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**Ice Skating and Island Hopping:
Refugees, Integration, and Access in a Segregated City**

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Table of Contents

List of Figures.....	3
List of Acronyms	4
ABSTRACT.....	5
I. INTRODUCTION	6
II. THE LYNCH METHOD	9
III. FORCED MIGRANTS IN STOCKHOLM.....	11
A. Sweden in the World.....	11
B. Integration Policy and Practice	12
C. The Red Cross	15
IV. INTEGRATION AND SPACE.....	17
A. The Image of the City	17
B. Public Segregation.....	18
C. Interstitial, Generic, and Transcendental Spaces	21
V. CONCLUSIONS.....	26
References.....	30
Appendix: Interview Questions	33

List of Figures

Maps of Stockholm:

FIG. 1. By Abbas, 45, from Baghdad, Iraq.....	10
FIG. 2. From the “Stockholm Online” CD-ROM.....	17
FIG. 3. By Flora, 53, from Shiraz, Iran.....	20
FIG. 4. By Djan, 28, from Charikar, Afghanistan.....	23
FIG. 5. By Nadja, 24, from Basra, Iraq.....	23
FIG. 6. By Yousef, 47, from Alexandria, Egypt.....	25
FIG. 7. By Ali, 37, from Baghdad, Iraq; Anwar, 40, from Kabul,..... Afghanistan; and Awat, 32, from Sulaimanyah, Iraq	27

List of Acronyms

DN	<i>Dagens Nyheter</i> , one of the two primary Swedish newspapers
IFV	Stockholm City Integration Agency (Integrationsförvaltningen)
IK	InfoKomp
IV	Swedish Integration Board (Integrationsverket)
KFUK-KFUM	Swedish YMCA-YWCA
MV	Swedish Migration Board (Migrationsverket)
SB	Spånga blåbandsförening
SCB	Statistics Sweden (Statistiska centralbyrån)
SM	Sociala Missionen
SRC	Swedish Red Cross (Röda Korset)
TG	Tisdagsgruppen

ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the role of the environmental image in the process of integration for refugees living in Stockholm, Sweden. The research uses techniques that the urbanist Kevin Lynch developed to question residents of Boston, Jersey City, and Los Angeles regarding their “image of the city” in the late 1950s. While integration is generally measured in terms of quantitative successes—especially the percentage of refugees entering the Swedish labor market and at what level—this study uses Lynch’s qualitative methods, a combination of in-depth interviewing and mental mapping, to elicit personal feelings about a new existence in Stockholm, which is a highly segregated city. These interviews were conducted with participants in the Red Cross Refugee Introduction Program, a small-scale alternative to the City of Stockholm Integration Agency program but funded by the city. Additional information was gathered using more traditional interviews, held with government and Red Cross officials, and through analysis of the Swedish media coverage of integration issues. Naming three kinds of spaces where refugees participate in urban life with lesser degrees of social, psychological, and physical exclusion, this paper expands upon the context, methods, and findings, and then suggests some possible new directions for practice.

Ice Skating and Island Hopping: Refugees, Integration, and Access in a Segregated City¹

Jennifer Mack²

I. INTRODUCTION

Way-finding is the original function of the environmental image, and the basis on which its emotional associations may have been founded. But the image is valuable not only in this immediate sense in which it acts as a map for the direction of movement; in a broader sense it can serve as a general frame of reference within which the individual can act, or to which he can attach his knowledge. In this way it is like a body of belief or a set of social customs: it is an organizer of facts and possibilities.

Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City*, 125-126

In a study released in October 2002, Statistics Sweden (Statistiska centralbyrån, SCB) proclaimed that refugees in Sweden have the potential to become a “permanent underclass” because of extreme labor market discrimination and other forms of systematic racism.³ The report was especially critical of the policies established during the 1990s, since the percentage of refugee immigrants working decreased by one third during that decade. As compared with Swedes, refugees rely more on unemployment welfare, have poorer health, and receive lower salaries if employed. According to the director general of the Swedish Integration Board, “the probability of getting work at the level of your qualifications increases the whiter your skin and the closer to Sweden and the EU you were born.”⁴ However, the Statistics Sweden report contends that the reasons for this “lie partially in the actual immigration situation and partially in the reception and the Swedish society’s ability to adapt the refugee-immigrant’s conditions for a successful welfare career in Sweden.”⁵

Attention to this dual failure of integration policy has also been pervasive in the Swedish media. Among many recent articles on the issue was “Invandrare integreras långsamt,” or “Immigrants are integrated slowly,” in the newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* (DN),⁶ which mentioned the Swedish government’s goal that immigrants will no longer need welfare assistance at greater levels than

¹ The author would like to thank the Mellon-MIT Program on NGOs and Forced Migration and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for generously funding both this research and the Rosemarie Rogers Working Paper Series. Additional thanks to Paul Schlapobersky, Sharon Stanton Russell, John de Monchaux, and Johan Lindquist for very helpful comments and/or editing suggestions.

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³ Mikael Hjerm, et al., “Flyktingar kan bli svensk underklass,” *Dagens Nyheter*, October 14, 2002, and “Flyktingar ny underklass,” *Svenska Dagbladet*, October 10, 2002. See the website of Statistics Sweden, www.scb.se, for the original report, “Integration till välfärd? Om invandras välfärd på 1990-talet,” Living Conditions Report 96.

⁴ Andreas Carlgren, “Invandrare systematiskt missgynnade,” *Dagens Nyheter*, November 20, 2002.

⁵ Mikael Hjerm, et al., “Flyktingar kan bli svensk underklass.”

⁶ “Invandrare integreras långsamt,” *Dagens Nyheter*, January 15, 2003. See the references for further articles in *Dagens Nyheter* and *Svenska Dagbladet* concerning the issue. Even those listed are merely a fraction of the numerous articles regarding immigration and integration that are constantly being published in Sweden.

native Swedes after residing in Sweden for two years. In reality it currently takes about 15 years for this to occur, making the government's goal seem overly optimistic. As one social worker described in *DN*, "It is as though immigrants are gathered together in a waiting room, where they must pass over a threshold to get into the next room....[This threshold] appears to be very high."⁷ The article points out that the integration bureaucracy in which refugees find themselves is at least partly to blame for their segregation—both geographically and socially—in Sweden.

In an institutionalized and socially progressive country like Sweden, these discouraging assessments of integration must be regarded as significant failures for both philosophical and structural reasons. First, the image of Sweden as the "good global citizen," with humanitarian objectives and immigration policies, is both widespread externally and well loved internally. Sweden prides itself on its extensive international aid work and one of the highest per-capita rates of refugee reception in Europe.⁸ Also, Sweden now stands somewhat alone among its traditionally immigration-friendly allies in Europe such as Denmark and the Netherlands, given that anti-immigration parties have not become powerful at the national level in Sweden as they have in those countries in recent elections.⁹ This leads to a substantial denial of racism within Sweden, which "reverberates," as cultural geographer Allan Pred has noted, "with elements of identity which have long rested on a taken-for-granted view of the country as *best in the world* at social justice and equality, as *the world's moral conscience*."¹⁰

Second, there is a crisis of integration policy in Sweden, simply because the institutional response is so well developed and supported. The Swedish government has two national government branches that develop and implement immigration and integration policies: the Migration Board and the Integration Board. Significantly, there is a Minister of Migration among the primary members of the Swedish government, and, at the municipal level, numerous authorities put integration policies into practice at the local level. The issue is both highly visible and omnipresent on the horizon of Swedish politics and is generally portrayed much more positively, for the time being at least, than elsewhere in Europe.

How then has this philosophical and structural failure occurred? While other countries may dream of Sweden's apparently benign failure, or partial success, in the realm of integration, the sense inside Sweden—among both natives and immigrants—is that such well-supported efforts should have by now produced far better results. The most obvious evidence of the magnitude of the failure lies beyond the scope of statistical surveys of economic independence; it is clearly *visible* in the extreme spatial segregation of Swedish cities, and in the capital city of Stockholm

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Allan Pred, *Even in Sweden: Racisms, Racialized Spaces, and the Popular Geographical Imagination* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2000).

⁹ In the 2002 elections, the anti-immigration Lijst Pim Fortuyn (LPF), which was a new political party, became the second largest in the Dutch parliament, with 26 seats. Although the party lost 18 seats in the January 2003 elections, the LPF success pointed to a distinct shift in attitude toward immigrants in the Netherlands. In Denmark, The Danish People's Party, an anti-immigrant, conservative party, won 12% of the vote and became part of the coalition in power after the elections in November 2001.

¹⁰ Allan Pred, "Memory and the Cultural Reworking of Crisis: Racisms and the Current Moment of Danger in Sweden, or Wanting It Like Before," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 16 (1998): 647, footnote 52. Italics are Pred's.

in particular. These cities differ from segregated North American cities in that ethnic pockets, such as “Chinatown” or “Little Italy,” do not exist. Instead, there are clearly defined “Swedish” housing areas and “immigrant” housing areas, delineated by difference and exclusion rather than ethnic bonds. As noted professor of economic history and Swedish parliament member Mauricio Rojas (a former refugee himself) notes:

Sweden is today truly a segregated society. But not because people who have much in common live together, but because they live together under degrading conditions. We have gotten the worst thinkable kind of ethnic division a country can get, that which breeds growing conflicts between different population groups, that which generates a feeling of contempt and fear among the majority and a bitter will to resist among the minorities.¹¹

Complicating this in the case of Sweden is the so-called “Million Program.” This initiative produced one million dwelling units during the 10-year period from 1965 to 1974 in response to the housing shortage of the post-World War II era. The intention was to ensure that high-quality housing would not cost more than one-quarter of the disposable income of the household. Over time, however, marginalized groups like refugees became concentrated in these modernist developments, which are located on the fringes of the urban centers. Geographers Robert Murdie and Lars-Erik Borgegård write:

In spite of the official Swedish policy of “integration” of immigrant and refugee groups, the outcome has been continued “segregation,” and in some cases increased segregation, both in terms of the spatial distribution of these groups and their concentration within particular housing tenures.

