, one of the interviewees and a Thai berry picker working in Sweden, describes his contract to be “just a formality, so we can get to Sweden in the first place”. He might officially be entitled to a minimum wage of €2,000 a month, but, he says, “this is just a piece of paper […] it is very simple. The more you pick, the more you earn”.

Nevertheless, circular migration is often presented – especially in policymaking environments – as a ‘triple win’, namely, a situation with beneficial effects for all actors involved. Dovelyn R. Agunias and Kathleen Newland, from the Migration Policy Institute, Brussels, provide this description in a Policy Brief (MPI, April 2007): “It offers destination countries a steady supply of needed workers in both skilled and unskilled occupations, without the requirements of long-term integration. Countries of origin can benefit from the inflow of remittances while migrants are abroad and skills upon return. The migrants are also thought to gain much, as the expansion of circular migration programs increases the opportunities for safer, legal migration from the developing world”.

But, as migration scholar Stephen Castles has shown, instead of being a gain, circular migration more often emerges as a mere means of survival; the only available option when people do not have the financial resources to stay put. In most cases, the journey and the visa conditions are expensive and involve taking up loans that people hope to repay with the money made abroad. But this is often a challenging task since migrants also need to come up for the costs of the stay and accommodation, meaning that circular migration can easily turn into a spiralling trap of debts, forced labour, and extreme precarity.

This is what happened during the Swedish berry picker crisis of 2012. Researcher Nedžad Mešić describes how in that year, “the prospect of seasonal earnings was transformed into a matter of scraping together sufficient funds to recoup their investment costs in travel”. Living in encampments without basic necessities such as sanitation and unable to make enough money to cover even the cost of food, let alone pay back their debt, many had to flee the forests to seek help from the Bulgarian embassy in Stockholm so that they could return home.

The benefits for the country of origin are likewise very limited. Since wages are moderate, savings and remittances (the money people send to relatives back home while they are away) are not sizeable. Rather than gaining new skills in the destination countries, it is common for circular workers to be employed in sectors of the labour market where firms are not likely to invest in training programmes. The abovementioned European Directive 2014/36/EU provides no legal framework to counteract this tendency since member states are in fact formally allowed “to limit the application of equal treatment in relation to education and vocational training”. Finally, Castles notes, circular migration is not a sustainable model for sending countries overall, because it fails to consider the broader set of causes determining their economic stagnation. With neither the migrants nor their country of origin benefitting meaningfully from circular migration, it becomes clear that the only one who tends to profit is the receiving country.

It is therefore by now apparent how the EU and its member-states are desperately scrambling for labour while simultaneously carving out a second-class status for the people they so depend on. Seasonal migrants are not treated as persons with families, aspirations, and aching bodies, but as a disposable source of cheap labour. And with the exploitation of seasonal workers being well-hidden behind the humanitarian facade of the ‘triple win’ argument, the injustice of the situation remains as invisible as the migrants themselves.
In September 2020, an interview with Mats Löfving, Deputy Director of the Swedish Police Authority, sparked off an intensive debate about so-called criminal migrant clans in Sweden. Many articles have been written and many opinions raised since then - some of them enthusiastically endorse the new category as the missing tool to target migrant villains; Others severely criticise it for lacking accuracy and being racist. Where does this category come from? What does it actually mean? And how does it affect migrant communities?

In the interview on Sveriges Radio, Mats Löfving talked at length about criminal clans or ‘family-based networks’, as they are also referred to frequently. But as of now, it remains relatively unclear what these clans exactly are. Rather than giving a definition, Löfving’s words painted a gloomy picture of dubious migrant families that are involved in organised crime: “They have come to Sweden solely to organise crime. They work to create power, they have a great capacity for violence, and they want to make money.” Besides making illicit profit, Löfving said, they have entered political positions and gained public influence. The clans he mentioned are not rare or solitary cases, but, allegedly, a secret intelligence report found around 40 criminal clans in Sweden. According to Linda H. Staaf, Head of the Intelligence Unit that authored the report, these clans are the biggest threat to democracy now. In an interview with Sydsvenskan in April 2021, Staaf said: “It is not a democratic system, they want total control.” Professor of Criminology at Stockholm University, Janne Flyghed criticises Löfving’s vague statements as strong exaggerations:

– His main purpose was to get the headlines and expand the boundaries of what is possible to assert in the discussion concerning ‘gangs’.

