

LONGING TO BELONG: *Stories of (non)belonging in multi-ethnic Sweden*

Abstract

The aim of this article is to contribute to an understanding of contemporary processes of negotiations concerning belonging and non-belonging to the Swedish social community. Taking on a theoretical approach on belonging inspired by Yuval-Davis and Jacobsen, the article analyses three individual stories of women who have migrated to Sweden. Out of this analysis, focusing on how these women claim their belonging to a Swedish social community at the same time as they in different ways are denied such belonging by others, we may conclude that although each of the stories told is unique and articulates an individual experience, there are striking similarities in how their claims of belonging, with its related implications for belonging, are not acknowledged by others. In a way, these individual stories tell us something about some of the crucial challenges regarding belonging in contemporary multi-ethnic Sweden, as well as Europe.

Keywords

Inclusion • exclusion • migration • stories • belonging

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*I'm falling harder than I
Ever fell before
I'm falling fast while hoping
I'll land in your arms
'cause all my time is spent here
Longing to belong
To you
Eddie Vedder: Longing to belong*

Since the end of 2015, more than a million people have been seeking refuge in Europe. Across water or over land, children as well as adults are fleeing from war, persecution and poverty. Thousands of them disappear without a trace or drown beneath the waves. Most of the refugees come from the war-torn Syria (International Organisation for Migration 2015). In several of the member states of the European Union, exceptional policy measures are being taken in order to handle the so-called 'refugee crisis' – intensified border control, the introduction of identity checks at specific checkpoints as well as within the borders of a country and restrictive rules for the reception of asylum seekers. This precarious situation in Europe raises a number of crucial questions about the state of belonging in contemporary Europe, during an age of large-scale international migration. In this particular age, established conceptions of belonging are renegotiated: Which characteristics, abilities or values should

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people have in order to belong to a certain social community? Who is included in the social community and who is excluded?

To address such questions are important, not the least in Sweden, where policy measures in terms of intensified border controls have drastically changed migrants' possibilities to enter the geographical space of Sweden. These measures, in combination with the past few years' political developments in Sweden, where a right wing extreme party, the Swedish democrats, has grown substantially, have introduced a different way to speak about migrants, refugees and the Swedish social community. Today, politicians in established parties are saying things they could not have said five years ago and politicians are making policy changes that would not have been possible before these preconditions arose. In such a situation, it is more important than ever to turn attention to the ways processes of belonging to a Swedish social community is played out by those who are on the margins or on the outside of such community, yet longing to belong and also claiming their belonging to the social community.

The aim of this article is to contribute to an understanding of contemporary processes of negotiations concerning belonging and non-belonging to the Swedish social community by focusing on three individual stories of women who have migrated to Sweden. Taking on this aim, the overall purpose is surfaced – to address questions of belonging in times of large-scale migration by giving body to them through individual stories. The article is structured according to the

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following: first, the issue of migration and belonging in relation to the Swedish context is elaborated, followed by the introduction of our analytical and methodological approach. Third, we introduce the analysis and the stories of the three women: Maria, Shirin and Ana. Lastly, we relate the main conclusions to some of the contemporary challenges regarding belonging to the Swedish social community.

Politics of inclusion – the Swedish way

Sweden has for quite some time had an international reputation of having developed a welfare regime based on the principles of social equality, solidarity and democracy. Sweden also has an international reputation for its generous immigration policies as well as for its inclusion of migrants. Sweden has hereby appeared as a symbol of the citizenship model described by Stephen Castles (1995) as *multicultural*, a model based on the principles of *inclusion* (making it relatively easy to obtain citizenship) and *recognition* (guaranteeing minorities certain group rights). Ever since the introduction of Swedish integration policy in the mid-1970s, there have been no major differences between those born in Sweden of native Swedish parents and those born abroad or in Sweden to foreign-born parents. All individuals with Swedish citizenship have basically had the same formal rights, ranging from civil to political and social, regardless of ethno-cultural background (Schierup et al. 2006).

However, as indicated by developments in the politics of welfare and integration in the past decades, as well as research, this conceptualisation of an equal and inclusive Swedish model has been substantially challenged (Hübinette & Lundström 2015; Dahlstedt & Neergaard 2016), not least in relation to issues of international migration and the inclusion of migrants. This challenge clearly illustrates the rising tensions between the ambitions and the conditions of Swedish welfare and integration policy.

