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A Culturally Relevant Education? Analysing "Swedish Values" in Civic Orientation for Newly Arrived Migrants

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This article contributes to ongoing discussions on education for migrants as a form of integration policy and practice. It does so by investigating whether the initiative Civic Orientation for Newly Arrived Migrants in Sweden constitutes an example of culturally relevant education. Drawing on a mixed-method and multi-level analysis, we hone in on "values" as a discursive construction in order to see how particular principles are linked to Swedishness. Specifically, we show how values are discursively constructed on multiple levels through 1) a qualitative analysis of policy documents instrumental to the implementation of civic orientation; 2) a quantitative corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis of media articles; 3) individual interviews with 14 persons involved in organizing the civic orientation courses; and 4) ethnographic classroom observations from six such courses. Our results show how, on the one hand, Sweden is constructed as the most developed country in the world in terms of values and, on the other hand, migrants are portrayed as antithetical to such

an ideal imagination. Furthermore, we show how a specific set of values – human rights and democracy – changes meaning from being universal to becoming particularized and nationalized as "Swedish".

Key words: Civic orientation, Civic integration, Critical Discourse Analysis, Sweden, Culturally relevant education

1. Introduction

In 1997, Glazer (1997) boldly stated that "we are all multiculturalists now", whether we want it or not. What this statement highlights is a perceived move away from monoculture towards what was later referred to as multiculturalism or "superdiversity" (see e.g. Vertovec, 2007). Being located in the United States, Glazer was primarily preoccupied with structural discrimination and injustice against African American people. Paradoxically, while embracing and encouraging multicultural education, he also singled out Islam "as a potentially rebellious element within Western societies" because of Muslims' lack of "commitment to liberal values" (Glazer, 1997, p. 156). What emerges here is an interesting tension between the endorsement of multiculturalism, on the one hand, and the singling out of Muslims as cultural Others potentially threatening multiculturalism, on the other. It is the endurance of this tension between "Western liberal values" and imagined "Muslim Others" that we seek to investigate in this paper by taking Sweden as a case in point. Specifically, we hone in on the educational initiative Civic Orientation for Newly Arrived Migrants (*Samhällsorientering för nyanlända*, henceforth CO), and we investigate whether CO constitutes an example of culturally relevant education.

The CO initiative is part of the broader Establishment Programme (*etableringsprogrammet*) for newly arrived migrants. The Establishment Programme is open for those have "turned 20 but not 66 and recently received a residency permit as refugee, a person in need of protection (*skyddsbehövande*), or if you are related to a refugee or someone in need of protection" (Arbetsförmedlingen, n.d.). It includes language classes, CO, and support to enter the labour market through practical courses and internships. Granted, CO is not unique to Sweden but is in line with a larger trend in the Global North where (adult) migrants are expected to learn about the country of arrival's laws, "norms", and "culture" (Joppke, 2007) at the same time as they seek to enter the labour market. In Sweden, CO is organized by the municipalities and regional administrations. It is offered in the participants'

"mother tongue or another language which the migrant has good command of" (SFS 2010:1138), and the courses are led by "society communicators" (*samhällskommunikatörer*), who themselves have a background of migrating to Sweden.

We believe that CO is particularly relevant for the remit of this special issue on *Culture on the Move* because, as we will see in more detail below, the inquiry that led to the introduction of this initiative strongly emphasizes 1) dialogue and reflection, 2) active participation of migrants, and 3) the importance of drawing on their previous knowledge and experience (SOU 2010:16). Accordingly, CO seems to be built, at least in policy documents, on a principle akin to what Ladson-Billings (2021) has called "culturally relevant pedagogy". By focusing on minoritized students' knowledge, strengths, and active involvement, culturally relevant pedagogy aims to help "students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities" to ensure that they "can achieve academically, … demonstrate cultural competence, and … both understand and critique the existing social order" (Ladson-Billings, 2021, pp. 18, 25).

However, previous research has demonstrated how educational initiatives directed at migrants in Sweden are built on the view that migrants, especially newly arrived ones, diverge from "Swedish society" through "odd" behaviours or unusual food practices (Eriksson, 2010, p. 135). In contrast, what counts as "Swedish" is seen as "modern, developed and normal" (Gustavsson, 2001, p. 146). As a result, through these courses, migrants are expected "to change in three areas: they are expected to change vocation, basic values [*värdegrund*], and language" (Elmeroth, 2018, p. 107). Thus, a focus on values also has a long history within adult education directed at migrants in Sweden (Carlson, 2021). In the Swedish context, the concept *värdegrund* – that is, basic values or value foundations – is often used to describe principles which are at the core of a group, a corporation, an educational initiative, or even society at wide. However, the semantics of "values" is complex, not least because Swedish has two words for it: *värden* and *värderingar*. The two words have slightly different connotations as can be gauged by looking up their definitions in the Swedish dictionary; while *värden* indicates values as a measure of utility, size, or desirability, *värderingar* is more about subjective perceptions.