In a second interview on SVT’s Agenda, Löfving admitted that he wanted “to open the door for an orderly discussion”, but eventually he refused to provide a clear definition of clans, because “the police officers, and the people on the ground just don’t care.” Instead, he framed the word clan with terms related to crime, violence and migration. Such a debate can be called a ‘discourse’ in social sciences. According to theories of discourse analysis, language constructs reality and with that, it has the power to shape social problems and structure policy solutions.

From this perspective, clans are not simply a fact that exists ‘out there’. Rather, they are discursive constructions that get loaded with meaning and images when used by influential figures such as Löfving and Staaf. Their usage of the word ‘clan’ establishes the image of a masculine, immigrant ‘other’ that is entrenched in family networks and opposes the ‘us’ - Swedish, egalitarian, law-abiding citizens. Accordingly, a study by researchers from Lund university an-
alysing the term ‘clan’ in the Swedish discourse finds it is mostly charged with negative meaning.

The public discourse about migrant clans is much older than Löfving’s and Staaf’s interventions. It was primarily kicked off by Per Brinkemo’s book Mellan klan och stat – Somalier i Sverige (Between Clan and State - Somalis in Sweden) in 2014. In the book, he related social problems and low integration rates of people with Somali heritage to their supposed clan structures. Since the book’s release, Brinkemo has assumed a role of a national expert on clans and integration, making a career out of giving “an exciting lecture on one of the most current topics of our time” to municipalities and ministries. His idea that clan structures build parallel systems that are alien to Swedish society strongly resonates in Löfving’s and Staaf’s statements and has been heavily criticised by Somali commentators in Aftonbladet.

Former Stockholm local politician and activist Rojan Karakaya thinks that Brinkemo has a misconception of both, clan structures and Swedish legal state. Karakaya has worked with homeless people from Roma communities and knows how clan rhetoric is directed against Roma as well. In his view, Brinkemo overstates the formality of clan structures and underestimates the functioning of state institutions for certain minority communities in Sweden.

– Brinkemo’s argument basically is that, since the clans are so structured they work as a substitute for regular state institutions and cannot coexist within them. This is why they allegedly don’t go to the police and the courts, but they try to resolve their conflicts through whichever code they subscribe to. In reality, however, many migrants have bad experiences of not being taken seriously by the police.

Somali communities seem to be specifically affected by clan rhetoric and are repeatedly accused of unfair benefit from their clan ties. Probably the most famous example is the Parliamentarian Leila Ali-Elmi from Gothenburg, who was elected to Riksdagen in 2018. Some, however, sensed illicit advantage through a so-called ‘clan-vote,’ since she was supported by many in the Somali and other migrant communities. A similar accusation of ‘clan-vote’ hit the food blogger Khadija Mahamud, who was about to bring in a landslide win in the public Facebook vote of the Swedish Food Blog Award 2020. However, the prize organisers suspected voting “for the wrong reasons” and reset the vote, which caused a public outrage on social media and accusations of racism. Eventually, the organisers were forced to issue an apology, although the damage had already been done. The idea of ‘clan-vote’ has a distinct smack of double-standards. What passes as democratic for ethnic Swedes – casting your vote for somebody that represents you best – becomes suspicious when done by minorities.
The idea of Brinkemo’s clan structures seem to have merged with older conceptions related to organised crime like ‘gang criminality’ and ‘vulnerable areas’. The inspiration for that might have come from abroad. Since 2018, German police authorities have launched a similar campaign that possibly had a spill-over effect. The Lagebild Organisiererte Kriminalität (Organized Crime Map) by the German Federal Police provides strategies and definitions about clan criminality. According to Sydsvenskan, Linda H. Staaf’s secret intelligence report also recommends working closer with German Police authorities. Since the report’s release, several Swedish journalists have travelled to Germany to get some firsthand accounts, such as SVT Nyheter that published a video titled “Så bekämpar tysk polis klankriminalitet” (This is how German police combat clan criminality).