While these problems are hardly unique to Sweden, their persistence has had a demoralizing effect on the society. Unlike many other European countries, Sweden actively seeks to change the status quo that is more readily accepted elsewhere. Segregation therefore becomes a black mark on the record of Swedish progressiveness, one that many would like to see rectified, but instead ignore or hide.

In this context of segregation, and against the background of a desire to do better, access to space—especially public space—becomes a vital concern for questions of integration. This is, quite simply, because space is the context in which the processes of integration take place. Refugees in Sweden must learn a new language, have their credentials evaluated, develop a new social network, and find a job and housing, and they must do so in the framework of a European city—a city with a long history that is both written and physical. In such cities, there may be less room for difference than in the bland, “empty” vessel of the New World conurbation. There is an implicit understanding or belief that immigrants will accept the city’s existing symbols—symbols of the Swedish past of which they were not a part.

This paper will focus on how refugees living in or around Stockholm and participating in the Red Cross Refugee Reception Program perceive the environmental image of Stockholm, and on the effects this has on their integration into Swedish society. This program is an alternative to the

¹¹ Mauricio Rojas, quoted in Allan Pred, “Memory and the Cultural Reworking of Crisis,” 642, from *Sveriges oälskade barn: att vara svensk och ändå inte* (Stockholm: Brombergs Bokförlag, 1995).

Stockholm municipal integration program, but it receives funding from the city. This Introduction program was chosen in particular because, in addition to group meetings and individual services, it uniquely includes field trips for refugee participants and Swedish volunteers, taking them to locations that focus on Swedish history, such as the royal palace of Drottningholm, or places that native Swedes would typically go to, such as an island in the Stockholm archipelago.

In order to elicit both verbal and visual responses, this research utilizes methods similar to those developed and used by the urbanist Kevin Lynch to question residents of Boston, Jersey City, and Los Angeles about their “image of the city” in the late 1950s, published in 1960 in the seminal book, *The Image of the City*.¹² As the Statistics Sweden report and others like it have shown, government authorities measure integration in terms of quantitative successes. In contrast, this research uses the *qualitative* methods that Lynch developed, a combination of in-depth interviewing and “mental mapping.”

Focusing on the city as the potential site of inclusion or exclusion, the research for this study seeks to reveal both barriers not easily quantified and the personal measures enacted to live effectively, if not always comfortably, in a new society. With this in mind, Lynch’s work has provided a means for structuring this analysis, and it is used to try to answer the following questions: 1. What are the boundaries for a refugee’s cognitive “map” of Stockholm? 2. How do refugees get to know a new city, and how do they define what is and is not theirs? and 3. What role does, and can, the Red Cross play in facilitating access to the city or aiding in its continued creation? The responses revealed three types of spaces where integration became a fluid process, and this paper concludes with suggestions for possibly improving the Red Cross program with these in mind.

II. THE LYNCH METHOD

Kevin Lynch sought to understand what the image of a city means to the populations living in different kinds of urban contexts. Specifically, he wanted architects and urban designers to have more information about the effects of the urban environment and its planning on life in the city, so that they could make better decisions while designing new city form, incorporating intangibles into the hard math of traffic flow, population distribution, and the like. Using the research, Lynch developed a system of classification for different urban phenomena, organizing cities into constituent paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks, and explained how these played a role for city dwellers. The methods allowed him to be able to compare three highly dissimilar American cities with one another, and he mapped his findings in various ways in order to represent the differences.

To arrive at his conclusions, Lynch questioned interviewees about what the city symbolized for them, asked them to describe their trip from home to work, including the sights, sounds, and smells along the way, and requested a list and description of the city’s “most distinctive” parts.¹³ Most significantly, he also required each interviewee to create a rough map of the city. These

¹² Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City*, 27th ed. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960).

¹³ See the appendix for the list of questions used in the present study, which were duplicated or adapted from Lynch as noted.

maps conveyed the omissions of confusing areas and the distortions of the individual's relationship to the city's subdivisions. Through this, Lynch better understood the local perceptions of spaces that allowed serendipitous human expression, were monotonous, or were simply confusing and contributed to frustrations in everyday life, as well as the interviewees' emotional connections or disconnections to parts of the city. (FIG. 1). As he wrote:

In the process of way-finding, the strategic link is the environmental image, the generalized mental picture of the exterior physical work that is held by an individual. This image is the product both of immediate sensation and of the memory of past experience, and it is used to interpret information and to guide action. The need to recognize and pattern our surroundings is so crucial, and has such long roots in the past, that this image has wide practical and emotional importance to the individual.¹⁴

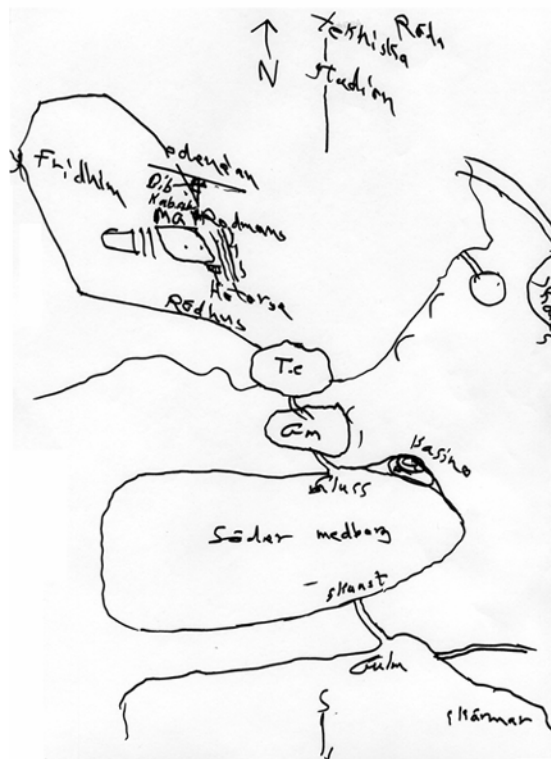


FIG. 1. An example of the use of Lynch's methods. This is a map of Stockholm as drawn by a 45-year-old man from Iraq. He represents some of the major sights, as well as a casino, two libraries, and some of the kebab stands of Stockholm, his personal interests.

Throughout his book, Lynch stated that his method should be reused in different ways. For instance, he suggested that different groups of people may have different environmental images, and he proposed that further research should be conducted in this area. He wrote that "If cities are to be used by many groups of people, then it is important to understand how the different major groups tend to image their surroundings."¹⁵ Lynch also mentioned the development of a

¹⁴ Lynch, *The Image of the City*, 4.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 157.

city image among newcomers as a potential direction for further research. He asked: “How does a stranger build an image of a new city?” and “How can such images be taught or communicated?”¹⁶ It was with these suggestions and questions in mind that this author interviewed, and acquired maps from, refugee participants in the Red Cross Introduction Program.

III. FORCED MIGRANTS IN STOCKHOLM

A. Sweden in the World

Large-scale, extra-European refugee immigration to Sweden began at around the same time as the military coup in Chile in 1973, when Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme actively sought to reform immigration policy to allow more refugees to Sweden.¹⁷ Prior to this, most immigration to Sweden occurred under the umbrella of labor immigration, and, although some Lebanese Assyrians and Ugandan Asians had arrived as refugees before, the immigration policies were generally very restrictive.¹⁸ Since then, several phases of refugee immigration have occurred. The Latin Americans, Hungarians, and Greeks of the early years gave way to large numbers of ex-Yugoslavians coming in the 1990s, following the break-up of that country. They continue to arrive in substantial numbers, and Iraqis, Russians, and Somalis, among others, have now joined them.

During the last few years, the number of asylum seekers coming to Sweden has increased dramatically.¹⁹ Since the end of the Bosnian War, which had resulted in a sharp rise and then reduction in asylum applications in the early 1990s, there has been a steady increase in asylum seekers to Sweden. While 2001 saw 23,571 applications, there were 33,016 during 2002. This was a 40% increase in one year, and about double the applications received during 2000.²⁰ For a social welfare state that guarantees a standard of care for its members, and especially for a country with a small population of just under nine million people, these numbers are very significant.²¹

¹⁶ Ibid., 157-158.

¹⁷ Palme was assassinated on February 28, 1986, a crime that is still unsolved. Many people believe that it was his progressive attitudes toward immigration and foreign policy that led to his death, possibly at the hands of an extremist or international terrorist group.

¹⁸ At this time, the rate of employment for foreigners was higher than for Swedes. See Johan Schück, “Den dåliga integrationen är dyr,” or “Poor integration is expensive,” *Dagens Nyheter*, June 14, 2002, for a quick overview of the changes in migration and labor market representation among immigrants. He concludes that integration, which is said to cost 30 billion Swedish kronor (U.S. \$3.8 million) per year, would be better spent if immigrants had greater access to the job market and could therefore contribute to the society.

