The Swedish Road to Democracy?

Governmentality, Technologies of Citizenship and Popular Movements
Abstract
The paper examines the view of popular movements as the hallmark of Swedish democracy, looking at how it is conveyed to “immigrants” involved in popular movements in today’s Sweden. Taking as its point of departure Michel Foucault and his theories of governmentality, the paper analyzes techniques of citizen-formation staged in Swedish popular movements, with the aim of including “immigrants” in an imagined “Swedish democratic community”. The paper further analyzes two popular movements that have long set the tone of Swedish social and political life, namely the trade union movement and the adult education movement. The work of both movements in relation to “immigrants” is based on an idea that democracy is more or less synonymous with specifically “Swedish traditions”. Both movements are viewed as bearers of the “Swedish national heritage”. This view, obviously, has a number of far-reaching consequences for the inclusion of “immigrants” in Swedish democracy, as mature “democratic citizens”, as well as for the functioning of Swedish democracy at large. The techniques of “democratic schooling” initiated by both movements thereby appears to be some kind of evolutionary process of governmentality, in which “immigrants” are transferred to a different stage of “development”. The process involves “us Swedes”, on the one side, sharing “our” historical experiences and conveying “our” democratic heritage, while “they”, on the other side, abandon their pre-modern, collectivist loyalties and become transformed into modern individuals, i.e. mature, democratic citizens.

Keywords: Governmentality, popular movements, inclusion, exclusion, immigrants, citizenship
The Swedish Road to Democracy?
Governmentality, Technologies of Citizenship and Popular Movements

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The citizen is an effect and an instrument of power rather than simply a participant in politics.

Barbara Cruikshank (1999: 5)

The spread of democracy, far from eradicating nationalism, consolidates its banal, but not necessarily benign, forms. The very conditions of democracy, as envisaged in the twentieth century, are those which are based upon the nation-state, and which routinely embody a mysticism of place and people.

Michael Billig (1995: 94)

It is 1998, election year in Sweden, and I am conducting fieldwork for a research project later about to result in the Ph.D. thesis Reserverad demokrati [Reserved Democracy] (Dahlstedt 2005). In a suburb North of Stockholm, I meet Obi. He was born and raised in an African country, but since a dozen years he is living in Stockholm with his family. Obi is the leader of an association based on ethnic ground – in Sweden often referred to as “immigrant associations”. He is also involved in a municipal project focusing on the increase of political participation among inhabitants in a number of multi-ethnic communities throughout Stockholm. In our conversation he mentions an incident that occurred a couple of weeks earlier. Together with several “immigrant associations” in the community, he had organized a pre-election event in a local meeting-place. The purpose of the event was to inform about the forthcoming election and to raise the political interest in the community. When Obi arrives at the meeting-place to prepare for the event, he notices that it is already occupied. Obviously, it is double-booked. Among the people already at the meeting-place, an elderly local politician, defined by Obi as a “native Swede”, looses his temper.

“Shut up!”, said that guy. “No Africans are to teach us about democracy!” They continued arguing out there, harassing us! [...] One of them didn’t say anything

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when the other one was saying that black Africans should not teach them about democracy. He didn’t say anything. Instead he also started arguing: “And you should wear that button: \textit{Vote on September 20}, it’s a joke”, he said to me.

The local politician is seeing Obi’s work as some kind of provocation. To him, the mere idea that people with African background could be involved in vitalizing Swedish democracy is no more than an insult, not only to himself, but also to the rest of Sweden and “the Swedish people”. Obi says that he feels deeply offended. He is not discouraged, however, but continues his work, in the project as well as in civil society. In the eyes of the local politician, Obi’s experiences of and commitment to issues of inclusion and democracy appears to be of no worth whatsoever. In his mind, Obi is in Sweden as a guest. He is in Sweden to learn. How could he then be able to teach somebody about democracy? The process of learning obviously goes in one direction. It is “we Swedes” who teach “the immigrants”, not vice versa. However, Obi is far from the only one having this kind of experience. Many of those living in Sweden referred to as “immigrants” have similar experiences of meeting popular movements, which have become an important part of the “Swedish model” of democracy.

Among both decision makers and researchers, there is currently strong support for the idea that active participation in various types of associations and organisations enables people to acquire many of the capabilities and qualities that are required for a well-functioning democracy (cf. Putnam 1992). This idea of the significance of the activities of various associations for democracy, and their role as schools of democracy is deeply rooted in the Scandinavian countries. Not least among them, Sweden has a long tradition of vigorous, well-organised popular movements, which have also played a prominent role in the corporatist “Swedish model” that emerged during the post-war period (Micheletti 1995). In both politics and research, there has emerged over time a consensus about the vigour of the work of popular movements as something of a hallmark of Swedish democracy. For example, at the beginning of the 1950s, at the height of the golden age of the “Swedish model”, the theologian Hilding Johansson, who in his day was one of the central figures in Swedish research into popular movements, noted that “the popular movements have had a major impact on the working methods of democracy. In actual fact, it is their status that is responsible for the distinctive character of Swedish democracy” (Johansson 1952: 245). This line of thought is also recognisable in the Swedish political debate around the millennium. Although the “Swedish model” had undergone a series of changes, the ideas concerning the role of popular movements for Swedish democracy and their importance as arenas for “schooling in democracy” live on.

The current paper examines this view of the powerful popular movements as constituting the hallmark of Swedish democracy, looking both at how this idea emerged and how it is conveyed to “immigrants” who become active in popular movements in Sweden. The focus is directed at the techniques of “schooling in democracy” that are staged in Swedish popular movements with the objective of including “immigrants” in an imagined “Swedish democratic community”. How is this schooling effected? What are the conditions for inclusion? The paper takes as its point of departure two movements that have long set the tone of Swedish social life, namely the trade union movement and the adult education movement. A detailed analysis of these two movements shows that the work of popular movements in relation to “immigrants” is based on an idea that democracy is more or less synonymous with “Swedish traditions”.

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The popular movements are in some sense viewed as bearers of the “Swedish national heritage”. This view has a number of far-reaching consequences for the inclusion of “immigrants” in Swedish democracy. In order for “immigrants” to be “schooled in democracy” through the work of popular movements, there is not least a requirement that the Others “become more Swedish”.

Before taking a closer look at the popular movements in present day Sweden, and at how “immigrants” are “schooled into democracy” in various ways in the trade union and adult education movements, we need first to examine the emergence of the idea of the Swedish popular movements as arenas for “schooling in democracy” that has now become so deeply rooted. To begin with, however, I will present a brief outline of the theoretical framework that provides the basis for the subsequent analysis.