The German approach to combat clans has faced severe criticism in national debates. The police tactic called ‘the politics of a thousand stitches’ is accused of being disproportionately far-reaching, and racist. The strategy recommends putting pressure on clans from different sides. Several authorities, from the tax agency to the migration agency, are instructed to target the clan as a whole, regardless of how many family members are actually involved in organised crime. It also explains how the use of female police officers can infringe the honour and pride of male clan members. Moreover, heavy-armed police forces frequently raid shisha-bars to publicly demonstrate their resoluteness. Some German commentators have pointed out how such strategies more than anything stigmatise shisha-bars. They don’t see it as a coincidence that the right-wing terrorist of the fatal Hanau shooting in 2020 chose two shisha-bars as a target.

In Sweden, the sense of insecurity seems real for a large part of society. The Crime Prevention Council’s (Brå) 2020 national security survey found that 47 percent of respondents “have great concern about crime in society”. It is the highest level of fear of crime measured since its assessment began in 2007. In Svenska Dagbladet, the Minister of Interior Mikael Damberg is not surprised by the data, since problems with gang crime have “made an impression on the population”, although the number of people exposed to crime has not increased. Professor Flyghed explains that repetitive presentations of security threats can be a basis for increasing the feeling of insecurity:

– If you repeatedly deliver statements in the media and reports to the public about severe security threats, without thorough analysis that the presented threats really exist, people take such statements for facts, fake facts will be the basis for their perception of ‘reality’.

The reality created by the clan discourse has broadly penetrated the political spectrum. Professor Flyghed points out that right-wingers in the Parliament have particularly embraced the discourse, although – Löfving’s statement has unfortunately also influenced the Social Democrats in the Government. Both, in rhetoric, and when it comes to proposed measures—usually exceptional measures, that after a while will be normalised.

Normalising exceptional measures seems to be on Löfving’s agenda as he seeks more re-sources and support for the strengthened police action. His three-level approach to combat clans resonates with the German ‘politics of a thousand stitches’. Linda H. Staaf shares the belief of police lacking resources to address gang criminality. In an interview with Expressen Staaf vocalises that “The control system must be strengthened in Sweden”.

The police officials’ interviews serve as a good indication of how the complexity of social problems are shifted to a bare security component. Janne Flyghed is concerned that such over-simplification is a tactic to push “for more resources to the police, harsher sentences and the introduction of new police technology”. That push for security is reflected in the 2021 Budget Bill, which earmarks funds for a ‘historical expansion’ of the police force and investments to effectively implement the 34-point programme aimed at combating gang crime—a policy measure to make Sweden ‘safer and more secure’. Nevertheless, as Professor Flyghed informs, if policies are shaped by secret reports obscured from public scrutiny, it is impossible to assess the validity of the facts these documents are based on.

– It is the (false) threat reports that constitute the real risk, they create a sense of insecurity, and that doesn’t make Sweden safer.
Forced Removals, Historical Dispossessions and the Ongoing ‘Nakba’. The Cases of Sheikh Jarrah and Jaffa “FROM THE RIVER TO THE SEA”

By Maayan Zohra Ashash

There are over 5 million registered Palestinian refugees living in and around historic Palestine, and hundreds of thousands living as minorities worldwide. Assessments regarding the value of expropriated land, houses, losses of livelihood and other damages suffered in the context of the 1948 establishment of the Israeli state are set as high as $300 billion. The events of 1948 are referred to as the Nakba—Arabic for ‘catastrophe’—and studies have tended to treat it as a single, time-bound historical occurrence. The displacement and dispossession of Palestinians, however, did not stop there: recent threats of expulsion against the inhabitants of East Jerusalem and Jaffa echo the past and highlight the continuing reality of the Nakba. To reflect this, the Nakba was conceptually reframed as an ongoing process. What are some of the key processes through which recent events can be made more legible, what connects the various issues raised in the worldwide protests of May 2021? How important are the Nakba’s material aspects—land, houses, labor—nowadays?