¹⁹ See the website of the Swedish Migration Board, www.migrationsverket.se, for detailed statistical data on asylum seekers coming to Sweden.

²⁰ A comparison of the applications for the first three months of the last four years is also telling. For the first three months of 2002, there were 7,249 asylum seekers to Sweden, which was a 66% increase over the same period in 2001 and 140% more than in the first three months of 2000. There were 7,942 asylum seekers during the first three months of 2003, another, albeit less dramatic, increase.

²¹ During 2002, there were a total of 64,087 immigrants to Sweden, including asylum seekers, while only 33,009 people emigrated. This was the largest net immigration to Sweden since 1994.

From 1985 through 1994, all asylum seekers coming to Sweden were required to live in a “refugee camp”²² while awaiting decisions on their cases.²³ At this time, the Swedish Migration Board was the sole arbiter in determining where a person or family would later live if asylum were granted, in an effort to distribute the new immigrant population around the country and thus avoid concentrations (and thus ghettoization) of new arrivals in particular urban and suburban areas. The policy, called the “Whole of Sweden Strategy,” had many opponents and was later regarded to be inhumane. Under this policy, asylum seekers were sent to areas where housing was available, but there was little consideration given to the fact that there were few jobs and frequently no contact with cultural heterogeneity in these towns.²⁴

Since 1994, it has been Swedish state policy that asylum seekers be allowed to choose to live with friends or family, or, if they do not have this opportunity, in state-run camps outside of the major urban areas.²⁵ If their applications for asylum are accepted, those living with relatives or acquaintances are granted the right to remain in the same city that they were staying in by choice. Those in the camps are assigned to communities that have agreed in advance to accept them, and they must move there if they wish to have access to social services such as language schools and health care. In spite of both direct and indirect efforts to disperse asylum seekers geographically,²⁶ many end up in the three major cities of Sweden—Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmö—especially since about half of asylum seekers do manage to arrange their own short-term housing upon arrival.²⁷ About 20% of all asylum seekers coming to Sweden take up residence in Stockholm.²⁸

B. Integration Policy and Practice

Integration policy has also shifted, as Sweden has negotiated its role as a country of refugee immigration. During the period characterized by labor immigration, from the post-War period

²² *Flyktingförläggning* or *flyktinganläggning* in Swedish.

²³ The policy was called “*Hela Sverige*” or the “Whole of Sweden Strategy” and was in place from 1985 to 1994. Allan Pred writes that it “was intended to stem the metropolitan concentration of migrants, and—in keeping with Swedish Social Democratic notions of ‘solidarity’—both to promote ‘integration’ and provide a ‘sharing of the burden’ among as many municipalities as possible.”

²⁴ A great deal has been written about the “Whole of Sweden Strategy,” both within Sweden and internationally. One particularly good overview and analysis of the program is Roger Andersson and Dennis Solid, “Refugee dispersal policies in Sweden: A preliminary report for the EU project ‘Identifying models of good practice in refugee dispersal and concentration,’” Institute for Housing and Urban Research, Uppsala, Sweden, December 2000.

²⁵ EBO (*eget boende*) and ABO (*anläggningsboende*) are the official terms for these two situations.

²⁶ The Integration Board brochures for asylum seekers, including, “Introduction programmes and where to live: Information for asylum seekers” and “In-depth material for introduction programmes and choosing where to live: Information for asylum seekers, etc.,” highlight one such effort. The brochures tout the benefits of living in a rural setting, such as greater contact with locals, and the disadvantages of urban life, such as the possibility of drug and alcohol abuse among teenagers.

²⁷ This however was a surprise to the Swedish Migration and Integration Boards, who expected very few to be able to do so. Of those involved in Migration Board asylum seeker reception programs at the end of 2001, 49% were living in their own accommodations (14,206 of 28,824 people). For more information, see Sweden, Migration Board, *Samordnat*, no. 1, January 29, 2002.

²⁸ Stockholm Integration Agency, www.integration.stockholm.se/flykting/index.htm, February 3, 2002.

through the early 1970s, the official policy was for immigrants to adopt Swedish culture and to “become Swedish.”²⁹ In 1965, the government began funding Swedish language instruction for immigrants, and in 1969 the Swedish Board of Immigration began work under its mandate. This policy of assimilation shifted after 1975, to a new “integration model” with “two major goals. One was to preserve ethnic identity and the other was [for immigrants] to attain equality with the Swedish-born population.”³⁰ This has tended to focus on “multiculturalism” within Swedish society, including such initiatives as native language schooling for immigrant children. Although this shift has been regarded as a positive move in some ways, it has also been criticized for restrictively defining immigrants into categories from which they can never escape.³¹

On June 1, 1998, the Immigration Board split into two divisions: the Migration Board (Migrationsverket, MV) and the Integration Board (Integrationsverket, IV). It was no longer considered appropriate for the authorities handling immigration requests and forced repatriation to also create the policies governing introduction into Swedish society. Currently, the MV is responsible for processing asylum and other immigration claims and for housing asylum seekers in the camps, among other functions, while the majority of the responsibility of the IV is to devise integration and anti-discrimination methods and policies and to oversee, to a degree, their implementation on the local level. The official goals of the IV integration programs are to give immigrants knowledge of Swedish society, Swedish working life, and the Swedish language, and the Introduction is meant “to provide the individual with the means to support himself or herself and to take an active part in Swedish community life.”³² But this ambition is broad, and the methods used to carry it out are left mostly to the municipalities to determine.

In Stockholm, the municipal Integration Agency (Integrationsförvaltning, IFV) offers a refugee “Introduction” program that includes Swedish language classes, housing assistance for those with extreme need, and social services, all to facilitate eventual independence among refugee participants.³³ Together with a social worker, the refugee develops an Introduction plan to cover the allotted 18- to 24-month period, which begins, on average, one to two months after the refugee receives a residence permit to stay in Sweden.

In addition to these general practices, the Integrationsförvaltning has, since July 2001, offered a “matching” service to help refugees and Swedes to make contact with each other: the Refugee Guide Program. This one-to-one social contact is meant to supplement the Introduction activities

²⁹ Lars-Erik Borgegård and Robert A. Murdie, “Immigration, Spatial Segregation and Housing Segmentation of Immigrants in Metropolitan Stockholm, 1960-95,” *Urban Studies* 35, no. 10 (1998): 1886.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Pred, “Memory and the cultural reworking of crisis,” 645. See also Said Irandoust, “Svenskar behöver integreras,” or “Swedes need to be integrated,” *Svenska Dagbladet*, March 26, 2002. Irandoust suggests that this is also exhibited as a general opposition to foreign influence on Swedish culture, which is rooted in the Swedish era of Nazi resistance, when the Social Democratic idea of the “*folkhem*,” or the Swedish welfare state (literally “people’s home”), was established. He wrote, “If one so desires, one can see how...these mechanisms still work well when the society and its citizens stand up against neo-Fascism and defend the Swedish. But, ironically, they are much less effective when the new Swedish multiculture insists on being included in the Swedish identity.”

³² Sweden, Integration Board, “Introduction programmes for new immigrants.”

³³ For more information on the programs, see their website: www.integration.stockholm.se.

in which the refugee is already participating and is entirely voluntary for both parties, offering the refugee a contact beyond the municipality's agents. This is important, since, as director of the program Annika Hälldin stated,

The difference between those who work with refugees and the volunteers is that they know that the officials are being paid to meet them. They begin to feel that someone must be paid to interact with them. With a volunteer, there is a certain equality between them.³⁴

Through a preliminary questionnaire and interviews, people are matched through family situations, work, education, and interests. At the moment, there are 200 guides and about 140 refugees in the program, with around 90 matches made. The goal of the program is to create friendships between Swedes and refugees. The program may also provide refugees with some knowledge of the urban context in which they live, as they meet their guide for activities in different locations. However, group activities for guides and refugees are the exception, even though some guides meet occasionally for educational activities, such as a November 2002 trip to the mosque in Stockholm that included 20 guides. In general, the IFV program seeks to overcome many of the problems inherent in the process of integration, and it implicitly addresses the extreme spatial segregation found in Stockholm between "Swedish" residential areas and those populated by immigrants.

As a parallel effort to these in-house services, the IFV has, since 1994, enlisted five private organizations—ranging from the Swedish Red Cross to the YMCA to a for-profit corporation—to develop specialized refugee Introduction programs.³⁵ This sub-contracting of government

³⁴ Interview by author with Annika Hälldin, October 2002. An article in the Swedish paper *Dagens Nyheter* on April 25, 2002 by Mia Sjöström, "Förhoppningsvis blir det vänskap," or "Hopefully, it will become friendship," detailed the program, and a November 2002 episode of the (now defunct) Swedish national television program on multiculturalism, *Mosaik*, was devoted to a discussion of the program. Hälldin said that she has had little trouble in enlisting Swedish volunteers for the program after one initial newspaper advertisement and media exposure. Refugees were sometimes more reluctant, due to language skills.