**Citizenship as governmentality**

This paper proceeds from the theoretical work on *governmentality* that has developed in the wake of the work by Michel Foucault (Cruikshank 1999; Rose 1999), but first and foremost from the applications of this work to the issues of citizenship and nation(alism), migration and the inclusion/exclusion of migrants (Dillon 1995; Isin 2002; Lui 2004). Conceptually, the term itself, in combining the two words *government* and *mentality*, captures more complex forms of governing than those usually referred to in a conventional understanding of “government” (Rose 1999). One crucial difference in relation to a conventional understanding is found in the way that those who constitute the “objects” of governance – citizens, peoples, city districts or regions – are *not* viewed as “passive” targets. Instead, governance in itself is rather said to form the “objects” or “targets”. In this way, the governmentality concept may be said to capture the “mentality of government”, i.e. how different conceptions and regimes of truth are related to political procedures and governmental techniques of various kinds. For Foucault (1991), governing does not originate in some self-evident fashion from the state apparatus as some kind of natural centre of power. Instead governance is rather comprised of a broad repertoire of technologies that operate across the entire social field. Civil society, including everything from popular movements and voluntary organisations to religious bodies and social movements, constitutes one of the many domains characterised by a continuous, ongoing struggle over the conditions for the governing of people’s morals or mentality (Hunt 1999; Rose 1999).

An important concept in the following paper is the concept of citizenship. Within mainstream social and welfare policy research, citizenship is viewed, in line with the work of T. H. Marshall (1950), as an institutional order that guarantees the members of society a certain set of rights, *civil, political* and *social* – but also obligations. Citizenship is thus viewed as a kind of reciprocal relationship between the state and the individual, where each has both rights and obligations vis-à-vis the other, laid down in the form of a *social contract*. However, using the concept of governmentality, citizenship may rather be viewed as an ongoing “struggle to define the terrain of the political” (Rasmussen & Brown 2002: 187), i.e. an intricate array of technologies of government. From this point of view, citizenship is created in and through specific regimes of truth. These regimes of truth provide the framework for *what it means to be a citizen*, for example, for the qualities and values, abilities and characteristics a citizen has or should have, for what is required even to be counted as a Citizen – in brief for what is regarded as characterizing “good citizenship” (Hindess 2002). In order to
understand citizenship as an institutional order we therefore need to trace and critically examine the fundamental ideas and ideals of citizens(hip) that this particular order has emerged from and which it continues to be moulded by.

On the basis of this theoretical perspective, categories such as “the democratic citizen” and “democratic citizenship” may be viewed as the products of various interventions and techniques of governance that mould an imagined ideal citizen in relation to its imagined opposite or inverse (Cruikshank 1999). The ideal citizen in liberal democratic societies of today is that of the “active citizen”, i.e. a self-governing (responsible and autonomous) individual, motivated, willing and capable of carving out his/her life-course on the basis of his/her own ideals, circumstances and ambitions (Rose 1999). Over the course of history, however, a range of groups, such as women, slaves, degenerates, homosexuals, and colonized peoples, have been regarded as being not quite “ready” for democratic citizenship (Said 1993; Isin 2002). And it is in the meeting with precisely these groups that prevailing ideals of citizenship become most palpable. In relation to these (out)groups a series of more or less disciplinary interventions have been staged – and continue to be staged – with the objective of “raising” these groups’ morals or mentality to a more advanced or developed level (Hindess 2000).

Historically, democracy has emerged in a political order based on the nation-state, in which it became self-evident over time that democratic citizenship presupposes a national community. The international system, as it appears today, is comprised of political entities that are sovereign in relation to one another – nation-states. It is precisely this historically specific system of sovereign states that makes it possible to rule and govern the world population. The system is characterised by its territoriality, i.e. by the way it is tied to a defined territory. On the basis of this territory, the political world has come to be divided up into an inside and an outside. Citizens are distinguished from non-citizens. Citizenship has been “nationalised” (Dillon 1995; Lui 2004). This division, however, is neither naturally given nor unproblematic. The latter part of the 19th Century was the era of nation building (Hobsbawm 1990). From this point onwards, the organisational principle of nationalism – one territory, one nation, one language, one culture – became the dominant societal ideal. When Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri touch upon nation building in their book Empire, they note that “The spiritual identity of the nation rather than the divine body of the king now posed the territory and population as ideal abstraction” (Hardt & Negri 2000: 95). The nation became “finally the condition of possibility of all human action and social life itself” (p. 101). It became almost impossible to think about community outside or beyond the increasingly tightly woven organisational principles of sovereignty, territory, nation, unitary culture (Billig 1995; Malkki 1997).

Liberal democracies were established in the course of the process of modernisation, in which several different processes developed in parallel and in symbiosis with one another, including amongst others the emergence of the capitalist mode of production, a centralised state apparatus and nation building. In liberal democracies, as in context of other regimes, the idea of the nation as “imagined community” has excluded at the same time as it has included. Through their very existence, for example, ethnic minorities and immigrants have always constituted something of an anomaly in this national order of things (Malkki 1997). The principle of national sovereignty is embodied in the doctrine of citizens who share one territory and one culture, which involves having the right to exclude and punish “aliens” and outsiders. It is just this “sound ‘political common sense’ [that] draws the contours of the politics of immigration in the West” (Hansen
On the basis of distinct systems of ordering and classification focused on race/ethnicity/nation, a broad repertoire of control, surveillance and border protection technologies are maintained — all with the objective of keeping the “Enemies” (both over there and here at home) “in their place” (Lui 2004). Ethnic affiliation has thereby gradually become central to the way democracy itself works, in parallel with the establishment of the practices of inclusion/exclusion, that were carried in by the process of nation building, as increasingly self-evident techniques of governance within the democratic system. A democratic form of government was naturally assumed, in line with a nationalist doctrine, to imply a national popular collective and a culturally homogeneous population. In this context it became more or less impossible even to imagine democratic forms of governing outside of a national or nation-state framework (Billig 1995).

Barbara Cruikshank (1999:2) has noted that theories of democracy “are best understood as constitutive discourses that contribute to solidifying what is possible to think, say, do, and be democratically”. In this context, academic research may also be said to have played — and to continue to play — a very important role in the establishment, legitimisation and normalisation of the cartography and the ideal of nationalism (Dillon 1995; Dahlstedt 2005), as we will also see in the current paper. Researchers have often taken borders and space (between nation-states as well as public/private, state/market/civil society/family), identities and categories (based for example on race/ethnicity/nation/culture) quite for granted, as if they were unproblematic and self-evident “facts”.

It is essential to move beyond this type of “methodological nationalism” (Wimmer & Schiller 2003) and to illustrate the ways in which people’s citizenship and self-realisation is staged by means of distinctions based on amongst other things race/ethnicity/nation/culture, and how this leads to the emergence/reproduction not only of unequal living conditions, but also of how these conditions are lived — and resisted (Isin 2002). Before looking more closely at the question of how belonging to these two categories is staged through the “democratic schooling” of the trade union and adult education movements, however, we will first return to the Sweden of the 1940s, ’50s and ’60s in order to see how the idea of the popular movements as arenas for “schooling in democracy” took shape.