In the early 1990s, with the economic crisis, the tone in Swedish public discourse was quite drastically sharpened, where there was a lively debate on the 'problem of migration' and the populist party 'New Democracy' entered the parliament with its focus on restricting migration and 'being tough' on migrants (Edgerton et al. 1994; Boréus 2006). In this historical context, Alund and Schierup (1991) described the state of Swedish multiculturalism as quite paradoxical, highlighting the tension between citizenship in the formal sense (being a member of the community, in juridical terms) and citizenship in the substantive sense (in terms of societal living conditions). In spite of the ambitions of including migrants and making them full members of the Swedish social community, and thereby bearing the same formal rights as any Swedish citizen, the substantive societal living conditions of the included migrants did not match these ambitions. A range of studies have later highlighted similar tensions between ambitions and conditions in terms of citizenship rights – from the justice system (*civil rights*) (Diesen 2005, 2006) to politics (*political rights*) (Rodrigo Blomqvist 2005; Dahlstedt & Hertzberg 2007) and to the educational system, the labour market and housing (*social rights*) (Schierup et al. 2006; Gruber 2007; Ngeh 2011; Vesterberg 2016).

In the late 1990s, however, integration policies put a greater focus on issues of discrimination and stigmatisation in the Swedish society, which also had an impact on the wider public discourse (Schierup et al. 2006). In the beginning of the new Millennium, public discourse on multi-ethnic Sweden was clearly polarised. On the one hand, there was a continued emphasis on the issues of discrimination running through the Swedish society. On the other hand, the public discourse became tougher, with an increasingly authoritarian character

(Schierup et al. 2006; Dahlstedt 2015), more recently exemplified by the growing popularity and electoral success of the right-wing populist party the Sweden Democrats, with an explicit focus on both polarising and politicising the 'problems' of migration and multicultural Sweden (Berggren & Neergaard 2015).

In the most recent national election of 2014, the party got 12.9% of the votes. Even though the more established parties have tried to exclude the Sweden Democrats, the formal political influence of the party has been quite marginal; this has *not* automatically led to the exclusion of the political ideas of the party. Quite on the contrary: right-wing parties as well as the Social Democratic Party have in recent years made political use of a rhetoric resembling that of the Sweden Democrats – not least in the context of the refugee situation in Europe since 2015. In tandem with the current 'refugee crisis', there has been an increasing focus on the 'problems' of migration and integration, where policies have been adopted in order to 'secure' the national borders and decrease migration (Prop. 2015/16:174). In 2016, the Swedish parliament passed an interim three-year legislation concerning migration, including, amongst other proposals, the following:

- The abolishing of minimum state subsidies for applicants with legally binding rejections.
- The mobilisation of police to implement the swift expulsion of applicants with legally binding rejections.
- The legal application of temporary residence permits – usually for 13 months.
- The linking of economic self-sufficiency to permanent residence permits and family reunification.

Ironically, the second deputy speaker of the parliament, Björn Söder of the Sweden Democrats, presided over the decision, with representatives of the Sweden Democrats applauding and cheering, further indicating that despite being exposed to an organisational *cordon sanitaire*, the political ideas of the party have indeed received quite strong parliamentary support. At the same time, there has in recent years been a strong emphasis on 'Swedish values' in mainstream political discourse in Sweden, where a range of values have repeatedly been marked as particularly 'Swedish' (cf. Kinberg Batra & Norlén 2016; Löfvén 2016), not far from the political vocabulary of the Sweden Democrats. So, in line with these developments, migrants have increasingly become problematised as ethno-culturally deviant and as non-belonging to the Swedish social community.

Theoretical and methodological framework

In order to contribute to an understanding of contemporary processes of negotiations concerning belonging and non-belonging to the Swedish social community, we draw on theories of belonging and specifically on Yuval-Davis' (2006, 2011) work on the politics of belonging and Jacobsen's (1997) conceptualisation of boundaries of belonging. Starting with Yuval-Davis (2006, 2011), we specifically engage with her ideas about identifications and emotional attachments, which is one of the three major analytical levels on which belonging is constructed. Identifications and attachments refer to individuals' narratives, the stories they tell themselves and others about who they are, where they belong and where they do not belong. Such stories are always, in some way, connected to others' perceptions of what belonging and non-belonging entail. This is also an emotional investment, a desire for attachment. Here the construction of identity becomes a

'transition, always producing itself through the combined process of being and becoming, belonging and longing to belong' (Yuval-Davis, 2006, 202). These constructions of belonging have a performative dimension, where '[s]pecific repetitive practices, relating to specific social and cultural spaces, which link individual and collective behaviour, are crucial for the construction and reproduction of identity narratives and constructions of attachments' (p. 203). Thus, there is no necessary connection between a social location and a specific social identity – they rather emerge as a result of social practices. Thus, by separating the analysis of social location and constructions of social identity, there are possibilities for resistance not only towards people's social location but also towards the internalisations of forced constructions of identity. Belonging is thus, and this is the third analytical aspect, an issue of value and judgment as well as an issue of contestations around how boundaries concerning identity and categories should be drawn.