Against this backdrop, we investigate how values are discursively constructed in relation to CO, and how they relate to culturally relevant education. The paper is informed by the following research questions:

1. How is CO presented and constructed in policy documents with regard to values?
2. What are the broader media discourses about CO and its relation to values?
3. How do these discursive constructions of values trickle down and get interpreted and rearticulated by those involved in organizing CO?
4. How are they discursively negotiated in the classroom?

In order to answer these questions, we analyse discourses about values on multiple levels: a macro level of policy and media, a meso organizational level of policy implementation, and a micro level of classroom interaction. Furthermore, as we focus on "values" as a discursive construction, we follow what Fairclough (2003) called "intertextual links". The metaphor here is meant to suggest a chain in which discursive constructions hook into each other, forming a discursive chain. Put differently, individual utterances and uses of "values" are not idiosyncratic but are linked to each other, thus making up the whole discursive construction.

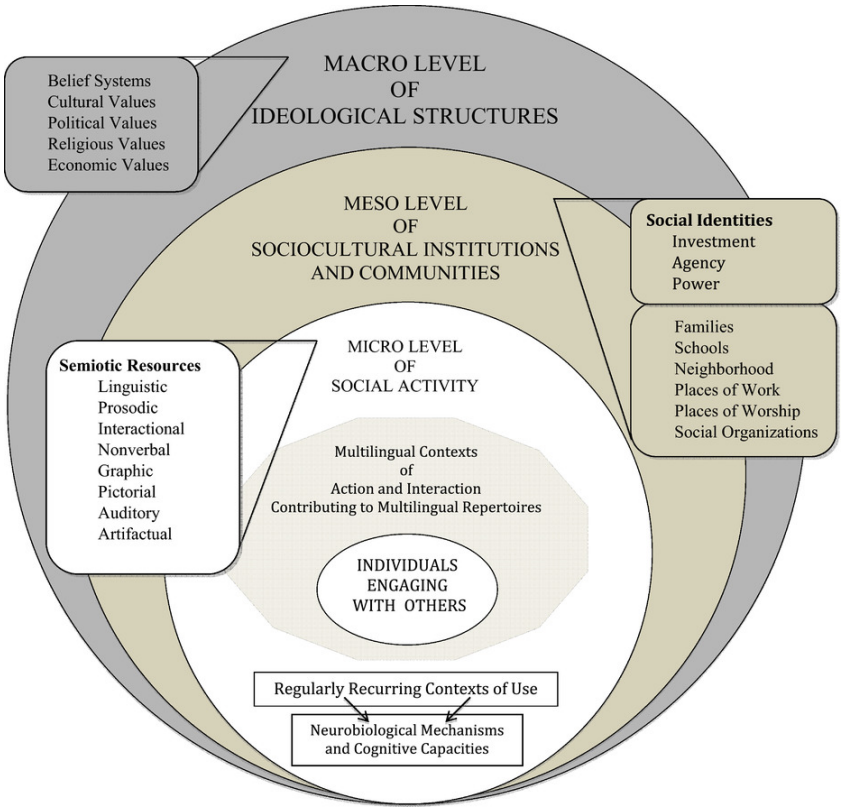
In the following, we first outline the theoretical framework and the methodology employed in this paper. We then start off with an analysis of policy documents to illustrate how CO was portrayed and legally defined. Thereafter, we analyse Swedish media discourses about CO over a 20-year period with the help of Corpus Assisted Critical Discourse Analysis (cf. Baker et al., 2008). This allows us to map the media context within which CO policy was interpreted and implemented. Subsequently, we analyse 14 individual interviews with people who interpreted and implemented CO policy in Sweden. Lastly, we show how these discourses and discursive constructions were negotiated in the classroom.

2. Theoretical Concepts, Methodology, and Data

Since the article aims to explore how discourses and discursive constructions occur, get reinterpreted, and get rearticulated on multiple levels, we believe that the Douglas Fir Group's (2016) conceptualization of the multifaceted nature of (language) learning and teaching can be particularly useful to capture the dynamic interplay between different scales: macro, meso, and micro. While the scholars behind the Douglas Fir Group were primarily concerned with second language acquisition, their model can also be a valuable heuristic for understanding how language as social interaction operates on multiple interconnected layers.

Figure 1

The Multifaceted Nature of Language Learning and Teaching (Douglas Fir Group, 2016).



By "language as social interaction" we mean how specific ways of using language become routinized over time, thereby constructing social meaning. This is what we refer to as *discourse(s)*, which can also be defined as "ways of representing aspects of the world" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 124). Discourses are not neutral; rather, they shape and reflect the way in which issues are thought about and engaged with. Moreover, discourses function as "systems of rules which make it possible for certain statements but not others to occur at particular times, places and institutional locations" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 40). While discourse(s) are systemic, their specific textual materializations are what we refer to as *discursive constructions*.