**Popular movements and democratic schooling**

During the 1950s and 1960s, everyone who turned 21 years of age — thus coming of age as citizens — received the gift of a special book from their home municipality, *The Citizenship Book* [Medborgarboken]. The book was published by the Swedish Federation of Rural Municipalities, with financial support from the Swedish Cooperative Union, the Swedish Insurance Association and the Swedish Savings Banks’ Association. The first edition was published in 1949, the seventh and final in 1966. In the foreword to the 1957 edition, the chairman of the Swedish Federation of Rural Municipalities describes the objective of the book as being that of “deepening and

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2 When the categories “immigrants” and “Swedes” are used in this paper, they are consistently placed in quotation marks in order to draw attention to the problems associated with dividing the population into fixed categories. The categories in themselves have no independent analytical value, but rather refer to an everyday societal division into “immigrant” and “Swede” that we will show has a series of practical consequences for those people who are assigned to the respective boxes.
strengthening the spirit of citizenship in our country” (Anderberg 1957). The book comprised of a collection of informative texts on different themes of more or less central importance to an imagined competent, responsible citizen, written by a series of authorities in the various areas covered, such as “Our democratic heritage”, “What it means to have come of age” and “Setting up home”. *The Citizenship Book* is in many respects a document typical of its time. It presents a Swedish ideal of citizenship from the 1950s and 1960s, the golden age of the “Swedish model”.

In the 1940 edition, a special section was devoted to “The citizen and the popular movements”. The text is written by Torvald Karlbom, who has written several books describing the history of the Swedish trade union movement. “It is in the unions that broad sections of the population have been given the opportunity to air their own and common interests”, writes Karlbom (1949: 63), “to consider, on a group basis and together with other groups, problems and issues that must be resolved in order to be able to live together with as little friction as possible”. He argues that the togetherness experienced by the active members of associations step by step creates a “solidarity and feeling for the collective” that gradually forms these members into responsible democratic citizens, capable of rising above conflicts and narrow group interests. “From group and class solidarity, societal solidarity has sprouted forth and in this way, through the work of associations, democracy has consolidated its place in people’s consciousness”. In this light, democratic citizenship may be understood as a specific morality, mentality or way of life, which by various means is to be conveyed to, and moulded in, individual citizens. For Karlbom this *democratic (govern)mentality* appears to constitute a condition for a well-functioning democratic social order. “These values cannot be measured in figures and graphs but they nonetheless exist. And they are at least as important for the defence of democracy as bastions built of steel and concrete”.

Karlbom is far from being alone in his way of looking at popular movements, democracy and citizenship. Similar ideas were a common occurrence in post-war Sweden. In later editions of *The Citizenship Book* Karlbom’s text was replaced by a piece on “Youth and the popular movements” written by the popular movement researcher Hilding Johansson (1957). Johansson is another of those who emphasised the intrinsic democratic value of the popular movements at this time. In the book *The Popular Movements* (1954), for example, he notes that the popular movements in Sweden play a crucial role as “schools of citizenship”. “In general”, he argues, they have “a democratic form of governance, and their mentality is also... democratic” (p. 201). But how does he think these members are concretely schooled into a democratic mentality? According to Johansson, the practical application of the “democratic technique of government”, whereby the members learn the art of discussion and compromise, constitutes an important part of the popular movements’ schooling in democracy.

People learn to handle the chairman’s gavel, to write minutes, to vote in line with customary parliamentary rules and so forth. Many also learn to contribute to discussions and give speeches. […] Not the least important is that people learn to compromise. […] And a democratic form of government requires an ability both to conduct an objective debate and to compromise (p. 196f).

Another important aspect of the popular movement as a school of democracy, argues Johansson, is found in its intrinsic ability to educate the members into becoming
responsible citizens, by forcing them to assume responsibility for the decisions they are involved in taking.

In the same way, it is important to this end that citizens have learned to govern with responsibility. The popular movements have taught many of their members not only to apply the technique of democratic government but also to assume responsibility for their decisions. The members are namely forced to bear the consequences of their decisions (p. 197).

Just after the Second World War and through the early years of the 1950s, there were a large number of researchers, debaters and politicians who, in the wake of the increasingly strong position that the popular movements had attained in Swedish society, spoke of the emergence of a new kind of human being. “What has emerged is another type of social human being”, notes the political scientist Gunnar Heckscher (1951: 261), for example, who would subsequently become chairman of the Swedish Conservative Party, “less individualistic and more focused on cooperation with other individuals and with society, than the one that characterised our country 25-30 years ago”. The developmental trend that is described is dramatic to say the least. In the same spirit, Hilding Johansson (1954: 170) declares that “The popular movements have created a certain way of life”. “The lives of the active members are to a large degree devoted to meetings, assemblies and exercises, and these determine the character of their leisure time. In this context popular-movement man emerges as a new human type”. How then can this “new human type” be characterised? Johansson provides the following description.

In her conduct an element of self-consciousness may be discerned… She argues for her views, and she often does so very knowledgeably. Even if her many tasks have prevented her from acquiring an extensive amount of knowledge, she nonetheless knows a good deal, and she is generally also energetic and purposeful. (p. 171)

Johansson repeatedly emphasises self-confidence and self-consciousness specifically as two of “popular-movement man”’s most conspicuous characteristics. Within the popular movement it also became possible for what Johansson refers to as the “simple man” to “advance to positions of leadership” (Johansson 1952: 77), which manifestly led to an increased self-confidence within the lower strata of society. Thus people from the lower classes also appear in the role of competent and independent citizens. According to Johansson, the question of belonging to the movement is also linked to the issue of citizens’ self-confidence/self-consciousness. Through active involvement in the work of popular movements, he wrote, the individual member became “conscious of being a part of a large and powerful movement. Behind him stood a multitude of people” (ibid.). This in itself has contributed to an improvement in self-confidence, not least among the lower classes. Here Johansson touches upon the question of representation, i.e. of claiming to stand in the place of others, of speaking for people other than oneself (see Dahlstedt 2008). “When he spoke in their name, he was no longer the simple man” (Johansson 1952: 77). The members’ increased awareness of themselves and of belonging to a larger social collective (the movement) strengthens their self-confidence, which by extension strengthens democracy as a whole.
This heightened self-consciousness meant a good deal for democratisation. It gave birth to demands to be given a place “at the masters’ table”. But first and foremost, it laid a spiritual foundation for democracy. In a society where the members of the lower classes lack independence and self-consciousness it is unlikely that a democratic form of government can emerge, and even less endure. There the rule of the few is tolerated. Besides a high level of public education, self-consciousness within the lower social classes is probably the most important spiritual condition necessary for democracy (p. 77f).