In our analysis, Yuval-Davis' (2006, 2011) conceptualisation of belonging and politics of belonging is further related to Jacobsen's (1997) distinction between specific boundaries drawn between those belonging and those not belonging. In her study of young British Pakistani adults and their sense of belonging to the British societal community, Jacobsen (1997) concludes that the national identity of Britishness does not have *one*, fixed content. Rather, she argues that belonging to the British national identity is given different meanings by specific 'boundaries of Britishness'. By the drawing of 'civic' boundaries, belonging is given meaning as a juridical matter, based on formal citizenship. By the drawing of 'racial' boundaries, belonging is defined in terms of ancestry or 'blood'. By the drawing of 'cultural' boundaries, belonging is characterised as a matter of the culture, values or lifestyle to which one adheres. Accordingly, Britishness is defined as 'those individuals whose behaviour, lifestyle and values are perceived as typically British' (p. 193). By these different boundaries, and the complex ways in which they interrelate, specific meanings of belonging and non-belonging are constructed, reconstructed and negotiated.

For the analysis, we draw on interviews conducted within the frames of a larger research project on citizenship formation within and beyond adult and popular education (cf. Nicoll et al. 2013; Olson et al. 2015). This project engaged in the elicitation of student narratives about what it means to be a citizen and what they themselves say they do 'as citizens' within as well as beyond their studies, that is, 'the doings of citizenship'. In total, we conducted 37 student interviews in a school for municipal adult education. Thirteen of the students had migrated to Sweden, 21 students were women and 16 men. Our sample does, in terms of gender as well as ethnicity, represent the pattern of participation in municipal adult education in Sweden, where more than 40% are migrants and the majority are females (Swedish National Agency for Education 2015). All interviews were transcribed verbatim.

For the specific analysis reported in this article, we directed attention towards those instances in the interview material where students identified themselves as belonging or not belonging to a Swedish social community. The analysis included examples, to different extent, from all interviews. However, in interviews with students who had migrated to Sweden, these stories are much more about being treated as different in combination with a constant wish to belong. This is especially the case in interviews with migrant women. We have thus selected three interviews, in this case with migrant women, that are the most illustrative of how processes of belonging and non-belonging are played out. Although these interviews have commonalities in terms of identifications and emotional attachments,

they do also illustrate differences. The first interviewed person is adopted, the second has migrated from Lebanon and the third has migrated from Hungary, with a Roma father and a Hungarian mother. The three stories do in different ways illustrate the women's identification with a Swedish social community, at the same time, as the stories also illustrate how others deny them attachments to such community. In the pursuing analysis, we provide a narrative of each of the three women and highlight those instances in their stories where there are claims of belonging, as well as the way such claims are said to be received by others.

Discourses on (non)belonging

In the interviews, a range of stories, topics and themes intertwine. Some of these stories had a particular focus on education, whilst others had not. Stories about migration were recurring in the interviews, not least amongst students with a migrant background. In the following analysis, the focus is put on the three migrant women's stories about migration and their claims of belonging. The stories told by these three women are unique and articulate quite specific (and different) descriptions, but there are also similarities, not least concerning belonging as a process of inclusion and exclusion.

The stories highlight prevailing norms of belonging in Sweden, according to which the citizen is conceptualised as not only having a Swedish passport but also as belonging to the imagined social community of the ethno-culturally homogeneous Swedish nation. In their stories, all three migrant women articulate feelings of *not* belonging to this imagined community by being regarded and treated as inferior in relation to this particular community – Maria for being adopted, Shirin for being a Muslim wearing a veil and Ana for being Roma. Thus, according to the stories told, the women face similar challenges when it comes to belonging. However, in their stories, there is also a strong longing to belong, where claims are made to belong to the Swedish social community as insiders and equal citizens, not only in terms of rights and duties but also in terms of being 'fully' Swedish.