³⁵ The NGOs involved are **1.** Spånga blåbandsförening (SB), **2.** YMCA-YWCA (KFUK-KFUM), **3.** Sociala Missionen (SM), **4.** InfoKomp (IK), and **5.** Swedish Red Cross (SRC). **1.** SB operates out of one of the main immigrant-dominated suburbs, Skärholmen, and is part of the organized sobriety movement of Sweden. It centers on reunited families and offers space for up to 100 refugees. In addition to helping refugees to learn more about work, education, and economic independence, SB hopes to teach refugees about popular movements and their networks in Sweden. **2.** KFUK-KFUM focuses on refugees with low levels of education and refugees who are traumatized or have war-related injuries. They offer spaces for up to 200 refugees and focus on how to deal with these special conditions in the context of Introduction and education. **3.** SM is a Christian organization that offers experience in working with families with children and refugees who wish to return to their home countries. They have space for up to 150 refugees. Their goal is to offer a program specially tailored to the individual, providing support and information about the society, and working with the government agencies to provide other services. **4.** IK is a corporate education company and works with the municipalities, the Migration Board, the employment agency (Arbetsförmedlingen, AMS), and a variety of companies. They offer programs for up to 280 refugees. The program focuses on the refugees' own questions about Swedish society and language and depends heavily on the use of computers. **5.** SRC's activities are described in the main body of the text. Source: www.integration.stockholm.se, October 24, 2002.

services to NGOs and international organizations in Sweden is part of a larger global trend, in which services are increasingly privatized even at the municipal level.³⁶ The participation of these NGOs was experimental in the beginning, but has now become a permanent part of integration services in Stockholm, the only Swedish city using NGOs for this purpose. While the NGOs organize their programs according to their own agendas, they do so with guidelines and funding from IFV, coordinating with the municipal services and, in some cases, replacing the IFV social workers with their own. While some NGOs concentrate on developing social networks for the participants, others seek to provide them with job and Swedish language skills. These choices depend on what the managing group perceives to be the greatest necessity for integration into Swedish society and on their particular areas of expertise.

C. The Red Cross

The remainder of this paper concentrates on participants in the Swedish Red Cross program for refugee Introduction in Stockholm, which focuses on helping refugees make contacts with Swedish people and depends heavily on volunteers.³⁷ The Red Cross currently accommodates up to 120 refugees, both individuals and families, the majority of whom are young men in their teens or twenties without relatives in Sweden. Participants meet with advisors to plan an Introduction program, which includes Swedish language instruction and other municipal services, and they discuss their employment experience and intentions for job seeking in Stockholm.

Since the Red Cross believes that the best way to accomplish integration is through contact with locals, social networking is key to their offerings. These informal contacts, they believe, may even lead to future job opportunities or housing, in addition to reducing refugee isolation. Therefore, the Red Cross offers a number of voluntary activities beyond the scope of the individual integration plans. These include the “Tuesday Group” (Tisdagsgruppen, TG), a group that meets once per week; monthly excursions to places in or around Stockholm; two parties per year to celebrate Midsummer and Christmas; thematic days; seminars on such topics as job searching, legal rights for immigrants, or a particular country; and the possibility for individuals or families to have on-going personal contact with each other, much like the IFV Refugee Guide program.

While in Sweden, the author participated in and observed Red Cross group activities, excursions, and a Christmas party and interviewed organizers and both Swedish and refugee participants.³⁸ Because it meets every week at the local headquarters at Medborgarplatsen in central Stockholm, TG is the most significant group in the program. Attendance varies depending on the activity

³⁶ For a discussion of this trend, see William F. Fisher, “Doing Good? The Politics and Antipolitics of NGO Practices,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 26 (1997): 439-64.

³⁷ The information in this section comes from interviews by the author with Göran Wredemark and Eva Hedberg of the Swedish Red Cross, the pamphlets, “Röda Korsets flyktingarbete,” “Röda Korsets verksamheter i Stockholms län,” and “The Swedish Red Cross-Stockholm Branch-Refugee Reception,” the Integrationsförvaltning website, www.integration.stockholm.se, and a Red Cross informational meeting for new (Swedish) volunteers held in September 2002.

³⁸ I was in fact an anomaly in the program, neither Swedish nor a refugee. I was at times mistaken for one or the other, and my participation was initially confusing to many people.

offered and averaged during this study about 10 people.³⁹ Composed of both volunteer Swedes, mostly female retirees, and refugees of all ages and both genders, it was approximately 50% Swedes and 50% refugees on any given evening. Although meetings are open, it was generally the same individuals who came each time. TG activities include discussing topics such as the human need for sleep, watching videos, eating at a Hari Krishna restaurant, going ice skating, and nights when participants would cook food, eat dinner, and then clean up together. A clear irony of this “Introduction” group was that many of its refugee participants had been in Sweden for many years and were not the newcomers that the program was established to assist. Another was that newcomers would appear for one session and then never come again. It is possible that TG, with its very consistent group of regular attendees, can be perceived as somewhat closed to outsiders.

As mentioned, excursions (*utflykter*, in Swedish) and parties are also a regular part of the Introduction program, and it is the two Red Cross social worker/refugee advisors who organize them. The monthly excursions are scheduled to occur year-round, although they do so more consistently during the summer. The organizers intend that these be day trips without overnight stays, so that refugees can go on their own again without difficulty, if desired. The program covers transportation costs and entrance fees, and occasionally drinks or food. Recent excursion destinations have been a boat trip to the archipelago with a stop on the island of Grinda; a bus trip to Julita, a small town and outdoor museum about two hours from Stockholm; a boat trip to Drottningholm, a royal palace outside of Stockholm; and trips to the towns of Västerås and Uppsala.

The primary goal of the excursions is for refugees and Swedish volunteers to have a setting to establish contact with each other. However, group participants are also shown a part of Stockholm, or the region, in the process. In many ways, these destinations can be characterized as “typically Swedish,” since they are places that would be either included in any guidebook to the region and/or where local Swedes would spend free time. For example, the Stockholm archipelago is integral to life in Stockholm in the summer among native Swedes but is a place where immigrants rarely go. This issue was mentioned in the caption to a photograph in the free newspaper *Metro*, which inspired this study in part.⁴⁰ It depicted and described a Red Cross trip to the archipelago and said that the trip took refugees to a place where they would otherwise feel unwelcome. This hints at the degrees of cultural segregation that refugees experience beyond exclusions from centrally located housing and the labor market. Although the goals of the excursions are primarily social, the city and its surroundings are also more significantly

³⁹ I was interested in interviewing only people with whom I had first established contact, so that they would feel most comfortable describing their reactions to the city and would trust my intentions. After doing one group interview to introduce the project, I asked all regular refugee participants in TG to be interviewed, of whom the majority (nine out of approximately eleven) agreed. An additional five interviews were done with contacts made through excursions. All of those interviewed were current participants in the Red Cross program, though some were no longer in the “Introduction” phase themselves. Identical interviews were done with some Swedish participants for comparison, but this information is not cited here. Further interviews were done, as noted elsewhere, with officials at the Stockholm Integration Agency and at the Swedish Red Cross.

⁴⁰ Photograph caption, *Metro*, July 2001.

uncovered for newcomers. But what does this mean in the context of daily life in Stockholm? The interviews conducted begin to answer this question.

IV. INTEGRATION AND SPACE

A. The Image of the City

European cities were, until quite recently, culturally and physically monolithic. They are filled with symbols of a historic past, including churches, civic buildings, and monuments. These elements are the physical record of a codified history. For tourists, these artifacts are the sights worth seeing, being the symbols of the difference between the place they are visiting and the place where they came from. European cities, including Stockholm (FIG. 2), do their best to open themselves to tourists. In this context, however, the city can become a place of frustration and alienation for migrants, who must contend with the fact that this historical record, a shared story for some, is not theirs. They are expected—especially in a culturally traditional place like Sweden—to accept and revere the history of these spaces of local identity and their cultural significance. But this is not easily achieved, and the weight of accumulated history can even serve to highlight the immigrants' differences. The city of migration, then, is not the city of tourism.



FIG. 2. *Map of Stockholm from the Dagens Nyheter CD-ROM “Stockholm Online.”*

Learning the city is another challenge. A guidebook, which decodes the unfamiliar for a tourist, is rarely an appropriate resource for a migrant. Refugees must negotiate, and learn, the city in other ways and with other resources. If being lost in a city can be a source of unchoreographed excitement for a tourist, Kevin Lynch gets at a more existential, less benign meaning:

To become completely lost is perhaps a rather rare experience for most people in the modern city. We are supported by the presence of others and by special way-finding devices: maps, street numbers, route signs, bus placards. But let the mishap of disorientation once occur, and the sense of anxiety and even the terror that accompanies it reveals to us how closely it is linked to our sense of balance and well-being. The very word 'lost' in our language means much more than simple geographical uncertainty; it carries overtones of utter disaster.⁴¹

In fact, fear can dominate an initial understanding of the city, since there are few clues to help an immigrant who does not speak the language and does not know its streets. Several interviewees revealed this form of anxiety as they described their experiences of becoming literally lost and without language skills in an unknown place. As Nadja,⁴² a 24-year-old woman from Basra, Iraq, said:

It's okay with me now, but when I came, I didn't know. I got lost all the time. But now I can ask questions and find a place quickly. It was not like that in the beginning.

Being lost can mean more than merely not knowing one's place on a map. It can also take on social dimensions. As Abbas, a 45-year-old man from Baghdad, Iraq, said:

It was difficult in the beginning because in my city I could always find the shops because they had things for sale outside the shops also. They sell fruit outside. When I was walking for the first time in Stockholm and I wanted to buy something, I saw no shops AT ALL! How do they eat? How do they sell things? I didn't know. The stores were always closed, I thought. But it never occurred to me that they were inside. That was very difficult for me.