Self-awareness is emphasised as one of the fundamental conditions or “spiritual foundations” for democracy. Commitment, awareness, self-confidence, independence, the ability to debate and assume responsibility, they are all elements that characterise the democratic (govern)mentality that largely defines the citizenship ideal of the 1940s and 1950s. Besides the institution of the school system, involvement in the activities of various associations is viewed as the primary arena in which this way of life can be formed. Becoming a really “good democrat” means first freeing oneself from the yoke of dependency and becoming an independent individual who is conscious of himself, of his capacities and of his responsibility, who is self-confident, with this self-confidence being fortified not least through the sense of being part of something bigger (the movement). A direct parallel can be drawn to the debate on the conditions and challenges of civil society, which amongst other things was discussed in Sweden during the years around the millennium.

National-democratic imaginations

Even if the strong popular movements have with time become a kind of symbol for Sweden and “Swedish democracy”, the most dominant among these movements had their roots far beyond the country’s borders. “The Swedish popular movements appear… to be ‘imported products’”, notes Hilding Johansson (1954: 80) for example. “During their early years, the movements often spoke a language that was quite unfamiliar”. Despite the fact that many of the popular movements thus had overseas origins, they appear to have very quickly become “nationalised”. After only a couple of decades they had been adapted to Swedish conditions. Step by step, the popular movements became in some sense bearers or stewards of what are viewed as specifically “Swedish” values, ideals and traditions. The author Ernst Herman Thörnberg devoted a great deal of his work to describing the Swedish history of the popular movements. He is one of those who place a powerful emphasis on the movements’ roots in the “Swedish nation”. In the book Folkrörelser och samhällsliv i Sverige [Popular Movements and Social Life in Sweden], a standard work in this area, Thörnberg emphasises that in order to understand the growth and development of the popular movements, we need a deeper insight into the specific “distinguishing characteristics” of the Swedish people.

It is incontestable that there are distinctive features discernible in Sweden’s population that denote a Swedish national character, and the investigation and description of which may be said to lie within the field of population psychology. And when we look at our popular movements, study their origins, progress and extent, we should attempt to develop an understanding of these distinctive
characteristics, as they have emerged during the evolution of the nation, in its institutions and culture (Thörnberg 1943: 109f).

Thörnberg is far from being alone in emphasising the links between popular movements and nation. Similar ideas were at this time deeply rooted in both popular movements and the research community (cf. Edquist 2001; Linderborg 2001; Nordvall 2005). In one of the opening sections of The Citizenship Book we find a very clear example of how popular movements were framed in a specifically Swedish/national setting, where a passage from Jalmar Furuskog’s essay entitled The Swedish Cultural Heritage is cited under the heading “Our democratic heritage”. The following is a passage from the Furuskog quotation included in The Citizenship Book.

It is distinctive of the Swedish culture that it is not the state that has forced collective action upon the citizens, but rather that they have themselves voluntarily united, voluntarily adopted rules and programmes for their activities, voluntarily submitted to the restrictions of their personal freedom that must be required by the organisation. We Swedes feel that a voluntary collective of this kind is more valuable than a state-ordered, controlled collaboration.

Something even more typical for the cultural understanding of the Swedish popular movements is that they in no way view collectivism as an end in itself. Cooperation is essential in order to carry out certain practical tasks, but the goals of social development are people themselves, however, people as free, creative personalities. High above the pretensions of collectivism to coordination and organisation, rises in all Swedish popular movements the conception of the value of individualism, and this view has strong, indestructible roots in Swedish philosophy and Swedish literature throughout the ages (Furuskog 1941: 16, emph. in original).

In the quote above, Furuskog speaks of “we Swedes”, as if it was completely self-evident who is included, who belongs – and who does not belong in this category. The “Swedish culture” is for Furuskog homogeneous and labelled in the singular. It has a specific “distinctiveness”. On the whole, Sweden is presented as the model of a democratic country. The superordinate democratic principle of the individual’s freedom is claimed to have “strong, indestructible roots in Swedish philosophy and Swedish literature”. Democracy is presented as being particularly deeply rooted just here in Sweden. Sweden is said to rest on a voluntary social contract, in much the same way as political philosophers of an earlier period in the history of ideas (such as Hobbes and Locke) imagined citizens voluntarily coming together to delegate the exercise of power to the sovereign state or the ruler.

Furuskog develops his ideas about Swedish national “distinctiveness” in several books, including the popular geography text book Vårt land [Our Country] (1943). There he describes Sweden’s homogeneous population as one of the nation’s most distinctive features. “Outside our national borders there are no linguistic minorities who claim to be united with us. Nor are there any ethnic groups within the country that are dissatisfied with being Swedes. These auspicious circumstances have contributed to the creation of a sense of national unity” (p. 18). Furuskog illustrates here something that can be labelled the doctrine of national unity – a doctrine proceeding from the principle of one territory, one language, one culture. There is no place in this doctrine for Romanies, Lapps or Finns, who have been part of the Swedish national heritage for
countless centuries (Catomeris 2004). They constitute anomalies, which quite simply do not fit into the self-image of national unity (Pred 2000). Whilst Furuskog’s cartography does indeed mention both Finns and Lapps, they are generally described as rather “exotic” elements in the landscape of Sweden. They are presented as imperfect Swedes, to a greater or lesser degree – and everyone is at bottom satisfied with this image. “There is nothing noteworthy in the mind of the Lapps”, notes Furuskog (1943: 348) for example, “and for the rest of us it is a delight to know that the representatives of the Lappish race in our country feel themselves to be free, respected Swedish citizens”. No mention at all is made in the otherwise extensive general work Our Country of the forcible relocations and disciplinary “Swedification campaigns” that just these population groups have been subjected to for centuries.

In line with the ongoing construction of the social democratic society, the People’s home [folkhemmet], from the end of the 1920s, the nature of the creation of the national community changes. The self-image of Swedish nationalism gradually tones down expressly ethnically Swedish principles in favour of principles such as humanism and modernity.

The Home of the people is based on a conception of collective progress, a unified nation that marched with determination into a common future. […] The new Sweden needed different stories and different heroes than those created by Swedish punch patriotism. It became important to transform the writing of history into a story about the triumph of modern democracy. […] It was now the democratic temperament of the common people that was emphasised, rather than their love of the monarchy (Löfgren 1993: 54f.).