Maria

Maria was adopted from Colombia in the 1980s, and today, she has a dual citizenship. She grew up in a small village outside Bergå, but today she lives in Bergå city together with her son and her partner who was born in Ecuador. 'Even if I'm adopted, I'm more or less raised as a Swede', Maria tells us. Her foster parents are both Swedish-born, and they have raised Maria according to Swedish ideals and conventions, she says. When telling us about her life, she tells a story about how she has been treated as non-Swedish because of her physical appearance.

I have felt that you can't be fully Swedish if you don't look Swedish. You are not accepted as a Swede. It doesn't matter what name one has or how you are dressed. That's why I have never felt fully Swedish.

In her story, Maria describes how her looks makes a difference for how she is being treated in everyday life. Thus, because of her having dark hair and dark skin, she is not seen as 'Swedish' by others, but as an 'immigrant'. In line with the drawing of such 'racial boundaries', she appears as an outsider, as not belonging to the Swedish

societal community (cf. Jacobsen 1997). Owing to the way she is perceived by others, she describes how she has never felt fully at home in Sweden, as a Swede, even though Sweden is her home and despite being raised as a Swede. Maria takes adult education as an example of how she is treated as not being fully Swedish: 'If you sit in a class for example, everyone believes you are an immigrant, as most people there are immigrants'. As many immigrants participate in adult education, she is also seen as an immigrant because of her appearance.

Even though Maria has never felt fully Swedish, she describes how it was different during the time she grew up in the 1980s. There were not many adopted children in the village she grew up in and no immigrants either. Thus, by being adopted, she was seen as different:

To be adopted in the 1980s wasn't easy. Wherever you were [...] not many people were adopted. And there weren't many immigrants, especially when you lived in a small village.

In her story, Maria describes a big difference of living in a small village compared to living in a city. In the city, she tells us, it is easier to be 'different' and there is a higher tolerance of cultural diversity. 'The city is very nice, with many cultures and different people', she says, 'you can be the way you are, I believe'. Drawing on her experiences of living both in a village and in a city, Maria makes a difference between cities and the countryside. The difference is, however, ambiguous. At the same time, as describing Bergå as a comparatively nice and tolerant place, she describes her time in Bergå as 'really tough'. 'It has been really tough, and especially here in Bergå'. As in the smaller village she grew up in, she tells us that she is treated differently in everyday life, not least in interactions with older people in Bergå. 'Some older people, they are so fed up with immigration and they gladly say things...' Through such small, seemingly insignificant comments and acts, Maria is constantly reminded that she does not really belong to the Swedish social community. Maria describes a bus ride with her mother as an example of how she is reminded of her non-belonging.

One time, when I was heavily pregnant with my first son, me and my mum went to the theatre [...] I was heavily pregnant and was giving birth within a week [...] no one believed that it was my mum. One old lady expected me to leave my seat to her, despite my mum already offering hers saying [to the old lady] 'Do you wish to sit here?' 'Can't she stand up instead' [the old lady said about Maria].

Another recurring topic in Maria's story is the significance of language as a marker of identity. In her story, language is described not only as a matter of knowledge and competence but also as one of belonging (Dahlstedt 2005; Eliassi 2013). Maria tells that on many occasions, people have been surprised that she speaks fluent Swedish. For example, as in the following situation, on the bus:

Many immigrants have many children; there are many prams and walkers. It's like a war on the buses [...] One time when I brought my children, there was someone who commented something, I don't remember exactly what, and then when I spoke Swedish to my children, then it was like [...] because they [the people making the comments on the bus] didn't believe that I had understood what they were saying.

In such small situations in everyday life, Maria is reminded about the fact that the way she talks and the way she looks does not match – that is, 'cultural' and 'racial' boundaries do not coincide (cf. Jacobsen 1997), which makes her 'different'. Because the way she looks marks her as an immigrant, she is not expected to speak the way she does. Even though language in such occasions reminds Maria about her non-belonging, she underlines how it's a great privilege to be able to speak Swedish fluently. Even though people around her view her as an 'immigrant', she has many advantages compared to many immigrants.

It's harder to come here as an immigrant, I have the language, which immigrants doesn't have. It's harder [...] as immigrant, I believe, you are often treated worse, I believe it has something to do with how much Swedish you know [...]