As individuals living in the same city, residents exist in separate or parallel spaces. This notion of a separation, another but equally potent form of segregation, means that each person forms a different picture of what common experiences—and the spaces in which they occur—look like. But is this only a question of newness?

B. Public Segregation

When public space is not revealed, or if it is merely inaccessible, it becomes privatized, as with the aforementioned Stockholm archipelago, which seems to be closed to refugees. In his discussion of the "unhomely" in *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha cites Hannah Arendt's observation that the public and private realms are "the distinction between things that should be

⁴¹ Lynch, *The Image of the City*, 4.

⁴² All but one interview with Red Cross program participants were conducted in Swedish (one was done in English); all English translations are my own. All interviewees were offered the option of providing an alias. The names used in the text are those chosen by the respondent: either the original name or an alias.

hidden and things that should be shown.”⁴³ The issue of “should” is a very important one, particularly for refugees who rely on others for their information. As Allan Pred put it:

The cultural repertoire held by any person or group, the array of collective memories they do or do not possess, is a matter of the enabling and constraining circumstances of social position. Is a matter of the situated practices people do or do not participate in, the objects and knowledge they do or do not encounter, the discourses to which they are or are not exposed. Is a matter of those power relations which determine who—individually or collectively—may or may not do what, when, and where, under what conditions of surveillance, if any.⁴⁴

The city, then, and in particular the European city, becomes just such a vehicle of shared memory, reinforcing the differences between insiders and outsiders. It crystallizes and symbolically represents a person’s social position and the possibility (or impossibility) of participation in the collective life it contains.

When asked about which places in the city were important, a common response among refugees was Adel’s, a 31-year-old man from Ramadi, Iraq: “Important for me, or important for Swedes?” His question exemplifies the nature of the problem; if refugees are treated as disadvantaged participants in an otherwise Swedish world, they are barred from or, at best, live in contrast to it. Some respondents clarified this distinction directly when discussing Stockholm. For instance, although Flora, a 53-year-old woman from Shiraz, Iran, has lived in Sweden for 18 years, she does not regard public spaces in Stockholm as having the same value to her as they do to “Stockholmers.” She expressed this in her assessment of the important sites of Stockholm, saying:

The Stockholm City Hall, and the Old Town, and every castle that exists are important. Well, I should say, they are important for Stockholmers, but I don’t know if they are important for me. For me they are just pretty.

Flora’s distinction between the cultural and social value of such places for her and for “them” indicates that she does not feel ownership over these spaces, even after a significant amount of time in Sweden and with fluent Swedish skills. Her map of the city reflected this separation. She began by drawing mainly sights that were relevant for tourism and shopping—not the many other sights that she mentioned as being meaningful to her. (FIG. 3). Only while detailing the map later in the interview did she add the Central Station and a “K.” for Kulturhuset (the cultural center in the business district of downtown Stockholm). She showed Stockholm “for Stockholmers” first because she assumed that this was the type of map being requested, but the remainder of the interview questions led her to reconsider, and to redraw the map to include spaces that she used.

⁴³ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 10.

⁴⁴ Pred, “Memory and the Cultural Reworking of Crisis,” 636.

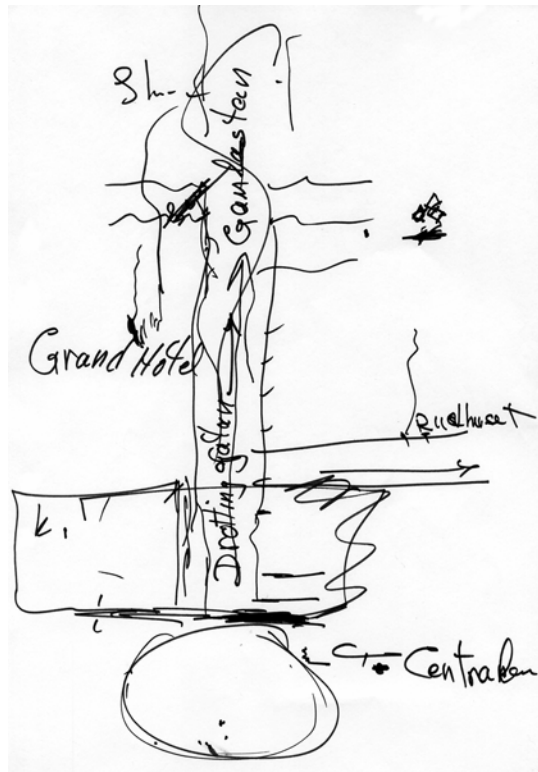


FIG. 3. *Flora's map of Stockholm. She shows the major shopping street of Drottninggatan; the Grand Hotel, considered the best hotel in the city; the medieval Old Town ("Gamla Stan"); the Central Station; and a "K." for Kulturhuset.*

Like many interviewees, 42-year-old Roza talked about the differences between the weather in Stockholm and in her home country of Egypt. When she first came to Stockholm in the summer, she noticed immediately that no one was sweating. This summertime experience led her to feel that Stockholm was more pleasant climatically than Alexandria. But that changed when winter came. As she said:

The weather in Stockholm is really difficult, really bad. You have to find a place or somewhere to get out of it. Then the days become fun. I think that Swedish people, they always have places to go, places to discuss and play in. They have the right to go to different places. The time goes by quickly without them noticing that the weather is bad. But I have nothing.

Roza assumed that the Swedes knew something more than she did about places in the city, especially in the face of the harsher side of Swedish weather. This suggests that she held a belief (not totally unfounded) that "natives" and immigrants remained separate, even if confronting the same hardship.

For some people, the expression of segregation in public spaces was reduced to the difference between the Swedish language skills of immigrants and those of native Swedes. Anwar, a 40-year-old man from Kabul, Afghanistan, talked about Kulturhuset, where he often went to read newspapers in his own language. When asked if he went to any of the other spaces in the

building, which also contains restaurants, libraries, shops, an internet café, and theater, among other spaces, he said:

I always focus my mind to go directly to the library at Kulturhuset. There are some other things there, maybe theater, that some other people are always going there to see and to enjoy. But for me, for the time being, it's too early to go the theater. Because if I went to the theater, I'm sure that I would not understand completely. It wouldn't be easy for me to go to.

For Anwar, his lack of Swedish language skills translates to a lack of access to certain spaces in a building that he otherwise feels comfortable occupying. It is not just language that separates, however, but the fact that certain spaces *allow* for difference, while others *reinforce* it. Many interviewees discussed spatial strategies for contending with this strongly felt spatial exclusion. Their experiences illuminate some of the spaces that allowed them to feel, at least for a short time, that they had an equal right to the city.

C. Interstitial, Generic, and Transcendental Spaces

So, what are the spaces that permit heterogeneity to occur? Where can a migrant in a traditionalist urban landscape and new cultural environment feel “at home”? While Kevin Lynch organized his interviewees' responses into physical city elements such as nodes and paths, this study found that living an independent life in Stockholm—the stated goal of both municipal and NGO integration programs in that city—can be characterized by three kinds of spaces that also have immaterial, social properties: interstitial, generic, and transcendental spaces.

One type of space that many of interviewees discussed was an in-between, or interstitial, space—a space that is not Swedish, and yet lies in Sweden. Homi Bhabha described this in-between condition in the following way:

What is at issue is the performative nature of differential identities: the regulation and negotiation of those spaces that are continually, *contingently*, ‘opening out,’ remarking the boundaries, exposing the limits of any claim to a singular or autonomous sign of difference—be it class, gender, or race. Such assignments of social difference—where difference is neither One nor the Other but *something else besides, in-between*—find their agency in the form of the ‘future’ where the past is not ordinary, where the present is not simply transitory. Is it...an interstitial future, that emerges *in-between* the claims of the past and the needs of the present.⁴⁵

This space can be constituted by language, food, reading material, or even smells that return a person to his or her home country, if only momentarily. It can be the feeling of recognition allowed through linguistic, cultural, or sensory similarities. In this space, the past is present, the present is the past, and, most importantly, one's right to be there is implicit. Nadja referred explicitly to this “in-between” condition. She said:

Sometimes when my sister and I go to Solna Centrum shopping center, we go to a restaurant, an Arab restaurant. We feel like we are a part of an Arab atmosphere, but it is

⁴⁵ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 219. Italics are Bhabha's.

also Swedish at the same time. If you sit in a special restaurant but you look out at the people in the shopping center, you feel like you are in Sweden and also not in Sweden.

For Ali, 37, from Baghdad, Iraq, certain spaces were more comfortable because they contained familiar visual cues. He said:

I thought that I would find a few people who looked like me, but there were tons of people who were like me. In my area. And when I took a walk, I saw that there were signs in Arabic, in Persian, in Kurdish. We have this kind of food, we have this kind of food, we have this kind of food. Then you know that they can speak Arabic, Kurdish, Persian. I would never have guessed it.

He knew that the shopkeepers would speak a language he could understand, because the signs included him, and they symbolized the presence of others like him. For Anwar, the availability of reading materials in his own language allowed him an individual experience of past-present fantasy; just looking through a newspaper returned him to Kabul. He said:

For me, it is very important to know where the libraries are located. Because when I am with books, especially in my own language, when I learn or I study or read something in my own language, I feel that in my imagination...somewhere in my mind...in my imagination, I feel like myself in my country for a while.