With the People’s home it becomes increasingly important to define the specifically Swedish in terms of democratic maturity or mentality. Furuskog’s reflections on “the Swedish cultural heritage” and the claimed deep historical roots of democracy in the Swedish philosophical tradition constitute a highly illuminating example in this context. Evald Fransson provides an example of a similar line of argument in the text book Demokratins samhälle [Democratic Society] (1956: 75). There he writes, amongst other things, that “we Swedes have since ancient times always had some form of self-government”. The mode of address is direct. It is focused on an imagined national collective, “we Swedes”. “This has been of enormous significance for our people”, Fransson continues, “Century after century, self-government has trained up citizenly virtues such as obedience to the law, the ability to cooperate, the love of liberty, the willingness to assume responsibility and to work for the good of one’s fellow men”. Once again “our people” is characterised as special and fundamentally democratic, not on ethnic grounds, however, but by reference to deeply rooted traditions that are claimed to have emerged specifically in Sweden.

In this line of argument, people, nation and democracy melt together into an apparently self-evident trinity. The popular movement is the bearer of both the democratic and national project. Democracy in the sense of popular rule is in practice the same as national rule. Democracy is a marker that distinguishes “us Swedes” from “other people”. It appears as though Swedishness is synonymous with democracy – and vice versa (Dahlstedt 2005). The Swede is somehow the very model of the democratic citizen. The popular movement is regarded as fostering not only “good democrats”, but “good Swedish democrats” (Edquist 2001; Linderborg 2001).
The fostering of citizens inwards and outwards

Several of the more dominant popular movements in Sweden have focused their “voluntary social work” on the most “outcast” and “disadvantaged” members of society. The objective has often been to “elevate” these groups to a “higher level”, culturally, morally, spiritually or as regards their degree of civilisation. This is not least true of the adult education, temperance and revivalist movements (Villadsen 2004). The idea that certain segments of “the people” need to be “elevated” to a “higher level” in one way or another was more or less generally accepted within these movements during the phase in which they became established. The idea has also had a major impact on those, both academics and others, who came to describe the history of the popular movements for subsequent generations. “It is quite clear that the movements have made a major contribution towards the cultural elevation of the lower social classes”, notes Hilding Johansson (1954: 182), for example, who during the 1940s and 1950s was one of those responsible for establishing the idea of the popular movement’s intrinsic democratic value. In doing this he also contributed in some sense towards reinforcing the self-image of the popular movements themselves, as the hub of the machinery of democracy. “The social inequalities continue to create cultural divides, though these are smaller now than they used to be”, Johansson continues. “Activities to educate the public therefore continue to be an instrument for the lower classes in their efforts to lift themselves to a higher cultural level”.

The idea of “cultural elevation” has a long history and appears in a series of different versions in the context of the Swedish popular movements. As already noted, it has had a major impact within the adult education movement. “The society of the future cannot be based exclusively on an economic system that has been developed to a high level of technical perfection. It must also be based around most highly cultivated people”, argues Rickard Sandler (1937a/1907: 10), for example, social democrat and founder of the Workers’ Educational Association. “Raising the spiritual level of the average person is of utterly essential significance to the realisation of our social ideal”. Corresponding ideas are also to be found in other movements, however, not least the religious ones.

Over time, a large number of movements have become bearers of Sweden’s “national heritage”. This does not however mean that they restrict their activities to “elevating people” within the borders of the nation-state. Many movements also focus a substantial amount of their work on people who are located outside these borders. The clearest examples of this transnational pattern of movement are found within the religious popular movements, among them the Salvation Army. In 1890, William Booth, the British founder of the “Army”, wrote the exhortative book *In Darkest England and the Way Out*, which achieved a massive circulation within a short period of time, not only in England but also in several other countries, among them Sweden. General Booth completely rejects the borders drawn by nation-states. His mission, i.e. that of spreading “the light” to the “dark regions” of society, takes no account of borders. It is a global undertaking. Inspired by the many expeditions of discovery made to Africa – the “dark continent” – during the late 19th Century, Booth draws a parallel between the jungles of Africa and the slum areas emerging in Britain’s large cities. He argues that the poverty in this “darkest England” is to a large extent a result of the patterns of life of the slum population themselves. “Drunkenness and all manner of uncleanness, moral and physical, abound” (Booth 1890: 14).

As in the United Kingdom, the Swedish Salvation Army focused its efforts on the “darkest” areas of society, not only in the “wildernesses” of the major cities and rural
areas in Sweden, but also in the farthest corners of the world. The Swedish Salvation Army in general reached out “to those who had sunk deepest”, notes Thörnberg (1939: 61). “It drew attention to their human dignity. This constituted a singular and powerful democratic declaration”. Once again the democratic essence of the popular movement takes centre stage. For Thörnberg, it is a question of including those who had “sunk deepest” in a broad democratic collective, of “elevating” their moral and social standard, leading them onto the right path. “Generally speaking, the Salvation Army prevented the moral and social degradation of a multitude of people” (p. 54f), he concludes, in a tone that is strongly reminiscent of the movement’s own figureheads. In the same captivating style as General Booth himself, Thörnberg describes the journey of the noble missionaries out into the “darkness” of the world.

These missionaries have travelled to the East and also the West Indies, to China, Korea, Japan, South Africa, South America and the islands of the Pacific. They have directed their message to hordes of people whose religions may be characterised as primitive and polytheist. […] They have had to acquaint themselves with very different types of culture, mythologies and dogmas. People of extremely varied ethnic character, with all kinds of racial components have been the object of their zeal. […] Into this confusion they strode, into the gloom (p. 93).

The description strikes an emotional tone that is to some degree reminiscent of the century’s imperialist doctrine of the white man’s burden. The doctrine involved “bring[ing] light to the dark places and peoples of this world by acts of will and deployments of power” (Said 1993: 33), all in the name of enlightenment, humanism and salvation. One part of this was that it was the “white man’s” own ideals, judgements and pattern of life that constituted the moral standard against which light and darkness, good and evil, quite simply the rest of humanity were measured. The “mission” that the Salvation Army, among others, involved themselves in may in this sense be viewed as a project of colonial(ist) education, on a global scale. In this context the “educated” and the “uneducated” constitute the direct opposites of one another. In order to be able to “elevate themselves” to the “level” of the former, the latter had quite simply to undergo a radical transformation, to become other people, writes Stefan Jonsson (2007: 209).

For the white European male, education involves him developing his identity through organic growth. For The Others education involves them freeing themselves of an identity that was viewed as a burden, and for them education was therefore tied to a conception of rapid mutation, a metamorphosis or conversion: to become educated one must become white...

In the following passage, Thörnberg illustrates in the clearest possible way that a colonial(ist) educational ideal has not only characterised thinking in those countries that were located in the front line of the exercise of colonial power. Similar ideals have also had a major impact in countries that worked more towards the outskirts of the colonial project, Sweden among them.