In order to operationalize the Douglas Fir Group's model, we draw on the discourse ethnographic approach suggested by Krzyzanowski (2011), "which integrates anthropological and critical-analytic perspectives through, on the one hand, extensive fieldwork and ethnography in institutional spaces and, on the other hand, the critical analysis of discourses of (social) actors" (p. 135). In our case, this has meant taking a multi-method approach which combines qualitative and

quantitative techniques. While we outline the methodological steps in more detail below, suffice it to say at this juncture that we employ qualitative methods to analyse policy documents about CO, interviews with CO organizers, and fieldnotes collected during participant-observations of six CO courses (three in English and three in Arabic) over a period of six months in 2020. We also use quantitative methodologies to analyse a large corpus of media texts about CO. In what follows, we first present how we constructed and analysed the media corpus; we then go on to present the policy documents, interview data, and ethnographic fieldwork.

The corpus we constructed for this paper consists of 1,257 articles, totalling 1,381,485 words, published between 2002 and 2021. This timespan was chosen as it covers the period leading up to the introduction of CO as well the period during which we conducted classroom observations and interviews. The articles were published in the national, local, and specialist press and were collected with the help of the Swedish Media Database (*Mediearkivet*). The articles were found with the help of the search term "Civic Orientation" (*samhällsorientering*). Because of the corpus's breadth of coverage, it can be seen as representative of the Swedish media landscape. All articles were downloaded as .txt files and compiled according to the year they were published and the type of press.

After compiling the corpus, we used the software Lancsbox (Brezina et al., 2020) to generate word frequency lists for each year and media type. These lists were then copied into Microsoft Excel, where function words such as prepositions, conjunctions, and words relating to copyright and the Swedish Media Database were removed. For a word to be deemed relevant for the specific year and included in the frequency list, it had to occur ≥10 times. Frequency lists are commonly used in corpus linguistics and in corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis to identify patterns of language use across time (Baker et al. 2008). Frequency thus speaks to the "aboutness" of a text or a corpus (Baker et al., 2008, p. 278).

After the frequency lists were created, a few indicative patterns emerged, such as absolute frequency of specific words across media types or increase/decrease of occurrences of words over time. However, frequency lists do not say much about *where* and *how* these words are used in context. Therefore, we searched for *collocations*, that is, words that co-occur in a non-random way across the texts in our corpus. Identifying the collocations of a particular word "can provide a helpful sketch of the meaning/function of the [word] within the particular discourse" (Baker et al., 2008, p. 279).

Accordingly, collocations can be used to identify semantic prosodies, that is, the "consistent aura of meaning" that a word accumulates over time (Louw, 1993, p. 157). For example, "if *illegal* and *immigrant* are often paired as collocates, we may be primed to think of one concept even when the one is not present" (Gabrielatos & Baker, 2008, p. 11). To identify such collocates, we used MI3 score. Rather than showing absolute frequency, the MI3 score shows how likely the collocations are to appear together across the corpus. It thus identifies words that are more likely to appear together in a statistically significant way. The statistical value was capped at ≥12 (on a scale of 0–100) and the frequency at ≥5, meaning the collocate had to appear at least five times and with a collocational strength that is higher than or equal to 12. Following the identification of these collocates, we then looked at their *concordances*, that is, how collocates co-occurred in a particular co-text, that is the text that surrounds the collocates. Looking at specific contexts of usage was a useful way of finding outliers, such as in the case of specific words that have a high frequency score simply because they feature in the name of a new law that was introduced in a particular year.

Interestingly, one of the most recurrent words across the media was "values" (*värderingar*). As we mentioned earlier, there are two words in Swedish that can correspond to "values" in English, namely *värden* and *värderingar*. In the media corpus, the latter was far more frequent (N = 909 compared to N = 109), so it was our main focus. However, the distinction between the two will be further fleshed out and exemplified below.

In order to fully understand the "macro level of ideological structures" of CO (Douglas Fir Group, 2016), we also collected three policy documents that have been instrumental to the implementation and organization of this educational initiative: 1) the inquiry commissioned by the government to propose the format, content, and organization of CO (SOU 2010:16); 2) the law that governs what the provision shall contain and how it is meant to be organized (SFS 2010:1138); and 3) a special inquiry commissioned to investigate how to expand the courses as well as how to put an increased emphasis on teaching values and norms (Länsstyrelsen Jönköping, 2018). These were all systematically read in terms of both how they related to culturally relevant pedagogy and how they discussed and constructed values.

In order to delve into the meso level of CO discourse, we conducted 14 semi-structured interviews in the winter of 2019/2020. The interviewees were selected on the basis of their position as organizers or implementers of the CO policy when it was first legislated in Sweden in 2010.

Therefore, these individuals' responses offered us an opportunity to understand how discourses and discursive constructions are negotiated and rearticulated at the meso-level by those who have to respond to macro-level political discourses. Importantly, from a critical discourse analytical perspective, our questions mainly concerned the organization of CO in the interviewees' municipalities. However, we also recognize that CO organizers work(ed) within a broader context. As it will become clearer below, the interviews took place at the time when the Swedish government decided that CO should have a stronger focus on norms and values (Länsstyrelsen Jönköping, 2018). In the light of this, it is not surprising that one of our interview questions concerned values and that the participants themselves were keen to talk about the increased attention to norms and values in the courses as a result of policy change.