In many ways, in her story about belonging in Sweden, as an adopted, Maria is put in a position as outsider. However, her story is in no way unique; similar stories have been identified in previous research on adopted people in Sweden (Hübinette & Tigervall 2009) as well as in other countries (Kirton 2000). Adopted people are both treated and seen as different by others. Maria is constantly reminded of her non-belonging to a Swedish social community, as being defined as belonging to the others, the 'immigrants'. At the same time, in Maria's story, there is a longing to belong, where she describes herself as belonging to the Swedish social community, as not being an outsider, as she has been raised as a 'Swede' by native-born Swedish parents, and she speaks Swedish fluently. Thus, Maria finds herself in a position in-between: being raised as Swedish and being repeatedly racialised as non-Swedish; between her capacity to speak Swedish fluently and her expected language difficulties; that is, as belonging in civic as well as cultural terms but non-belonging in racial terms.

Shirin

Shirin was born in Lebanon and came to Sweden when she was five years old. Now she is a Swedish citizen. Her husband is also born in Lebanon, and they have four children. The family has lived in Lebanon as well as Sweden, and Shirin describes how, through that experience, she has developed perspectives on living in different countries. Based on such experiences, she describes how she does not really feel at home in either of the two social communities: neither Sweden nor Lebanon. This means that her belonging – and her longing to belong – is related not to one particular community, either Sweden or Lebanon, but two, Sweden and Lebanon.

After several years of consideration, she decided a few years ago to start wearing a veil. For Shirin, this was a big step. The reason for not starting to wear one earlier, she tells, was that she didn't want to stand out too much. When she finally made her decision to wear a veil, some people reacted.

I'm Muslim, and as Muslim you should wear a veil in order to follow the Koran, and that's what I have done, and many people have said, 'Are you really a Muslim? You are normal' [...] Should I, shouldn't I, shouldn't I, should I? So when I took the step and came back: 'But you are normal'. What is normal and what is not normal? I mean: aren't I normal because I wear a veil?

In her story, Shirin addresses the issue of belonging and normality: who really decides what is normal and what is not? Shirin claims her belonging to the Swedish social community as a 'normal' person, even

though being Muslim and wearing a veil in situations in everyday life and in public debate may appear as something non-normal and non-Swedish (i.e. as a token of non-belonging). The rationale found in Shirin's story is the following: why should someone else describe her as not belonging when she is just as normal as they are? However, amongst those reacting to her wearing a veil, where also some of her close friends.

My best friend is from Lebanon, and we have known each other for a really long time. She is Muslim, and she was a bit shocked when I dared to start using the veil, but she says she will start doing it, but she hasn't dared yet. She hasn't gained that self-confidence so to say. [...] 'How did you dare to do it? How do people treat you?' So I told her, 'I don't really care what people say'. It's about coming to that point of not caring.

Shirin's conclusion after starting to wear a veil is not to care about what people expect, no matter if they are friends or others. Instead, she dresses the way she wants: 'everyone is allowed to have his or her own opinions and values. That's my position ... why should I care about what friends will think about me wearing a veil?' When she describes the developments in Sweden in the past decade, she states that tolerance of cultural and religious differences has increased. As an example, she points to how, today, more people working in banks wear a veil.

People accept one's culture and religion more now than before [...] Ten or twelve years ago, women wearing a veil couldn't work in a pharmacy [...] Now it's common that they work in a pharmacy, a bank, or that they have a high position, which they didn't before.

Whilst Shirin describes an increased tolerance, she concurrently describes the decision to wear a veil as something brave, daring and related to self-confidence. Thereby, the wearing of a veil and its possible drawbacks are construed as an individual choice based on good self-esteem. Any problems of discrimination are described as an individual responsibility, enacted by courage and 'not caring' what other people think. As mentioned earlier, when Shirin describes her belonging and longing to belong, there is a certain belonging appearing, one that is stretched out in time and space, including not only *one* community (the Swedish) but two (the Swedish and the Lebanese). Shirin describes how the experience of moving back to Lebanon for a five-year period was an important experience that helped mature her decision to wear a veil. As she describes it: trying to 'live in her own country'.

I went there to try and live for five years at the same time as studying [...] I can't read or write in Arabic, so I thought that I should try that education. At the same time to get the opportunity to live in my own country, but I couldn't manage it.

In her story, Shirin describes it as really hard to adapt and belong to her 'own country'. It didn't feel like home anymore. Thus, she chose to move back to Sweden. The challenge to adapt was partly due to the lack of electricity and water, things that are described as taken for granted in Sweden, which in Lebanon she could no longer take for granted.