The material impacts of the 1948 displacement en-masse of 750,000 Palestinians from their homelands, the destruction of hundreds of villages and appropriation of ample land by the new state of Israel and its members, have been debated by scholars, activists, and bodies such as the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNC-CP), aiming to formulate concrete demands for reparations. Components include the loss of individually owned land, assessed between 6,611,250 to 19,031,012 dunum, (one dunum = 1000 m²) their value estimated between $9 and $23 billion with inflation adjustment; it is appraised that refugees lost around $1 billion in movable property losses in 2021 dollars. As suggested in works such as Brynen and El-Rifai’s 2013 book Compensation to Palestinian Refugees and the Search for Palestinian-Israeli Peace, including various elements such as non-property income (labor income) and the value of human wealth loss, assessments go up to $300 billion in losses overall.
Legal disputes over the compound known as Shimon HaTzadik (Simon the Righteous) in Sheikh Jerrah have been ongoing since Israel’s 1967 annexation of about 70,000 dunum east of Jerusalem in the Six-Day-War, doubling Jerusalem’s municipal area in violation of international laws. According to a report (A/71/174) presented at the UN General Assembly in 2016, Israeli-imposed restrictions on the mobility of people and goods, as well as on various aspects of development and the direct cost of the destruction of Palestinian infrastructure, house demolitions in the West Bank and the military operation in Gaza were valued at 74 percent of GDP ($9.95 billion) in 2014. Availability of “low skill” Palestinian labor for export into Israel via an elaborate system of labor permits also bears important relation to damages caused to the economy by the occupation: the GDP of the partially recognized State of Palestine dropped by half in the years 1975-2014, its contribution to employment decreasing from 47 to 23 percent. This has been related, among other things, to the loss of 60 percent of West Bank land and two thirds of its grazing land since 1967, contributing to progressive de-agriculturalization with severe consequences to livelihood.

**Current events and accumulation by dispossession as defining feature of settler-colonialism**

In 1967 Israel furthermore annexed vast areas of the West Bank, and over 1 million dunum came under the control the Israel Lands Administration. Studies have shown that Israeli occupation in the West Bank has followed clearly economic objectives, having continuous impact on Palestinian economy. According to a report (A/71/174) presented at the UN General Assembly in 2016, Israeli-imposed restrictions on the mobility of people and goods, as well as on various aspects of development and the direct cost of the destruction of Palestinian infrastructure, house demolitions in the West Bank and the military operation in Gaza were valued at 74 percent of GDP ($9.95 billion) in 2014. Availability of “low skill” Palestinian labor for export into Israel via an elaborate system of labor permits also bears important relation to damages caused to the economy by the occupation: the GDP of the partially recognized State of Palestine dropped by half in the years 1975-2014, its contribution to employment decreasing from 47 to 23 percent. This has been related, among other things, to the loss of 60 percent of West Bank land and two thirds of its grazing land since 1967, contributing to progressive de-agriculturalization with severe consequences to livelihood.

Legal disputes over the compound known as Shimon HaTzadik (Simon the Righteous) in Sheikh Jerrah have been ongoing since Israel’s 1967 annexation of about 70,000 dunum east of Jerusalem in the Six-Day-War, doubling Jerusalem’s municipal area in violation of international laws. As reported by Ir Amim in a 2009 document, a small Jewish community resided in the compound up to 1936, which fell to Jordanian control in 1948. In 1956 the Jordanian government decided to house 28 Palestinian refugee families in the compound in exchange for a symbolic rent for 3 years, after which the refugees would become homeowners. After annexation, over 300,000 residents of East Jerusalem became stateless. More than five decades later, they are living neither under the sovereignty of the Palestinian Authority (PA) nor as citizens of Israel, subject to a gradual process of forced removal. In the case of Sheikh Jarrah, it is done under the claim of restituting Jewish property; yet that hundreds of thousands of Palestinian homes throughout the country have been seized by Israel
since 1948 has not been considered by legal authorities.

In the case of Jaffa, says historian Yaara Benger-Alaluf of the organization Zochrot, the Absentee Property Law was enacted in 1950, and the homes of tens of thousands of displaced Palestinian-Arab residents then transferred to state authorities and state-owned housing companies. The remaining Palestinian population of the city has since lived under their subordination. At the end of the 1990s, Israel Lands Administration ordered the sale of the assets. If tenants are not able to meet the price set for the property, apartments are put up for auction in the private market, exposing thousands of residents to imminent removal from their homes. This procedure has cleared the way for real estate investments by partially government-funded ethno-nationalist associations, who openly state their aim to achieve the demographic ‘Judaization’ of Jaffa. These processes of dispossession had been a crucial stressor in the development of May 2021 unrest.