Finally, in the spring of 2020, we followed six different CO courses in three large municipalities in Sweden. The classroom observations started off in person but were moved online due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Three of these courses were taught in Arabic, and three in English. Those of us who attended the courses spoke Arabic and English, respectively, so we had no need for interpreters. Fieldnotes were taken by hand, and we took the position as participant observers, meaning that we did not interfere with the class but spoke when asked to and actively participated in the breaks. We conceptualized the classroom as being part of the micro level, as this is where the discourse is articulated face to face (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999).

To sum up, this paper is based on an investigation of the construction and function of values in CO on different interconnected levels. Our investigation follows Dean's (2010) perspective on governmentality:

> An analysis of government, then, is concerned with the means of calculation, both qualitative and quantitative, the type of governing authority or agency, the forms of knowledge, techniques and other means employed, the entity to be governed and how it is conceived, the ends sought and the outcomes and consequences. (p. 18)

In practice, such a multi-level perspective entails fleshing out 1) how values are discursively constructed and justified in policy documents about CO; 2) how they are circulated through media discourses and interpreted and rearticulated by those in charge with organizing CO; and lastly 3) how these discursive constructions are relayed or contested in the classroom.

3. Policy Document Analysis

One of Sweden's four constitutional laws, The Form of Government (*Regeringsformen*), states that "The individual's personal, economic and *cultural welfare* [emphasis added] shall be foundational goals for the public sector" (SFS 1974:152). The notion of *cultural welfare* being foundational for all state actors and programmes is of interest here. Cultural welfare through public structures does not just refer to Swedish citizens' well-being but also includes anyone regardless of their legal status in the country. An example of such a concern with everyone's well-being can also be found in the report from the parliamentary inquiry that led to the establishment of CO. The section that focuses on dialogue and reflection states that CO

> provides greater possibilities to utilize the experiences and competences that participants bring into the teaching situation. The experience is that dialogue – properly executed – is a way to treat participants with the respect they have an obvious right to as civic orientation involves values and norms. (SOU 2010:16, p. 73)

Such an argument echoes both Freire's (2005/1970) well-known insistence on the pedagogical importance of dialogue and Ladson-Billing's (2021) emphasis on education as "designed not merely to fit the school culture to the students' culture but also to use student culture as a basis for helping students understand themselves and others, structure social interactions, and conceptualize knowledge" (pp. 91–2). While not directly referring to either Freire or Ladson-Billings, the policy document echoes their pedagogical principles: it portrays migrants participating in CO as resource holders and agents in their own rights, with the potential to create engagement and mutual reflection and the ability to discuss and come to a mutual understanding of "values and norms".

That CO should be built on this reflective and interactional approach is also mentioned in another section of the same policy document, which deals with social codes,

> for example, codes present in the workspace, the role of religion in Sweden or the celebration of traditions. Such elements ought to [*bör*] be present in civic orientation in part based on the idea that such knowledge can be a useful tool for facilitating the encounter between people with different cultural backgrounds. (SOU 2010:16, p. 65)

This indicates how cultural markers in Swedish society are discursively constructed not so much as something migrants need to learn or adapt to but as starting points for dialogue and reflection,

which will then enhance the mutual understanding of differences and facilitate the encounter between CO participants and others in Swedish society. Nevertheless, there is a glimpse of a fracture in the discourse constructing CO as a form of culturally responsible pedagogy. While such knowledge, critical reflection, and dialogue may indeed be empowering in theory, the preposition "between" performs interesting ideological work in this context as it indicates a mutuality in the encounter. However, the only people who are expected to attend CO courses and actively engage in these dialogues and reflections are the migrants and the communicators. Thus, the underlying logic in the policy concerning CO is to prepare migrants for encounters *with* what is assumed as an otherwise homogeneous and undifferentiated Swedish population, rather than offering a space for different cultures to engage in dialogue with each other *on equal terms* (see also Milani et al., 2023, about the role of participation in CO).

The importance of values is also evident in the legal document (*förordning*) regulating the CO courses, which states that the purpose of CO is to "give a foundational understanding of Swedish society and a basis for continued knowledge acquisition" (SFS, 2010:1138). The document also specifies that participants will gain knowledge of "1. Human rights and the foundational democratic values, 2. the individual's rights and obligations generally, 3. how society is organized, and 4. practical everyday life". Since dialogue and reflection are also mentioned in this legal document, it might sound quite unbalanced that only migrants are supposed to be changing and opening themselves up to further change by participating in CO. While we certainly agree that human rights and democracy must be valued and respected, we take some critical distance from the two-fold discursive construction of "Swedishness" as always already embodying these values vis-à-vis *newly arrived migrants* as not and, therefore, in need of education about them.

The metaphor conveyed by the adjective "foundational" (*grundläggande*) is particularly interesting here, as it conveys the image of a base upon which the rest of oneself and, by extension, the wider imagined community of Sweden is built (Anderson, 1983). As outlined in the introduction, in the Swedish context, the concept *värdegrund*, which means basic values or value foundation, is often used to describe principles which are at the core of a group, a corporation, an educational initiate, or even society at wide. In the legislation about CO, basic values are never defined with precision but are simply presented through the word cluster "human rights and foundational democratic values".