It was really hard to adapt [...] just such a small thing as to open the tap and drink water, it wasn't possible. Electricity could break

down anytime. To adapt to all these things we are used to, it is really hard [...] There are no radiators there, so it is really cold in winter time.

The challenges were also partly related to not fitting in and feeling at home, mainly because of the way she looked. Shirin's light hair colour and green eyes made many people see and treat her as non-Arabic, as not belonging to the Lebanese social community.

Most people have told me that I do not look like a Lebanese, I don't look Arabic, they thought, so in some stores they fooled me, where I had to pay the double price just because I looked the way I look.

To some extent, there are similarities between Shirin's and Maria's stories of belonging and non-belonging, even though the contexts are different. As in the case of Maria, Shirin's language did not fit in with the way she looked:

They didn't know I knew Arabic, so when I asked: 'No, why does it cost this?' 'Oh, so you are Arabic? We didn't know. But then the cost is this instead'. Just the way I looked [...] If I didn't know Arabic I had to pay one price, but as soon as they knew I knew Arabic, the price was totally different.

In Shirin's story, a feeling emerges of not fitting into the community, of not being at home, either in her previous or in her current 'home country' (Dahlstedt 2005; Eliassi 2013). In Sweden, she feels different and not belonging because of her choice of wearing a veil (i.e. in cultural terms) and in Lebanon, because of the way she looks (i.e. in racial terms). Despite this, Shirin still claims her belonging as a member of the Swedish social community as fully 'normal', not least because – as she describes it – with time it has become more common and more accepted to wear a veil in Sweden. From her position, it has become more and more strange *not* to consider her as belonging to the Swedish social community.

Ana

Ana was born in Hungary. Her father is Roma, and her mother is Hungarian. She came to Sweden when she was 11 years old. Ana has been a Swedish citizen for many years, but she doesn't really feel herself as belonging to the Swedish social community. 'I'm not Swedish, so to say. I became a Swedish citizen by coming here'. When Ana describes herself and her belonging to the Swedish social community, she underlines that there is a difference between her, as a Swedish citizen with her background, and other Swedish citizens, who are born in Sweden with Swedish-born parents. She describes her belonging in Sweden as a balancing act, where she constantly needs to coordinate between 'the Hungarian', 'the Roma' and 'the Swedish'.

It has been hard for me, if I'm honest, to decide, okay, should I be Swedish, Hungarian, or Roma, or how should I combine these [...] as you have the Roma in your blood and the Hungarian in the blood living in Sweden. So it is hard to put things together really.

In her story, Ana describes a quite fragmented life, where her background is hard to reconcile with the fact that today she lives in Sweden. In her way of talking about belonging, Ana draws boundaries along racial lines by explicitly using a biological metaphor –

Hungarian and Roma blood (cf. Jacobsen 1997). According to such metaphor, belonging is understood in terms of biology and biological heritage, clearly distinguishing those belonging from those not belonging to the community. Thus, migration in itself emerges as something problematic, as people are understood as seemingly naturally belonging to certain places, certain communities, sharing certain values (cf. Yuval-Davis 2011).

As described in her story, living in Sweden has its problems. However, based on the experiences of visiting relatives and friends in Hungary, Ana draws the conclusion that Sweden, as compared to Hungary, is a much more tolerant society: 'Compared to Hungary, it's totally different. It's much easier to be here. [...] It's so multicultural here in Sweden, so you don't feel it so much'. At the same time, Ana tells the story of a quite different Sweden, where there is both prejudice and discrimination. In her story, Ana describes her childhood as a time when she was sorted out and treated as being Roma: 'I was the only girl in the entire school with a foreign background. [...] It was really hard to be in school [...]'. It turned out to be harder to be accepted as belonging to the community of Swedes than she had expected.

I spoke English in school as I didn't know any Swedish at all [...] I felt that, okay, now I'm in Sweden, now I can be as open as I wish to be, so I told a girl that my dad was Roma and such. Then she told me that I shouldn't tell anyone else in school. [...] So I didn't tell anyone else.