Following weeks of rising tensions, demonstrations erupted in Jerusalem, Jaffa, Lydda, Ramle, and Haifa—all of which inhabited by Palestinians and Jews both—quickly escalating into large-scale violence that ravaged these and other cities for days. Riots, organized mob attacks and lynchings took place. While these places are sometimes referred to as having “mixed” population and even “co-existence” cities, for Palestinians they represent the constant threat of displacement and dispossession. Dalal, a Palestinian activist from a Druze village within the Israeli governed 1948 territories, explains:

– We live with the constant threat of losing our home, which is always there, always in front of our eyes. So many of us have already experienced this loss, whether they are internally displaced or in other countries altogether, as you could see with refugees demonstrating in Jordan and Lebanon along the borders. In my village, half of the houses are under threat of demolition due to the bureaucratic mechanisms superimposed by Israeli authorities.

Demolition orders such as those referred to by Dalal have already affected other villages and neighborhoods, examples in recent years include the Bedouin village of Umm al-Hiran and the Silwan neighborhood in East Jerusalem, the latter currently facing the demolition of 1,500 homes. Khouloud, a Palestinian-German whose parents were expelled in 1948, remarked:

– When I spoke about maybe one day buying land or a house in Ramallah [currently under full PA control] my father told me that I should not, that it is too unsafe, because what started then still continues.

In his article ‘Settlers, Workers, and the Logic of Accumulation by Dispossession’, Sai Englert analyzes the role of expansionism, land confiscation and continuous accumulation through dispossession in settler-colonial projects, arguing that to fully realize the goal of capitalist development they must do away with indigenous ways of life. Losses are thus not limited to the issue of personal property. In fact, it is the privatization of commons—a process critically analyzed in the works of scholars like Silvia Federici and David Harvey—which reveals the profound differences between settler-colonial and peasant or indigenous relationships to the land and its resources. As commented by Dalal:

– My village is an example of how this develops: more than 80% of the natural land around it has already been taken over by Israeli institutions. It was not private land, it belonged to the village, it was where people take their livestock to graze, or go to pick Zaatar. We are not allowed to do that anymore.

Recent upheavals throughout Israel and the Palestinian territories of West Bank and the Gaza Strip soon had international resonance and solidarity protests proliferated worldwide, led by Palestinians in diaspora and supporters of their cause. A general strike was observed by Palestin-
The EMS Community is a study-social committee that represents the interests of MA in Ethnic and Migration Studies’ students, and promotes social and cultural activities for them. The main aim of the EMS Community is to build relationships between the programme, its students and the Norrköping Community more broadly. It is our beliefs that community engagement and collaboration benefits both students and the municipality.

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE
https://emscommunity.wixsite.com/emsliu

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1. **Aidan McGirr** is from the United States of America. Aidan holds a bachelor's degree in astrophysics and a minor in global health from Arizona State University. His main research interests are: Human Rights; Atrocity Prevention; and the Economics and Health Implications of Migration.

2. **Amélie Judith Amedaho** is from Benin Republic, West Africa. She holds a bachelor's degree in Sociology of Development at the University of Abomey-Calavi. Judith is an Exchange Student at Linkoping university. She has studied Racism, Ethnicity and migration. Her main research interest is Social Science.

3. **Anna Dremina** holds BAs in Translation and Interpreting received at Moscow State Linguistic University. She has been volunteering at The Civic Assistance Committee with teaching refugee children Russian. She is interested in raising awareness about mental health and LGBTQ+ rights.

4. **Antoine Bodo** is from France, and her main research interests are “forced migration” and “education”.

5. **Begum Altincapa** is from Turkey. She has a bachelor's degree in Sociology. Begum is obsessed with data and interested in personal stories.

6. **Brooke Boers** is from Fort Myers, Florida in the United States and has a bachelor's degree in psychology.

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8. **Elizabeth Wickenburg** is from Sweden; she lives in Norrköping. Elizabeth is especially interested in labor rights and working towards equal opportunity for all.

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10. **Fredrik Strömlind** is from Sweden. Before EMS, he has studied Social and Culture Analysis at Linköping University.

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18. **Lubna Mousa** is Half Palestinian Half Syrian, main interest is women and children rights in the whole world. Studied English Literature.

19. **Maayan Ashash** is from Jerusalem. Based in Berlin, she completed her BA in area studies at the Humboldt University. Her interests include neo-colonial continuities in the political economy of international migration and its class character.