For Adel, walking in a particular area of Södermalm, the southern island of Stockholm, reminded him of the streets in his hometown of Ramadi. He mentioned their physical similarities, but it was other sensory experiences that returned him, emotionally, to Iraq. He said:

Last summer, I walked there, between Slussen and Mariatorget. I was walking, and I felt like I could relax. Sometimes, I feel like I am in Iraq again, when I walk there. I can't really explain why, but, sometimes, when I smell the scent of the cars, I remember Iraq. When I smell the cars, or smell the trains, or when I drink tea like we did in Iraq, I feel like I am in Iraq.

In-between spaces, where a return to one's identity before coming to Sweden was possible, were often religious spaces. They always featured prominently on the maps of those who mentioned them. For Djan, a 28-year-old man from Afghanistan, learning about the location of the mosque was very important. (FIG. 4). He said:

When I came to Stockholm, I met a lot of Afghans in school, who said, "There is a mosque here." I went there with them the first time. In the mosque, they have to speak many different languages: Arabic, Kurdish, Persian, Dari. Maybe other languages, too. A lot of Swedes come to the mosque to see it. The mosque is a place where all the Muslims come. One sits there, travels there to sit there, and then one goes home again. It's good. It's good for me because I am Muslim.

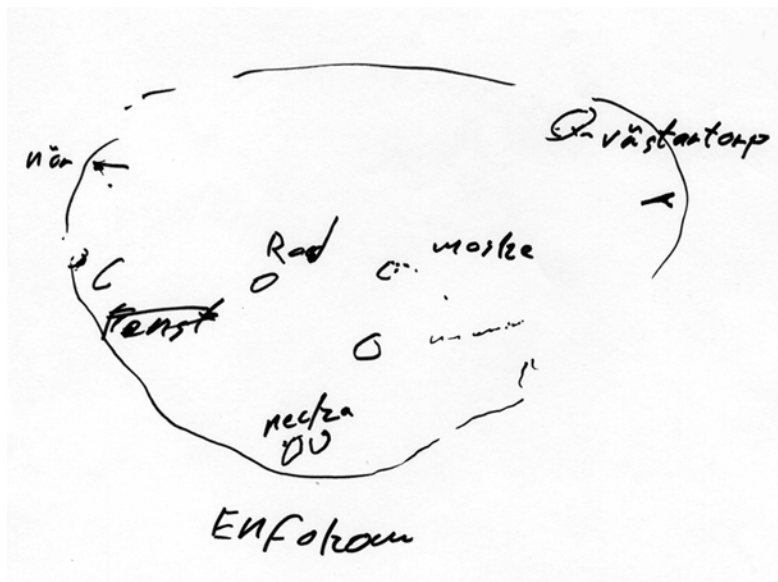


FIG. 4. Djan's map of Stockholm. He shows the Red Cross ("Red"), the two suburbs where he lives and goes to school (Tensta and Västertorp), the location of another school that he attended near Globen, and the mosque ("moske"), at center.

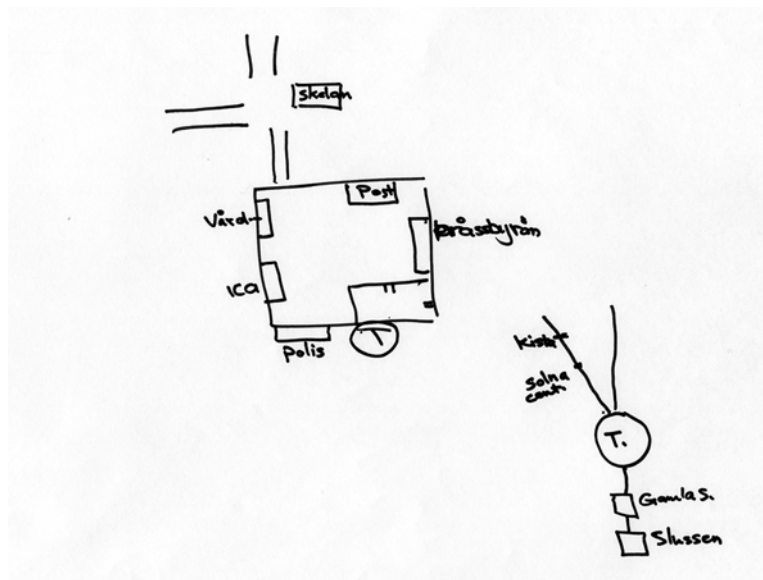


FIG. 5. When asked to map Stockholm showing the most important places in the city, Nadja produced this map of a typical suburban town square plan, showing the post office ("Post"), convenience store ("Pressbyrå"), subway ("T"), police station ("polis"), grocery store ("ICA"), and health clinic ("vård"). She said, "This is everything that anyone needs to know about Stockholm." Her subway map of the rest of the city shows the Central Station ("T."), the Old Town ("Gamla S."), Slussen, and two suburban shopping centers in Kista and Solna.

For Roza, finding the Coptic church in a suburb of Stockholm was vital. She said:

My church is a Coptic church. Everyone who comes there is from Egypt. When I lived in [the asylum seekers' camp], I couldn't go to my church. It was very difficult. I went to the Swedish church, but I couldn't understand anything. I liked to go to the Swedish church anyway, but I was very sad, I couldn't understand anything. In my church, I understand everything, and I like my church very much. I feel at home there. I have to go there.

Another condition that allows difference occurs within the generic spaces, where refugees are not beholden to the unwritten rules of life in Swedish society: the globalized spaces of franchised fast-food restaurants; places of transit like the subway; and open, public spaces like public squares. Many interviewees produced maps of Stockholm that depicted the city as a system, as a subway map or, in one case, the typical suburban town square plan. (FIG. 5). The generic provides a framework for understanding the specific, just as generic space opens itself to many possible uses. For instance, the space of a franchise, famously unpopular among some spatial specialists and defenders of local character for its blandness, offered real refuge for Awat, a 32-year-old Kurdish man from Sulaimanyah, Iraq, who said:

I go to McDonald's at Norrmalms Torg with a friend, sometimes other people. We don't always sit at the same table because sometimes someone else is sitting there. But we usually sit there because it is up above, and you can see people going by, and cars, too. And no one comes and says to you, "Now, you have been sitting here too long. You need to leave." That could maybe happen in other places or other restaurants. I have been going there for years now. It was after maybe three or four months in Sweden that I found the place. And it is so nice there. We went around and tried some others, but then we went back there. We said, "No, this is better."

Abbas mentioned that both McDonald's and a casino with a view over Stockholm fulfilled this role for him. He drew the casino carefully on his map (FIG. 1) and described it in this way:

You can say that I have gone to the casino many times. It's right by Slussen. I take a bus toward Nacka. But after only one or two bus stops, I get off. It's on a mountain, you could say. You have to walk up. It's a really nice casino. I really like to sit there. I think that people who like to write books, they can sit there. It's a calm place, and you can look out and see all of Stockholm. You can see the boats coming from Finland or other places. It's really fun. I like that place a lot.

Another version of a generic space is a public square, where the boundaries are not well defined, and individual groups may occupy the many smaller spaces within it. One example in Stockholm is Sergels Torg in front of the Central subway station, a favorite space of Nadja's, and one that nearly every interviewee mapped. She said:

T-Centralen is so huge that one can't even describe it in words. But there is something so beautiful one encounters there. And that one goes there and looks at all the people there. Some of them are going to shops or to buy something, or to stand in Kulturhuset or go to Sergels Torg. You have a feeling there that everyone in Sweden is around you. In spite of that, you don't know each other, the other people, but you know that they want to do something there. To sit and look at them, you feel that there is life there.

Finally, there are the places that provide access to a world beyond their own edges, but are still non-specific enough to allow difference. These are “transcendental spaces” like libraries and cultural centers, transcendental because their specific programs allow for a generous interpretation of use and occupation. Almost every person interviewed mentioned or mapped Kulturhuset and/or the Stockholm City Library. (FIG. 6). Both buildings consist of multiple spaces, have free access, contain books, newspapers, and music in many languages, as well as internet access. Ali described the scene at the library:

You can read all the newspapers from the whole world. All of them are there. They have a lot of computers, and you can use the programs on the computers to send letters. I have an address on Hotmail, but I don't have my own computer. I think Stockholm is also good because there are computers in the libraries. You can read, and know, about everything in the world.