Here, Ana describes the difficult challenge of how to position herself in relation to other people's perceptions of Roma. Her strategy has been to simply avoid telling people about her Roma background. When she talks about herself and her belonging, she explicitly distances herself from what she refers to as 'typical Roma people'. 'I'm not raised as a typical Roma girl, so to say. You can see if a person is Roma. But me, I don't think people can see that I'm Roma'. Thus, in her story, Ana makes a clear distinction between 'Roma' and 'Roma people' – the typical Roma people and the few atypical Roma people like herself. When describing the 'typical Roma person', there is a well-established stereotype of 'the Roma Other' emerging: the self-excluded, passive Roma, the one who does not wish to work and who uses the system (cf. Pusca 2012): 'Most of the time, among Roma people, they use the Swedish system. [...] They don't like to work. And that's how it has been since generations'. Here, the exclusion of Roma people is understood as a result of an almost hereditary mentality, with its own logic (cf. Vesterberg 2016). In Ana's story, Roma are characterised as a distinct collective (by more often referring to people who are 'not being typical Roma' as individuals). By describing herself as an atypical Roma, Ana construes herself as a free individual, opposed to 'Them', who are more dependent on cultural norms and ways of living.

It's so deep inside them, since generations back [...] your parents' way of life and their view on society influence you so much, how they live, but it could also be due to them having been through so much discrimination and such from society. [...] They have discriminated [against] me because I'm Roma, so why should I contribute anything?

In relation to this characterisation of the 'typical Roma person', Ana positions herself as being well adapted to Swedish society. 'I feel that I adapt quite well to society'. Her biggest problem, though, is to be conflated with those who do not belong and who do not wish to adapt.

I'm bunched together with those who do not wish to live as Swedish citizens, and it's I who have to suffer from it, and I don't want my children to suffer from it.

Talking about belonging, Ana makes a distinction between formally being a Swedish citizen, having certain rights and duties, and not being born in Sweden. Even if she herself is not born in Sweden and not fully seen as Swedish, she is still – formally – a Swedish citizen, and as such, she is a bearer of certain rights. As a citizen it is also, as she points out, a question of following laws and regulations, that is, to fulfil one's duties.

It's important for me as a Swedish citizen to have rights; that I have the same rights as a Swede has, who has Swedish origin. That means a lot, and I believe everyone should enjoy the same rights, no matter from where one comes, and if one comes to Sweden and becomes a Swedish citizen you should have the same rights, but at the same time follow the Swedish laws. If you live in the Swedish society, you follow their laws, and then you are granted the same rights. There are some who use the Swedish society, who wish to have the same rights as a Swede does, at the same time, as they do not really follow the laws.

Here, belonging is constructed through difference. She does not belong to the category 'of Swedish origin' or the category of those who use the Swedish system. She is somewhere in the middle – neither one nor the other; neither 'We' nor 'Them'. She describes her belonging distancing herself from 'Them' – those who use the system. At the same time, she does not belong to the community of 'Us' – Swedes with a Swedish origin. Thus, in Ana's story, Roma and Swedes are constructed as homogeneous and mutually exclusive collectives, with herself in-between. The problem is, once again, that some people demand their rights as citizens without fulfilling their duties. Thus, she argues that people immigrating to Sweden need to 'pitch in more', show gratitude and earn their rights as citizens.

I really believe that they should pitch in more than a Swede, because a Swede is always a Swede. [...] Show gratitude, thank you so much for letting me live here and be part of the Swedish society.

Here, there is a conception of a graded citizenship emerging, in which citizens' rights are directly linked to belonging to the ethno-culturally homogeneous community of Swedes. The relationship between being 'Swedish' and being an 'immigrant' is uni-directional and hierarchical. 'A Swede is always a Swede' and always has the right to put demands on those who have immigrated, whilst the reverse is not allowed (cf. Dahlstedt & Hertzberg 2007). Thus, in Ana's story, belonging is described by the drawing of racial, cultural as well as civic boundaries. In formal terms, she does belong to the Swedish societal community (by being a Swedish citizen). At the same time, she is not born in Sweden and accordingly does not belong in racial terms. Even though she is born a Roma, she is not raised as a 'typical Roma', thinking, behaving and dressing the way they do.

Concluding discussion

This article has focused on one of the most pressing issues in Europe today, namely, the issue of belonging in an era of international migration. Taking on a theoretical approach to belonging informed by

Yuval-Davis (2006, 2011) and Jacobsen (1997), we have undertaken an analysis of three individual stories of women who have migrated to Sweden. Out of this analysis, which has focused on how these women claim their belonging to a Swedish social community at the same time as they in different ways are denied such belonging by others, we may conclude that although each of the stories told by these three women is unique and articulates an individual experience, there are striking similarities in how their claims of belonging are not acknowledged by others.