[T]hese Swedish Salvationists have occasionally provided admirable examples of a capacity to adapt, of enterprise, perseverance, of psychological clarity, intellectual fertility. Words that they have spoken, actions they have performed, have brought
white, yellow, black and every possible type of mixture leadership, relief, light. […] Their enthusiasm and spirit of self-sacrifice have time and again transformed the impoverished five loaves and two fishes of knowledge into religious-moral nourishment, physical and mental comfort, hygienically-civilising wisdom for a thousand, and perhaps even five thousand confused, crawling, suffering, bleeding human beings far off in the orient or south of the equator (Thörnberg 1939: 93f).

In Thörnberg’s work, as in that of several others of those who have written on the history of the popular movements, it is possible to discern something of the grandiose ideas of nationalist-romanticism that were strong towards the end of the 19th Century and the beginning of the 20th, whereby Swedes were viewed as being a little more noble, benevolent, enlightened and heroic than all other “peoples” (Ehn et al. 1993). The heroic figureheads of the Swedish popular movements, the description of whose good deeds the movement’s historians have devoted a good deal of effort to describing and emphasising, appear somehow to embody all of the good qualities and abilities that are said to characterise “us Swedes”.

It is difficult today to believe that we would have agreed with such narrow-minded national(ist) imaginations (Billig 1995). The fact is, however, that similar lines of thought are still echoed today and exist in the form of a highly vibrant ideological heritage within popular movements of various kinds. In the following, we will see that the well-intentioned ambition to include and “elevate”, as well as the intimate relationship between people, democracy and nation, continue to be of crucial importance to the “democratic schooling” of the popular movements.

The time machine: Inclusion/exclusion of “immigrants”

The work of the movements within the country’s borders may be exemplified by reference to the meeting with “immigrants”, since over recent decades “immigrants” have largely come to represent that which is deemed to be in acute need of “elevation” to a “higher level” in society, mentally, culturally and socially (Ålund & Schierup 1991; de los Reyes et al. 2002). In relation to the question of “immigrants” and their involvement in popular movements and associations, too, popular movements are assumed to serve a fundamental educational function with regard to the issues of citizenship and democracy. The popular movements do not however appear to comprise arenas for true mutual democratic schooling, whereby “immigrants” and “Swedes” exchange experiences and learn from one another on equal terms. The exchange of experience goes in one – and only one – direction. It is we who educate them, and not vice versa.

Many of those who are labelled “immigrants” have similar experiences of the meeting with Swedish popular movements. A number of studies have identified similar patterns within the trade union movement, for example (Mulinari & Neergaard 2004), and the adult education movement (Eriksson & Osman 2003; Osman 1999, 2005), but also within the political parties (Dahlstedt 2005). These research findings indicate that democratic schooling via the work of popular movements is based on the premise that democracy is somehow synonymous with Sweden and specifically with “Swedish traditions”. In this context, the popular movements are viewed as bearers of the “Swedish national heritage”, despite the fact that the population is today more ethnically heterogeneous than it has ever been. For “immigrants” to be included in the Swedish
community and schooled into good democrats by means of the active work of popular movements, there is a requirement that “they” in some sense “become more like us”. The fact is that “we” view ourselves as the stewards of democratic traditions.

According to the national self-image that became established during the “home of the people” epoch, “we Swedes” are viewed as standing at the forefront of the “modern” (Ehn et al. 1993). According to this self-image, it is largely this that is argued to constitute the “Swedes’” individualism, which distinguishes them from other “peoples”. We also saw above how Jalmar Furuskog, for example, emphasised the “perception of the value of individualism” as constituting the real essence of Swedishness. In relation to this individualistic, modern Swedishness, many “immigrants” from other parts of the world are today regarded as more or less “pre-modern” or “backwards”. What unites “us” is our dissimilarity (as individuals), while what unites “them” is their similarity (as a collective). “Immigrants” whose origins lie in countries outside the rich, western world in particular tend, in the meeting with the popular movements, as in a large number of other contexts, to be defined and treated on the basis of their “different culture”; that is to say not on the basis of their individuality, but rather of their affiliation with a collective. You could say that “they” are, in some sense, their culture. “The Swede”, by contrast, is an individual. Irrespective of what “they” do, “their” actions are always interpreted in terms of “culture”, either in a positive or a negative sense.

Within the popular movements, “immigrants’ culture” is most often viewed as nothing other than an “obstacle to cooperation”, something essentially problematic, a barrier that needs to be dealt with or passed in order for “immigrants” to be able to actively participate and be included in the life of Swedish popular movements and Swedish society (Ålund & Schierup 1991). Democratic schooling thereby appears to constitute a kind of evolutionary process, in which “immigrants” are transferred to a different stage of development. The process involves “us”, on the one side, sharing “our” historical experiences and conveying “our” democratic heritage, while “they”, on the other side, step by step abandon their pre-modern, collectivist loyalties and become transformed into modern individuals, i.e. mature, democratic citizens.

“Immigrants” on the periphery of the trade unions

The trade union movement provides us with a good example of how this process may manifest itself in practice. The study Den nya svenska arbetarklassen [The New Swedish Working Class] by Diana Muliniari and Anders Neergaard (2004) is a thought provoking example of research into the experience of “immigrants” in the Swedish trade union movement. One the basis of interviews with individuals who are active in the Swedish Trade Union Federation network TUAI [the Trade Union of Active Immigrants], Muliniari and Neergaard conclude that “being an immigrant, i.e. non-Swedish, does not constitute marketable capital within the Swedish trade union movement” (p. 249). They show that a strongly nationally oriented self-image has become established in the Swedish trade union movement. One the basis of interviews with individuals who are active in the Swedish Trade Union Federation network TUAI [the Trade Union of Active Immigrants], Muliniari and Neergaard conclude that “being an immigrant, i.e. non-Swedish, does not constitute marketable capital within the Swedish trade union movement” (p. 249). They show that a strongly nationally oriented self-image has become established in the Swedish trade union movement. In relation to this self-image, the “immigrant” often constitutes an anomaly, an “alien”. Given the strong position held by the trade unions in the context of Sweden’s corporatist social order, the movement in some sense became one with the national project. “In the epic of the home of the people, the organised, responsible and experienced ‘union men’ play a heroic part” (p. 233).

Within the Swedish Trade Union Federation, it is common according to Muliniari
and Neergaard, that the causes of various difficulties and problems that arise in the meeting with “immigrants” are assigned to the “immigrants” themselves. It is “they” that constitute the problem. “They” lack the necessary elementary knowledge about what trade unions do, how Swedish society functions – and not least of the Swedish language. The trade union image of “immigrants” is based on the idea of “cultural distance”. “Immigrants” from certain parts of the world are viewed as “bearers of ‘collectivistic’ cultures in which the lines drawn between individual/family/society are diffuse or completely non-existent” (p. 240), which has a number of consequences for the political work of trade unions. Mulinari and Neergaard show how this framework of interpretation impacts upon a large part of the work conducted within the Swedish Trade Union Federation.