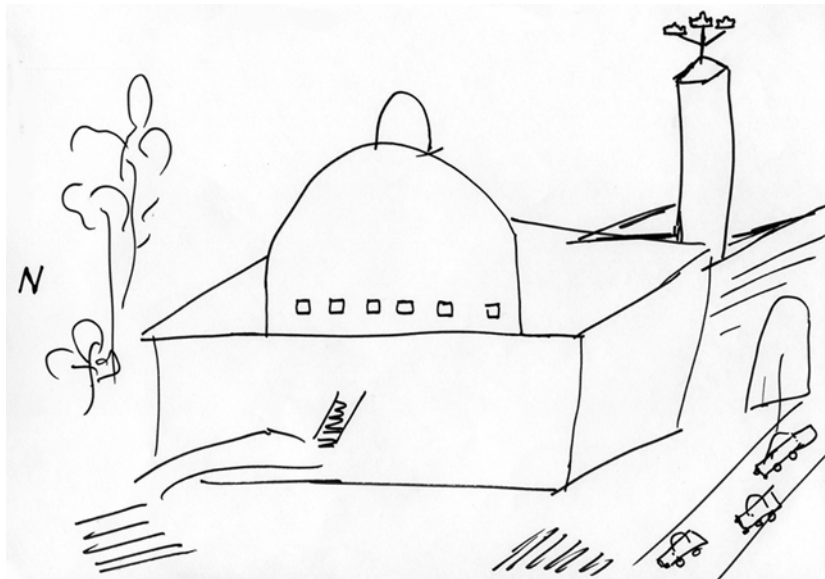


FIG. 6. *Yousef, a 47-year-old man from Alexandria, Egypt, drew a pictorial representation of the Stockholm City Library (Stadsbiblioteket), with the Stockholm City Hall (Stadshuset) in the background when asked to map Stockholm.*

Transcendental spaces also allow for unplanned interactions to occur between Swedes and refugees, making them more fluid. People bond or intermingle over common interests, rather than over the fact that one person is a refugee, while one person is a Swede. For Abbas, this was a feature of Kulturhuset:

I go to Kulturhuset when I have spare time. I don't have any other places. And I can play chess with some Swedes. It is a good place, the most important to me.

In short, since European cities have many symbolic material components—in contrast to the newer and often more “generic” cities of the New World—there is much less room for the spatial presence of outsiders. But, as Homi Bhabha says, “the migrant’s survival depends...on

discovering ‘how newness enters the world.’”⁴⁶ Migrants have to find spaces that allow difference anyway. This research has revealed a few of these spaces, and certainly there are many more that would become apparent with further investigation.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Historically, the city has always been a hope for the displaced. And today, as it was in the past, our cities are worth nothing and will be condemned to destruction if they cannot open themselves to strangers....Tens of millions of these strangers now traverse and transgress frontiers and borders that are simultaneously internal and external, geopolitical and psycho-social, ethical and spiritual, private and public. Identities and communities are disintegrating, multiplying, crossing, shifting, and reconfiguring, sparking fear and violence among those who feel invaded by others, who import speechless pain.

Krzysztof Wodiczko, *Critical Vehicles*, 6

Territory and “rootedness” are key issues surrounding human mobility, particularly for refugees, who, as anthropologist Liisa Malkki has written, are “an object of knowledge and management,” whose displacement “is constituted differently from other kinds of deterritorialization....”⁴⁷ Although people living in Stockholm experience the same *physical* city, the *perceived* cities of different residents are vastly different (FIG. 7), and for refugees this can become a manifestation of their exclusion from the society at large. How does one provide a mental framework, then, that allows for maximum individual choice and, in the context of integration, independence? In his book *Delirious New York*, architect Rem Koolhaas has famously noted that the very rigidity of the gridiron plan of the city of New York allows for maximum variation within it, while suburban tract developments, with their seemingly variable curved streets and cul-de-sacs, are actually much more rigid—entertaining little real difference.⁴⁸ One can see this as a metaphor for the potential reconstruction of the integration program efforts in Stockholm, which are especially possible under the auspices of an international organization such as the Red Cross, with its freedom over decisions involving practice. The introduction to life in Sweden should provide a needed structure, but it is equally important not to provide a city-image full of social cul-de-sacs.

Both tourist guidebooks and the Red Cross program highlight spatial and cultural information, but both also underscore the differences between temporary visitor and permanent resident. Certainly, it can be exciting to visit the archipelago or royal palace, or to get together at the Red Cross headquarters for a night of cooking with the “Other,” but refugees and Swedes who go on these trips or to the meetings are still aware of the social and educational purposes of these events. While developing institutionally sanctioned friendships, refugees become tourists in their own (new) country, and the Swedes become tour guides, whether they have been to a place visited before or not. This creates the condition of continuous role-playing on both parts, and it

⁴⁶ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 227.

⁴⁷ Liisa Malkki, “National Geographic: From Refugee Studies to the National Order of Things,” *Cultural Anthropology* 7:8 (1992), 25.

⁴⁸ Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manual for Manhattan*, rev. ed. (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1997).

is perhaps a reason why the same 15 people come to group meetings every week.⁴⁹ Others either feel unwelcome, or they do not wish to become “career” refugees and fear that meetings will produce that result, or they steer clear of such codified relationships whose lines are so clearly drawn.

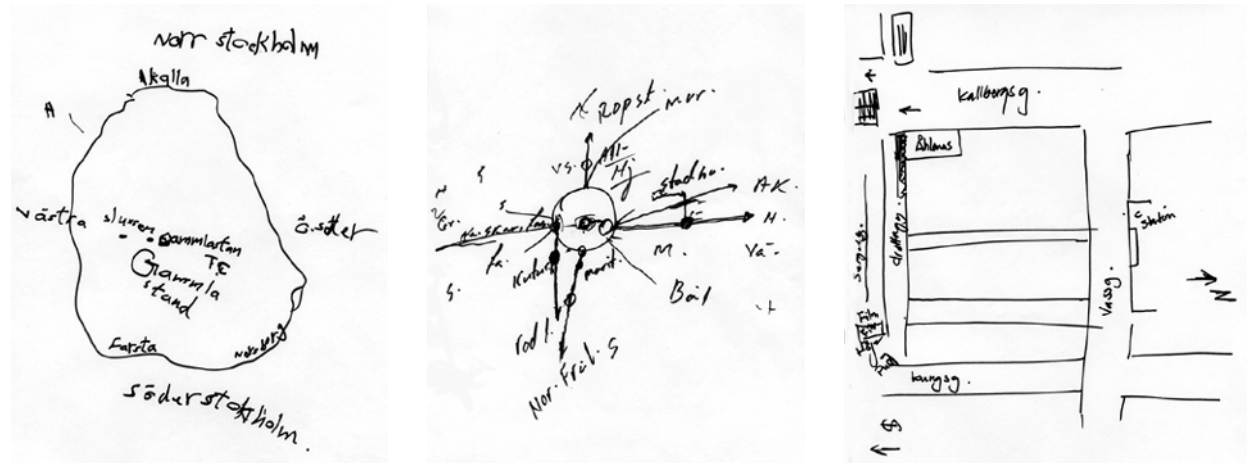


FIG. 7. Maps of Stockholm by three men from Baghdad, Kabul, and Sulaimanyah. While each person was asked in exactly the same way to draw the map, these three maps show that the responses were very different.

But what “image of the city” is possible in a society that was until recently quite homogeneous but is now much more a part of the world? Only 30 years have passed since Swedish borders were more widely opened to refugees. And the Old World city that these refugees perceive is not an “empty” vessel that they arrive at and imbue with their being; it is an almost full vessel. Newcomers get lost, but they also feel lost when they are forced to be refugees continuously, constantly reminded of what they must learn. As noted, many refugees feel that certain places are “only for Swedes,” or that Swedes know more. They may be out of physical danger, but they are still homeless, being unable to “own” their own city. Because the “image of the city” cannot be changed immediately, refugees in Europe have to find a way to inhabit an urban “house” that was custom-designed for someone else. And so they guide themselves to the spaces described.

Geographer Edward Soja has written that “the spatial dimension of our lives has never been of greater practical and political relevance than it is today.”⁵⁰ By problematizing “integration” and its intrinsic relationship to space, it is clear that the very efforts that seek to help refugees may in fact reinforce their “difference.” The Statistics Sweden report from October 2002 and others like it have made Swedes aware of integration policy failures; municipal authorities and, in the case

⁴⁹ See Mia Sjöström, “Det är genom arbetet du blir en del av samhället,” *Svenska Dagbladet*, April 22, 2002, for an analysis of the inherent problems with this form of “integration.” She wrote, “We have to get away from the thought that we Swedes are in the superior position, where we will ‘take care of.’ Integration cannot deal with morals, guilt, or reconciliation—it must concern the equivalent meeting and an equal thinking where you are able to be who you are, but at the same time are able to be a part of the fellowship of the society with the same conditions.”

⁵⁰ Edward Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1996), 1.

of Stockholm, NGOs have been given the quite daunting task of overcoming these problems of homogeneity and exclusion. But the information provided to the municipal agencies is not adequate, and, as one recent article put it, the “Introduction programs are formulated too generally and lack goals that can be followed up upon.”⁵¹ Without sufficient political support, and without a clear direction, the product has not been a success. And when NGOs are involved, they have often merely reproduced the models they replace. As one respondent wrote in an internet debate article on integration in *DN*:

The integration policy of the last few years has completely failed. We must find other ways and other alternatives to solve the problems. We have to understand that the pizza generation’s time is over, and second generation immigrants, who are born and raised here, are more Swedes than immigrants. Most of them speak Swedish better than the native language, a majority of them cannot even read or write in their parents’ language. But they are still called immigrants and that...hangs on one like a hidden Star of David for the rest of one’s life.⁵²

It is no longer acceptable to continue with the program of current integration policy, especially if Sweden plans to continue to admit new refugees. It is clear that new solutions must be found, and the Red Cross faces the challenge and opportunity to formulate and take part in them. The objective of the Red Cross program, clearly admirable even in its current efforts to help, is “to create the prerequisites for and give opportunities to the refugee/individual to live an independent life in the Swedish society.”⁵³ It does not, however, currently seem to problematize or critique the framework in which this occurs. It may also suffer from the very broad scope of the assignment, which is clearly a contrast to the crisis-oriented, specific situations with which the Red Cross name is often connected.