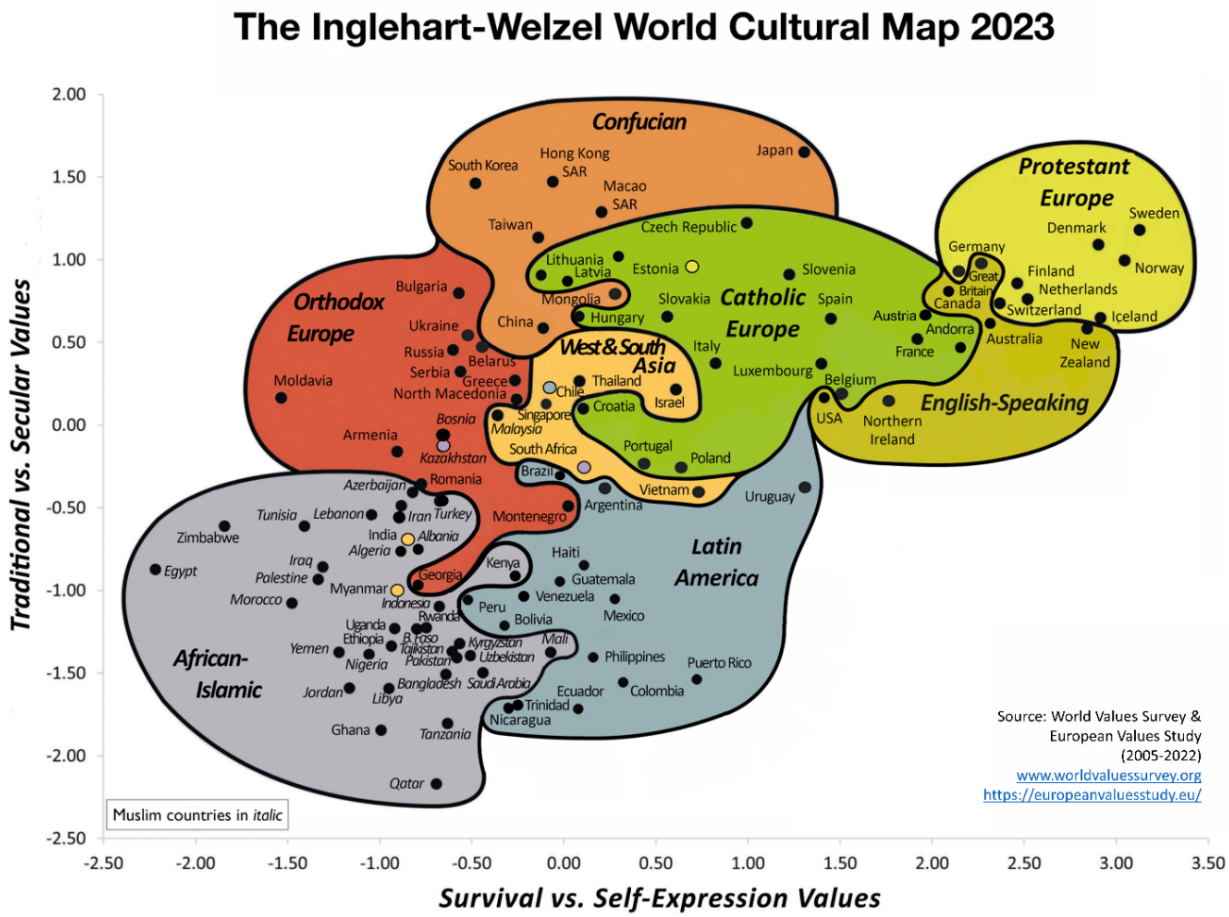
When discussing these foundational values, the parliamentary report that led to the introduction of CO states that the courses need to be pragmatic and that "[t]he place of departure is to explain and give tools for the newly arrived to function in everyday life" (SOU 2010:16, p. 53). By being in dialogue about these values, the participants are expected to take them up and to use them as tools to function in society. The report also gives pedagogical indications by stating that discussions about values should *not* be based on surveys that map cultural patterns of behaviour; rather, they should be linked to Sweden's constitution and constitutional values (SOU 2010:16, pp. 62–4).

However, a different picture about the meaning of values emerges in the report from a following inquiry about CO published in 2018, according to which CO "shall aim at [the participants] getting to know *Swedish values* [emphasis added], but the material taught shall be characterized by universal values as they are expressed in, for example, human rights" (Länsstyrelsen Jönköping, 2018, p. 5). This statement shows a clear change in rhetoric whereby "values" are no longer referred to as constitutional or foundational but are overtly tied to the ethnic/national qualifier "Swedish". By the same token, while the 2010 parliamentary investigation discouraged using surveys for discussions about values, the 2018 report recommended that the CO courses should begin with a visualization of the World Values Survey (WVS, The Inglehart-Welzel World Cultural Map 2023 based on the WVS-7). The WVS is conducted in 111 countries around the world, and it positions nation-states in relation to two axes: Traditional vs. Secular values and Survival vs. Self-Expression values (see below).