Within the trade unions, for example, a strong conviction has become established over time as to who “owns” the organisation. This “right of ownership” is not least accentuated by an emphasis of the movement’s “historical heritage”. In this way the “national affiliation” becomes a crucial issue. “Many informants felt that elected Swedish representatives perceive themselves to have a natural precedence in relation to the history of the Swedish workers’ movement” (p. 250). Since “immigrants” within the trade unions are not regarded as being part of this “historical heritage”, but rather find themselves in the position of bystanders, they do not have the same access to the organisation as “native Swedes”. “Immigrants” cannot make the same legitimate claims to the “history of the movement”. “Immigrants” are somehow excluded in advance. Constructive criticism that is expressed by “immigrants” is often seen as illegitimate since it is interpreted as criticism either of the organisation itself, or of “Swedishness”.

Both through a selective reading of the history of the Swedish trade union movement and through kinship, the trade union leadership monopolises the right to define the nature of the trade unions – “this is the way we’ve done things in Sweden”. This means that racified groups are excluded from the opportunity of belonging to the nation and the Swedish trade union movement, while all criticism of trade union practice is neutralised by means of a nationalist defence (p. 274).

For “immigrants” to be able to establish themselves requires that they adapt to “the Swedish way of working” and the “right” understanding of “Swedish trade union history”. One issue related to the working methods of the trade union movement is that which is often referred to as the “Swedish meeting culture”. I have previously noted how a predominant idea has emerged in Sweden that the popular movements educate their members in the “application of the techniques of democratic government”, as Hilding Johansson (1954: 197) puts it. In their study of the TUAI, Mulinari and Neergaard (2004) show how the idea of specific “rules of the game” can in itself function as a mechanism of exclusion in relation to those who do not have the right to define what is right and reasonable, legitimate and relevant. Many of those who are active in TUAI also have a strong sense that the prevailing conventions relating to the technicalities of meetings systematically work to their disadvantage. “They’ve mastered us with their meeting techniques” (p. 260), as one of the active trade unionists puts it. You mustn’t flare up. You have to keep to the agenda, wait your turn, etc. Deviations from these conventions are as a rule interpreted as a manifestation of “cultural differences”. Democracy presupposes the right kind of socio-cultural competence.
“Immigrants” in the centre of adult education

We find a similar pattern of ideas and treatment in the adult education movement. As are other movements, the adult education movement is also characterised by the historical development of a specifically “Swedish” nationalist self-image, in the context of which the movement is understood as being “typically Swedish” (Nordvall 2005). “Workers’ education grows like all living education out of a national culture”, notes Sandler (1937b/1927: 151), for example, the grounder of the Workers’ Educational Association. The popular movement scholar Petros Gougoulakis (2006: 126) expresses such a self-conception when he describes the movement in the following way: “The adult education movement constitutes an essential part of Sweden’s identity-creating cultural heritage, with deep roots in the western humanist tradition of human emancipation and empowerment”. The characterisation resounds like an echo from the beginning of the 20th Century. At the same time it captures lines of thought that are more typical of our own time. “As an educational environment, the study circle constitutes a typically Swedish model for what is today labelled life-long learning” (p. 72). According to Gougoulakis, the social interplay that occurs in the context of adult education is regulated by a series of “internalised codes of interaction that have evolved in Sweden under the influence of common experiences in the past”. Even today, he emphasises, the educational environment of the study circle contributes to “the transmission of this relational code to new generations of Swedes” (p. 125).

Ali Osman is one of the Swedish researchers who have further analyzed adult education as a democratic arena and a meeting place for people from different ethnic backgrounds (cf. Eriksson & Osman 2003; Osman 1999, 2005). Among those who are important actors in the field of adult education, he argues, there is a basic assumption about the existence of a more or less fundamental difference between “Swedes” and “immigrants” as regards their view of society, not least in relation to the question of democracy. Within the adult education movement, it is precisely these differences that are largely viewed as being the reason that “immigrants” find it difficult to establish themselves in Swedish society. These differences are not uncommonly interpreted in terms of “culture”.

As bearers of the Swedish “national heritage” the actors involved in adult education view themselves as shouldering a great responsibility as regards the transmission of the democratic traditions that have evolved over time in Sweden to new generations, irrespective of ethnic background. To the extent that “immigrants” lack knowledge of how democracy is conducted in Sweden, what to do when you go to vote, how to contact authorities, how formal decision-making processes are organised, which areas of responsibility are associated with which specific bodies, this is primarily understood as a consequence of “immigrants” belonging to “another culture”, which lacks experience of what is “democratically Swedish”.

Here too we see the same kind of evolutionary mentality as that which characterises the Swedish trade union movement. Today’s “immigrants” are said to be at the same stage of historical development as the “Swedish working class” was around the turn of the last century, in the “infancy of the labour movement”. Despite the fact that the meeting between “Swedes” and “immigrants” which takes place within the Swedish adult education movement is described on the basis of the metaphor of mutual learning, where all those involved learn from and about one another, irrespective of their background, Osman (2005) describes something that is more like a one-way communication from “us” to “them”, than a free and open dialogue between equals.
“Immigrants” are in some sense assigned to another point in history. “They” need to learn from “our” experiences, “become more like us”.

The dominant view of “immigrants as bearers of culture” in the context of Swedish associations and in society at large is not unequivocal however. “Immigrant culture” is occasionally presented as something very positive, as a vital and dynamic force that is of great value for the work of Swedish associations as a whole. Narratives of this kind not uncommonly include a powerful element of exotism, in which “the Others” are viewed as being more natural and genuine. “They” still retain the primitive, elementary human characteristics that “we” have somehow lost in the process of modernisation. Precisely this type of tone can be discerned in an interview with the former Prime Minister, Ingvar Carlsson, published in the journal *Invandrare & Minoriteter [Immigrants and Minorities]*. In answer to the question: “What does your multi-cultural Sweden actually look like?” Carlsson answers: “When I go out to a popular-movement day today, there are always, and I mean always, immigrants involved. They play, they sing and they present their culture. This is something that is good for all of us. They’ve given Sweden a bit of colour” (Schwarz 1993: 13). What Carlsson does, with the best of intentions, is to distinguish “us” from “them”. At the same time as he describes “immigrants” as bearers of “their culture”, he transfers the question of “cultural diversity” to “them”. It is “they” who represent the “multi-cultural”. “Cultural diversity” is not viewed as a problem. “Immigrants” are instead rather described as constituting an “exotic” feature of Swedish society.