From interviews and participation in the program as a volunteer, this author has concluded that the Red Cross program’s efforts could be much more effective. The Red Cross should perhaps focus less on trying to promote role-based friendships between refugees and Swedes, which occur through the trips, group meetings, and the matching service, or on showing the Swedish world to newcomers. It is not argued here that these services are a fundamentally bad idea—of course it is important for new immigrants to have contact with those who are already living in the society—but the friendships they foster are quite possibly unsustainable, being predicated on the roles assigned to each person. Based on this research, it is recommended that the Red Cross divide its efforts between developing social connections such as it currently does, and reconsidering the urban landscape as the *site where integration occurs* in a much more primary way. As one interviewee put it, “If I feel bad, I think to myself, ‘What a terrible city! I don’t want to stay here!’ But if everything is good, I think to myself, ‘What a beautiful city!’” The city of Stockholm is the site of complex negotiation for a refugee—not only between the past and present, but also between the present and the future—and it is the site of many changes, both

⁵¹ “Introduktionen dålig för flyktingar,” *Svenska Dagbladet*, June 18, 2002.

⁵² Nader Najafi, “Nya Svenssons utan framtidshopp,” www.dn.se, November 8, 2002. The “pizza generation” is the large number of Bosnians who came to Sweden in the early 1990s and succeeded in opening small businesses, many of which were pizzerias.

⁵³ Swedish Red Cross, “Röda Korsets flyktingarbete,” April 2001.

social and individual. It must therefore be more centrally featured in endeavors that attempt to coordinate the processes of integration.

With this in mind, the Red Cross should do its best to promote knowledge of and access to the city through concentrated efforts, but not solely on those focused on Swedishness, or on the Swedish past. Understanding that refugees also need to feel ownership over a territory that symbolizes someone else's history, it is argued that the Red Cross should sponsor knowledge and use of generic, transcendental, and personally specific spaces, among others, where, according to this research, refugees have agency in public space. The Red Cross should also rethink its offerings and the settings in which they occur, seeing them within a philosophical framework that includes an awareness of the extreme difficulties presented to a newcomer by an historic European city.

These tasks can be accomplished by offering information about spaces such as meeting places for immigrant unions, religious centers, and libraries, or places where it is merely "acceptable" to spend time during the initial meetings with the refugee. Now, refugees learn about places like these alone or through friends and relatives, while the Introduction Program excursions take them to sites they may not feel are theirs even after 18 years in Sweden. Rethinking the very role of the space in which Red Cross programs take place can also help to introduce the city. Instead of promoting a cohesive group of career refugees and Swedish guides, true integration would be better served by creating a clearinghouse for information about activities taking place elsewhere. Instead of attempting to partially replace the social and spatial city, the Red Cross can better inform people about how to live in the real one.

Most significantly in this scenario, the Red Cross—as an esteemed international organization—has the potential to be critical of the near-failure of Swedish integration policy within which it currently operates, and for which it is an agent. If Sweden's failure were more malignant than it is, the Red Cross would clearly have nothing to do with it. This benignness thus creates a comfort zone of acceptance on everyone's part—Swedish society, the Swedish government, and the Red Cross. But there is a need to reconceptualize, and the Red Cross, with its global reputation, as well as the trust it enjoys locally, can play a lead role in rethinking the issue. If non-governmental organizations are going to be a part of governmental services—and, as noted, it does appear that this is a growing trend, both in Sweden and elsewhere—then the role of the NGO should be problematized as a means of avoiding the pitfalls of uncritical "coziness." The NGO position in this framework presents an opportunity for rethinking critical issues like integration, and providing new answers that government bureaucracy does not currently entertain. Answers to these questions of integration are both topical and vital, because it appears that the refugee presence in Europe, and in Sweden specifically, is a permanent fixture of immigration politics. And space should take a central role in the reconfigurations. As sociologist Saskia Sassen put it:

There is only one enlightened road to take for Europe today: that is to work with settled immigrants and refugees toward their full integration, and to do so through frameworks that ensure cultural and religious diversity will be a part of civil society, that is, part of what binds us rather than what segregates us.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Saskia Sassen, *Guests and Aliens* (New York: The New Press, 1999), 133.

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www.integrationsverket.se

www.migrationsverket.se

www.redcross.se

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Appendix: Interview Questions

Group interview questions:⁵⁵

- 1 What words come to mind when you think of Stockholm?
What adjectives would you use to describe Stockholm?
- 2 What does Stockholm look like?
- 3 What are the most important places and buildings in Stockholm?
Can someone talk a little more about _____?
- 4 When I came to Stockholm, I didn't know where I should buy my food, meet my
friends, or get a cup of coffee. How does a person find his or her way in a new city?
(Through friends, etc.?)
- 5 Did you find it easy to feel at home when you first came to Stockholm? How does it
feel now, after some time in Stockholm? Is the city more comfortable for you?
Why?
- 6 If one thinks about Stockholm as compared to your hometown, what are the
differences?
- 7 What cities in the world are good cities? Why?
- 8 Does anyone here like the city of Stockholm? Why? (Anyone else?)
Is there anyone here who dislikes Stockholm? Why? (Anyone else?)
- 9 What are the differences between living in the city and living in the country in
Sweden?

⁵⁵ This group interview was conducted in Swedish. Many of these questions were adapted from the individual interview questions used by Lynch, which were used more faithfully during individual interviews and are outlined below.

Individual interview questions:⁵⁶

Stockholm (general)

- 1 What comes to your mind, what symbolizes the word “Stockholm” for you?
How would you broadly describe Stockholm in a physical sense?
- 2 I would like you to make a quick map of Stockholm. Make it just as if you were making a rapid description of the city to a stranger, covering all the main features. I don’t expect an accurate drawing—just a rough sketch. [I took notes on the sequence in which the map was drawn.]
- 3
 - a. Do you go to school or work?
 - b. Please give me complete and explicit directions for the trip that you normally take going from home to where you work or go to school. Picture yourself actually making the trip, and describe the sequence of things you would see, hear, or smell along the way, including the pathmakers that have become important to you, and the clues that a stranger would need to make the same decisions you have to make. I am interested in the physical pictures of things. It’s not important if you can’t remember the names of streets and places. [During recital of trip, I probed, where needed, for more detailed descriptions.]
 - c. Do you have any particular emotional feelings about various parts of your trip? How long would it take you? Are there parts of the trip where you feel uncertain about your location?
- 4 Now, I would like to know what places in Stockholm’s inner city you think are the most important. They may be large or small, but tell me those that are for you the easiest to remember and describe. [For each of two or three of the places listed in response to 4, I went on to ask question 5:]
- 5
 - a. Would you describe _____ to me? If you were taken there blindfolded, when the blindfold was taken off what clues would you use to positively identify where you were?
 - b. Are there any particular feelings that you have with regard to _____?
 - c. Would you show me on your map where _____ is? (and, if appropriate:) Where are the boundaries of it?

⁵⁶ Questions 1, 2, 3b, 3c, 4 (Adapted. Original text read, “Now, we would like to know what elements of central Boston you think are most distinctive.”), 5a, 5b, 5c, 6, 14 (Adapted. Original text read, “What cities of your acquaintance have good orientation? Why?” and the question was part of the free discussion section.), 15a, 15b (Second question is not original.), 15c, and 15d were taken from the interviews Kevin Lynch conducted in Boston, Jersey City, and Los Angeles for *The Image of the City*. The original questions can be found in Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City*, Appendix B, 141-142. The remaining questions were either adapted from Lynch’s questions or are new questions that directly focus on the questions posed by this study.

d. How did you originally learn of _____? Who took you there for the first time?

6 Would you show me on your map the direction of north?

Stockholm (comparative)

7 Which country do you come from originally?
What is your hometown?
How long did you live there?
How long have you lived in Stockholm?

8 (*Using name of hometown*)
What comes to your mind, what symbolizes the word “_____” for you?
How would you broadly describe _____ in a physical sense?

9 I would like you to make a quick map of _____. Make it just as if you were making a rapid description of the city to a stranger, covering all the main features. I don't expect an accurate drawing—just a rough sketch, just as you did for Stockholm, and showing north. [I took notes on the sequence in which the map was drawn.]

10 If you think of Stockholm and _____, what are the main differences?

11 Was it easy to feel “at home” in Stockholm in the beginning?
How does it feel now, after some time living in Stockholm? Is the city more comfortable for you? Why?

12 Do you think it is important to get an introduction to the city, when a person is new in town?
Do you think it is important for integration? Why?

13 Have you been on any of the Red Cross field trips to areas in and around Stockholm?
What did you think about these trips?
Have you made return trips to any of the places visited?

14 Which cities that you have been to are good cities, or easy to be in, according to you?
Why?

Conclusion

The interview is over now, but it would help if we could just have a few minutes of free discussion. (Remainder of questions inserted informally:)

15

- a. What did you think I was trying to find out?
- b. What is the importance of orientation and the recognition of city elements to people? Why is it important for newcomers to a city?

- c. Do you feel any pleasure in knowing where you are or where you are going? Or displeasure in the reverse?
- d. Do you find Stockholm an easy city to find your way in, or to identify its parts?
- e. Do you like the city of Stockholm? Why?

Information gathered at the end of the interview:

Name (or alias if desired)
Age
Gender
Country of origin and hometown
Native language
Time resident in Sweden
Time resident in hometown