As shown in the map below, Sweden is presented as an outlier, even to the rest of the Global North. The position in the top right-hand corner furthermore spatially constructs Sweden as what in social semiotics is described as the ideal and the new (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 197). Accordingly, the spatial position on the map conveys the idea that Sweden, with its allegedly most advanced and progressive values in the world, is an ideal, which other countries should imitate or strive for. The usage of this survey in CO was justified in the report because it "meets the basic requirements of an objective and credible assessment" (Länsstyrelsen Jönköping, 2018, p. 8).

Figure 2.

The Inglehart-Welzel World Cultural Map 2023, World Values Survey 7.



Needless to say, the WVS has been critiqued for the biased cultural assumptions upon which it is based (cf. Lundgren, 2015). A glaring visual example of such a bias can be seen in the caption in the bottom-left corner, "Muslim countries in italic", which ties back to the tension outlined in the introduction of this paper. Here, the visual singling out of these countries is the manifestation of a strategic Othering of Muslims and Islam. All of these countries are located in the bottom left square of the map, categorized as "Traditional" and holding values focused on "Survival" rather than "Self-Expression". Whereas the position in the top right corner indexes Sweden as new and ideal, being located in the bottom left corner indexes the opposite, that is, old and real (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2005).

In her analysis of knowledge production and the WVS, Lundgren (2015) argues that the map represents a problematic correlation: the more economically developed a country is, the more developed values it has (p. 47). In practice, this means that the Global North has

> a culture that puts us ahead of the rest of the world in terms of human development. So, in a way, when producing this kind of knowledge, we are at the same time involved in writing the success story of the [Global North]. (p. 51)

In writing the success story of some, the map simultaneously presents a story of failure for others, mostly Muslim but also formerly colonized countries, showing them as less developed both in terms of economy and values. Importantly, discursively constructing values as both more "developed" or more "mature" implies a directionality according to which those who do not currently hold the same ideas can change; they can *develop* or *grow* into holding them.

What is important to stress here is how the analysed policy documents highlight an underlying contradiction, namely that "Swedish values" are simultaneously presented as objective and universal and as particular (i.e. Swedish). This contradiction is fleshed out in the remainder of our analysis.

4. Media Analysis

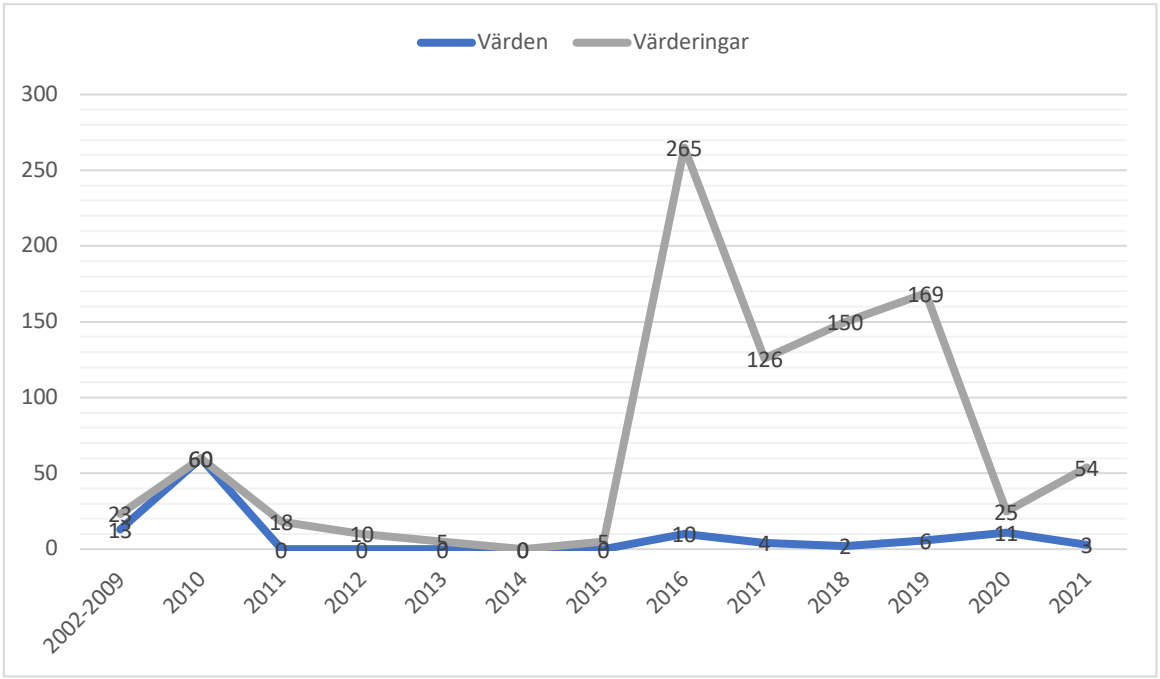
As previously mentioned, this paper is concerned with how discursive constructions form "intertextual chains" (Fairclough, 1992) and how they are articulated on various levels (cf. Douglas Fir Group, 2016), focusing on not only how such constructions are similar or different but also how they are embedded in the same macro context. In particular, the previous section revealed how the conceptualization of values seems to have shifted from viewing values as democratic and foundational to viewing them as national (Swedish). The question that remains to be investigated is how values are presented in media representations of CO, and whether such representations are also characterized by such a shift of meaning.