At the same time as “immigrant culture” is often viewed in terms of an “obstacle to cooperation”, “we Swedes” are assumed to have something to learn from “the immigrants”, not least their spontaneity and their often lively involvement in various organisations and associations, “characteristics” that in some way remind us of “our past”. The trend witnessed over recent decades, in Sweden as well as in many other countries, towards an increased distrust of, and a gradually diminishing level of participation in the large popular movements, is today seen as a very alarming one, that over the long term is said to constitute a serious threat to the most Swedish of all things Swedish – democracy. By learning from “them”, “we” may somehow “rediscover ourselves” and “become more like we used to be”. Even if the “schooling” is in this sense bi-directional, it is still essentially “we” who define the frameworks and rules of the game that “they” have to adapt to. At the same time it is “we” who determine what “we” might have to learn from “them”.

**Branding Sweden: Concluding reflections**

Over time, the popular movements have become a self-evident part of the “Swedish trademark”. They are today an important element in the Swedish self-image. For instance, The Swedish Adult Education Association (2007) recently described adult education as “part of the soul of the Swedish people”. This self-image is not only conveyed within the country’s borders, by means of the stories about “Sweden and the Swedes” (where we come from, who we are and what we stand for) that are constantly retold by the one generation to the next, by “old Swedes”, to “new Swedes”. It is also conveyed externally to the surrounding world. By comparison with other countries, Sweden often appears – according to this self-image – to be something of a model of democracy (Dahlstedt & Nordvall 2009).

As just one recent example of this kind of national self-conception, the Board for
the Promotion of Sweden Abroad in 2008 launched the project *Image of Sweden 2.0*, a guide “addressed to everyone commissioned to represent Sweden abroad” (Board for the Promotion of Sweden Abroad 2007: 1). It is a quite well known picture of Sweden and “Swedishness” presented in the guide. According to the Board, the “Swedish brand” can best be described as a “progressive country pursuing development and balance” (p. 10). Towards the outside world Sweden should be branded on the basis of four “core values” – innovation, openness, consideration and authenticity. Once again democracy and equality is emphasized as specifically Swedish values or phenomena. As an echo of past times, “The tradition of adult education and popular movements” are mentioned as examples of “Swedish openness” (p. 12). “Paternity leave, cohabiter law and registered partnerships” are given as examples of “Swedish innovation” (p. 11). “Pursuing equality” is said to be one of the main characteristics of “Swedish consideration” (p. 13). The message presented by the Board to the outside world is clear: “Our experience shows that change and improvement can be implemented, and that this creates opportunities for both individuals and society” (p. 16).

Powerful popular movements, as we have seen in this paper, constitute one of the factors that are said to make Sweden unique. Over the past century, the popular movements have been bearers of the “national project”. They have had the important task of creating a *Swedish democratic citizenship*. By means of active participation in popular movements, citizens are assumed to have participated in the formation of a specific “spirit of citizenship”, which is both Swedish and democratic. By this means, citizens are said to have “evolved” the capacities and virtues, the fundamental sense of responsibility and community that is felt to be required for democratic government; and this at the same time as they have been “fostered into Swedishness”. In adult education, for instance, myths about Swedes as “the most curious, concerned and enlightened people” (Swedish Adult Education Association, 2007) still belong to the common sense, a characterization very much reminiscent of national mythologies of past times. This national self-conception is particularly clearly discernible specifically in relation to the meeting with “immigrants” – but also in relation to the outside world. In connection with the inclusion of “immigrants”, assumptions and ideals are made relevant and become manifest that have otherwise simply become submerged in the repertoire of collective givens – “banal nationalism” to borrow a term from Michael Billig (1995), becomes somewhat less “banal”. It is important to consistently and critically examine such national characterisations/distinctions and not to regard them as taken-for-granted and naturally given elements in the social landscape. Even if there are strong tendencies towards the normalisation of “Swedishness”, whereby democracy is more or less directly linked to “the Swedish nation”, within both the trade union and the adult education movements, we need nonetheless to remember that these are not closed systems characterised by total unanimity. The movements are rather domains characterised by a continuous struggle over agenda-setting and the space available, in which not least “immigrants” themselves are actively involved. The case of the network within the trade union movement known as Trade Union of Active Immigrants clearly shows, for example, how even those who are subordinated and disciplined in a variety of ways can intervene in order to manage dominant conventions and techniques of government. Even if the power relations involved are unequal, the outcome of the struggle is not given in advance.

At the same time, several leading popular movements – ever since their beginnings have been involved in *transnational* relations of various kinds. In this context, it is
worth remembering that several of the movements were of a transnational character from the point of their inception. Their movement patterns were originally quite at odds with national and nation-state borders. To some extent this is still true today. This is visible not least in the “democratic schooling” that the Swedish adult education and trade union movements are currently involved in. In several instances, this work is located outside Sweden’s borders in the form of various types of solidarity and developmental work in various “developing countries” around the world (cf. Sjölander 2005; Berg 2007). In some sense, these transnational contacts manifest a constant, ongoing, global educational project with striking historical parallels to the global mission of the Salvation Army during the last century. As was the case around the turn of the 20th Century, great hopes are today still being placed on what has been referred to as the global civil society.

In the same way as civil society within the framework of the nation-state has been viewed as making citizens more “democratically minded”, transnational non-profit organisations of various kinds are today assumed to have an inherent power that can in time “civilise” the world’s population and – possibly - encourage a spirit of global democratic citizenship. As in the case of William Booth and his imperial crusade against the spreading “jungles” of the world, it is possible in the blissful references to the “global civil society” and the final triumph of western liberal democracy to discern an ever-present, nagging fear. If vigorous efforts are not soon made to strengthen civil society, so that the “uncontrolled mass” of people out on the periphery of the world can be led and moulded in specific directions, there is a risk that the “powers of darkness” will eventually take over. In this connection certain solutions lay claim to being universally applicable, as if they were valid for the entire human race. As was the case around the turn of the last century, the threats, like the blessings, appear to be boundless – they are more or less everywhere, including right here in our midst (Hardt & Negri 2000). The fear is particularly projected towards specific places, however, and not least focused on the dark peripheries of the metropolitan areas, that through their very existence appear to constitute nurseries for terrorism and other types of non-democratic ideological currents.

Popular movements – both those with a national and a global orientation – continue to constitute central arenas for governmental techniques of various kinds. As in other social arenas, civil society plays host to a continuous ongoing struggle to define both the present and the future (Hunt 1999). In relation to the threats posed by the “jungle” and the “uncontrolled mass” there is room here to articulate alternative ways of becoming a citizen, of organising towards a citizenship beyond prescribed models, beyond hierarchies and unequivocal distinctions (Isin 2002; Hardt & Negri 2000). At the same time civil society is an important element in the repertoire of (neo)liberal governmentalities. The outcome of this struggle, as has been noted, is anything other than given in advance.
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