Amongst all three women, belonging is given meaning in complex processes of boundary-drawing, where civic, racial and cultural boundaries interrelate (cf. Jacobsen 1997). As an adopted person, Maria is both seen and treated as being different because of her physical appearance (racial boundary). She is constantly reminded of her non-belonging to a Swedish imagined community, as her physical appearance makes her belong to 'them', the 'migrants'. Maria makes claims for, and describes herself as, belonging to the Swedish social community, as she is formally a Swedish citizen (civil boundary), raised as a Swede by native Swedish parents and speaks fluent Swedish (cultural boundary) – unlike the 'migrants', who are neither raised as Swedes nor speak fluent Swedish. Ana also makes claims for, and constructs her belonging by drawing boundaries. Like Maria, she is in an in-between position. Ana describes herself as belonging to the social community by distancing herself from the category of Them, that is, the inferior Roma who exploit the welfare system (cultural boundary). Formally, she is a Swedish citizen (civil boundary). However, she emphasises that she does not quite belong to the community in the same way as Swedes with Swedish origins, as she was born a foreigner and will always be foreign (racial boundary). Much like Maria and Ana, Shirin does not, despite her claims of belonging, become acknowledged as one who belongs to the Swedish or the Lebanese social community. As a migrant to Sweden, she is seen as different because of her religion and her choice of wearing the veil (cultural boundary), whilst she, back in Lebanon, is seen as different because of her appearance (racial boundary). However, Shirin still considers herself as belonging to the Swedish social community as a 'normal' citizen, formally being a Swedish citizen (civic boundary) and not least because of the fact that over time, as least as she sees it, it has become more common and more widely accepted to wear the veil in Sweden.

According to the three stories, the women face similar challenges when it comes to claims for belonging to the Swedish social community. A recurring pattern is that formal belonging to the Swedish social community by having a Swedish passport is not the only mechanism for inclusion and exclusion in the social community. Even though all three women formally belong to the social community by their status of being Swedish citizens, in their everyday lives, a range of interrelated racial as well as cultural boundaries leave them in positions as non-belonging. At the same time, and in different ways, the women do claim their belonging to the social community of 'normal' citizens. They do so by drawing boundaries between Me/Us and Them, along civil, cultural and racial lines. All three women tell their stories from a highly contradictory position where they all struggle and makes claims for belonging to the Swedish social community as full members. Ana limits her claims to issues of rights

and duties, whilst Maria and Shirin go beyond such claims. For them, belonging concerns full membership, that is, to belong to and be seen as fully Swedish. However, they all end up in an in-between space, where they are not really allowed to belong anywhere in the way that they wish.

In a way, these individual stories tell us something about some of the crucial conditions and challenges regarding belonging in contemporary multi-ethnic Sweden, as well as in contemporary multi-ethnic Europe. The claims of belonging found in the stories told by the three women in this article reflect broader renegotiations of belonging, which in a particular mode reflect the so-called 'refugee crisis' in Europe post-2015. Amongst these stories, Ana's may serve as a reminder that the precarious situation of the Roma in Europe can be seen as an illustrative example of the intricate and somewhat 'impossible' paradoxes of belonging in contemporary Europe (Isin 2012). On the one hand, the Roma do belong to the European societal community, as European citizens in juridical terms, with all the formal rights given to them. On the other hand, they do not have the same substantive equal rights, including the right to move freely within the EU's borders (cf. Olson 2012).

In all, the stories of Maria, Shirin, and Ana address the crucial question of who is included in the social community and who should be left out. This particular question is also at the very centre of the political debate in Europe of today. On one hand, there are strong arguments about the 'death of multiculturalism', and the demands, also from Sweden, for new forms of ethno-culturally graduated citizenship (Dahlstedt & Neergaard 2015). The tensions between citizenship in the formal and substantive sense, already identified in multi-ethnic Sweden in the early 1990s (Ålund & Schierup 1991), have increased rather than decreased.

On the other hand, in Sweden as well as in other European countries, claims have been made for the development of a new and more inclusive social community that expands the rights of citizens by accommodating those who have previously been excluded. These demands have been made collectively as well as individually, publically as well as more privately, loudly as well as more quietly. Indeed, the individual stories on which this article is based tell us that there are possibilities of making claims of belonging which might counter or at least question the current state of being. These are claims that try to resist the social location in which one is placed as non-belonging as well as resistance towards potentially forced constructions of social identity (see Yuval-Davis 2006) that address the present multi-ethnic situation of Sweden, as well as of Europe, marked out by migration.

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