Before doing so, however, we need to first return to the distinction between the two words for "values" in Sweden, namely *värden* as more objective measures of utility and *värderingar* as subjective perceptions. There is a stark difference in the frequency of the two words across the corpus. While

the former appears 109 times, the latter appears 909 times. Regarding the word frequency lists (the compiled lists with the 50 most commonly appearing words for each year and media), *värden* only appears one time (2010, national press), compared to *värderingar* appearing 15 times across all media types and over multiple years.

Figure 3

Frequency of Värden and Värderingar.



4.1 Värden

There is also a difference both in the use and collocational patterns of the two words. Table 1 provides a collocate list for *värden*, with function words such as the conjugation word "and" removed. Further down, Table 2 provides a similar list for *värderingar*, showing the difference in collocates.

Table 1

Top collocates of Värden (Values)

Type of Press	National Press	Local Press	Specialist Press
Collocates, in order of statistical significance	Welfare state (*Välfärdsstat*) Everyday life (*Vardagsliv*) Equality (*Jämlikhet*) Central (*Centrala*) Foundational (*Grundläggande*)	Welfare state (*Välfärdsstat*) Everyday life (*Vardagsliv*) Interpreted (*Tolkas*) Are understood (*Förstås*) Cultures (*Kulturer*) Connection (*Samband*) The weight/importance (*Vikten*) Other (*Andra*) Democracy (*Demokrati*) Speaks (*Talar*) Swedish (*Svenska*) Focus (*Fokus*)	No statistically significant collocates

As can be seen in the table, there are no statistically significant collocates in the specialist press. The two top collocates in both the national press and the local press are "welfare state" and "everyday life", which is not surprising as they, together with *värden,* are part of the title of one of the reports that lay ground to the introduction of CO. Furthermore, the strongest collocates in the national press are "equality", "central", and "foundational", which support the Swedish Dictionary's definition of *värden* being more about measures of utility. As for the local press, we see a high frequency of words emphasizing interpretation and understanding. While "Swedish" occurs as one of the top collocates here, such a result is due to the data in this particular case being skewed by a local politician having published the same opinion piece in multiple local newspapers in 2010 in which he warns of the danger of arguing that there is no such thing as Swedish values.

To map out how the use of *värden* and *värderingar* changed over time, it is crucial to examine the co-text in which the words occurs. In 2009, then Minister for Integration and Gender Equality Nyamko Sabuni argued that the government was introducing the Establishment Programme as

> reforms to facilitate newly arrived migrants' entry into the labour market and society…. For us it is important that the establishment process also provides civic information, both how society

> works and what values [*värden*] make up the cement that binds society together: fundamental human rights, children's rights, and gender equality. This is such important information that it is part of the Swedish educational system, and because of that, I think that it is important that newly arrived also get to take part of it through Civic Orientation. (SVT 3/9/2009)

Here, "values" (*värden*) is named as one of two topics that should be included in the establishment process in Sweden, the other one being "how society works". As in the collocate list above, the word "values" is used to describe human rights, children's rights, and gender equality as the "cement that binds society together", constructing it as integral to what defines Swedish society. Accordingly, these values are presented as connected and mutually dependent in relation to what makes up society. While the ethnic/national qualifier "Swedish" does not appear in Sabuni's pronouncement, a specific yet somewhat vague set of ideas is subtly tied to one particular context – (Swedish) society. Here the linking of gender equality to Sweden inherently presents this notion as extrinsic to other societies. This could be taken as example of what van Dijk (1993b, p. 181) has called denials, a discursive strategy through which those in power engage in boundary work yet make statements that construct their own group as inclusive, thus affirming the superiority of the Self.

4.2 Värderingar

In contrast to *värden*, the word *värderingar* appears in the frequency lists in all types of media. It is first used in the years 2009–2011 as part of the justification for introducing the so-called Establishment Programme, of which Civic Orientation is part. These justifications make an effort to explicitly state that these *värderingar* are not exclusively Swedish values but rather foundational values, such as equality or human rights. However, the word does not appear again until 2016, when it peaked (see Figure 3 above); it was still one of the 50 most frequent words in the specialist press in 2020 and in the national press in 2021. Below (Table 2) is a collocation list for *värderingar*.