20. **Marcus Larsson** is from Solna, Sweden. He holds two degrees from West Virginia Wesleyan College, one in Political Science and one in History. Marcus' main research interest is integration.

21. **Matilde Veglia** is from Italy and has a Bachelor's Degree in Philosophy. She enjoys learning about feminism, aesthetics, and political philosophy, with a special curiosity for Marxist and post-Marxist theories.

22. **Melike Isleyen** is from Turkey, she holds a BA in Guidance and Psychological Counselling and MA in Trauma and Disaster Applied Mental Health. Her main academic interests surround mainly class, gender and race with a focus on decolonial and intersectional perspective, and critical border studies.

23. **Rachel Dölker** is from Germany, her main research interest is Flight, Migration and Racism in the Mediterranean area in recent and not that recent times.

24. **Tamar Nadibaidze** is from Tbilisi, Georgia. She has a BA in Political Science. You have probably heard Ukraine is under occupation, well, so is Georgia. 20% of Georgia is currently occupied.

25. **Tobias Seitz** is from Germany, his research interests are Right-wing extremism and labor migration, and he is still waiting for the ‘denazification’ of his home country.

26. **Tua-Lisa Runsten** is from Sweden. Her BA is in Sociocultural Anthropology and her main research interest are citizenship and diaspora studies.

27. **Yumi Oh** is from South Korea, she lives in Norrköping. Her main research interest is Asylum and Refugee Policy in EU.

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This report is made by students at the International Master’s Programme in Ethnic and Migration Studies (EMS), Campus Norrköping, Linköping University (LiU). Every Spring we give the first year students a difficult task: to analyse and portray how migration and ethnic relations shape the social, economic and cultural life of Norrköping. The report is produced during few weeks by the students themselves. And this year, like the last, the work has taken place under the pandemic with all its special arrangements, distance and digital communication. Considering the extra burden this entails, as teachers we are however in awe over what the students have accomplished during these stressful, difficult and, sometimes also, boring, times. Our seminars and workshops out of which this report have grown have been lively and inspiring meetings, albeit only on our screens.

This is the fifth issue of REMS – Reports from the Master of Arts program in Ethnic and Migration Studies. Beginning in 2020 we work with a theme to focus more deeply on a set of specific issues within ethnicity and migration. This year we chose the theme money, i.e. economic aspects of migration. This is indeed a rather broad theme, but has been a fruitful entry point allowing us to raise questions that range from reflections on global economic transformations related to migration, to the daily allowances of refugees in waiting for asylum here in Norrköping, from discrimination in the Swedish labour market, economic difficulties for kids to participate in sports, to the economy of remittances, the economic rationalisations of Denmark’s zero asylum politics and the advent of crypto currencies.

A special delight this year has been to welcome Anna Roxvall as guest teacher. She gave the students a set of interesting and inspiring lectures and workshops on journalistic writing that both helped us in starting to develop writing tools for communicating and discussing research as well got us getting us all started in thinking critically about ideas for essays and investigations.

The authors themselves make up a global team, with backgrounds in at least five continents. Their interest in how migration transforms the world and how ethnic boundaries are dissolved or recreated in this transformation, have inspired their look at Norrköping and Sweden from within and without at the same time. The report contains many voices that reflect the struggles people have in making Norrköping, Sweden and beyond, their home.

The International Master’s Programme in Ethnic and Migration Studies is part of the Institute for Research in Migration, Ethnicity and Society, REMESO, at the Department Culture and Society (IKOS) at LiU.

REMESO is an internationally renowned center for research and education in migration and ethnic relations. We study problems of immediate societal relevance: labour and refugee migration, integration of migrants, migrants’ access to citizenship, discrimination, nationalism and racism, EU migration and asylum policy. This report produced in the series’REMS – Reports from the MA Program in Ethnic and Migration Studies’.

This is one of the ways in which we train students to identify and resolve key problems related to migration, integration and diversity. This is also how Linköping University and REMESO seek to make research and education useful to a larger audience.

Erik Berggren, Course Coordinator, EMS, REMESO, LiU
Anna Bredström, Program Director, EMS, REMESO, LiU
Master’s programme in Ethnic and Migration Studies 120 hp

Addressing some of the most challenging issues in today’s world, this programme relates ethnicity and migration to global economic and cultural change, as well as to systems of domination and movements of resistance.

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