Table 2

Collocations of "Värderingar" (Values)

Type of Press	National Press	Local Press	Specialist Press
Collocates, in order of statistical significance	Swedish (Svenska) Norms (normer) Foundational (grundläggande) Our (våra) They (de) Sweden (Sverige) Rests (vilar) Democratic (demokratiska) The individual's (individens) Libertarian (frihetliga) Focus (fokus) Newly arrived (nyanlända) We (vi) Duties (skyldigheter) Rights (rättigheter) Society (samhället) Concerns/applies (gäller) Speak (tala) Learn (lära) Self-realizing (självförverkligande) Civic orientation (samhällsorientering) Traditional (traditionella)	Norms (Normer) Swedish (svenska) Foundational (grundläggande) Democratic (demokratiska) Built (byggts) is losing (tappar) Human (mänskliga) Rights (rättigheter) Sweden (Sverige) Concerns/applies (gäller) Laws (lagar) Uncontroversial (okontroversiellt) Our (våra) They (de) Society (samhället) The weight/importance (vikten) Know (veta) Here (här) Society's (samhällets) Abortion (abort)	Swedish (Svenska) Norms (normer) Foundational (grundläggande) Learn (lära) Our (våra) Newly arrived (nyanlända) Focus (fokus) Civic orientation (samhällsorientering)

The collocates "Swedish", "our", "norms", and "foundational" occur across all three types of press. "Swedish" is the strongest collocate in both the national press and the specialist press, and the second strongest in local press. The notions of "Swedish" and the possessive plural "our" (*våra*) are of special interest in this paper, as they signal a boundary of what comprises "us". The pronoun

"our" is one of those little words with big meanings (Billig 1995), words that make up the nation in everyday life. Thus, the strong collocational link between "our" and "Swedish" in relation to values gives the impression of an imagined homogenous national community sharing a particular set of beliefs.

However, a closer look at the list of collocates reveals interesting contradictory semantic prosodies. On the one hand, values are argued to be foundational for all, and on the other hand, they stand out as "ours" and "Swedish". Therefore, the word "values" itself becomes an important discursive marker of a boundary. Namely, the collocation of "our" with "values" demarcates and enforces the boundary between the nation and those who are part of it and those who are not. An example of such reasoning can be seen in an opinion piece arguing that values vary between cultures authored by a local politician representing the conservative Christian Democrats in the Stockholm City Council: "The biggest challenge of integration concerns transmitting, standing up for, and spreading those values [*värderingar*] on which our society rests" (*Mitt i Kungsholmen*, 15/3/2016). That is, the values themselves are an important part of what makes up an imagined "us", and there is also a clear delineation between "us" and "them". The argument in this opinion piece goes as follows: If the "biggest challenge of integration" concerns "values on which our society rests", these values are under threat. Thus, values are constructed as subject to threat from the Other, that is, "the migrant" or, in this case, the "newly arrived".

There is a shift from the earlier quote in which Sabuni articulated values (*värden*) as the "cement which binds society together" and therefore as a necessary part of Civic Orientation to the piece published seven years later in which values (*värderingar*) were constructed as the most crucial and biggest challenge to integration. By following these "intertextual links", we also see an increasing convergence between society and a distinct set of values – "values upon which our society rests" or "our values" – which is viewed as integral to integration. The next section shows how such societal values morphed into Swedish values in media discourse.

4.3 Swedish values

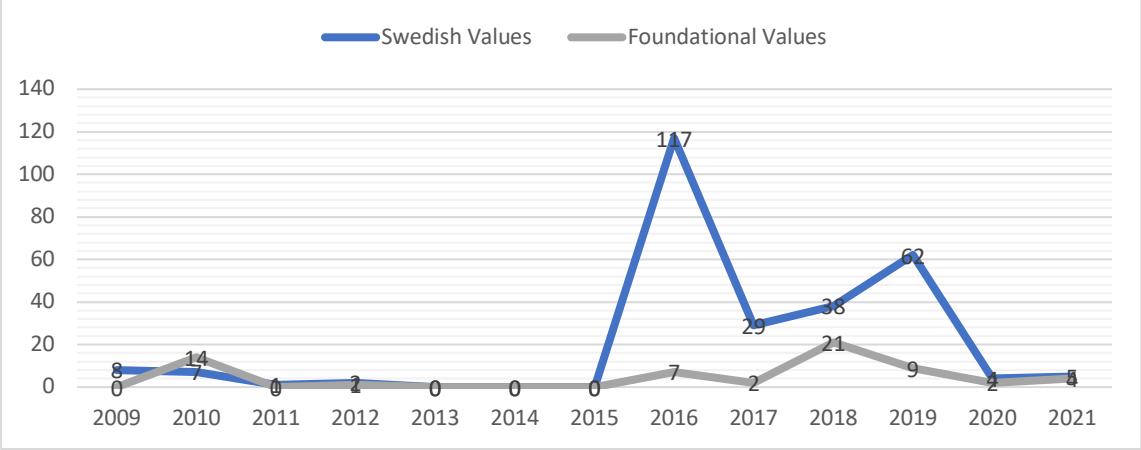
The phrase "Swedish values" (Svenska värderingar) first appeared across all three types of media in the corpus in November of 2009, following the Liberal Party's congress, where Nyamko Sabuni gave a speech touching on the topic of values in what was then proposed as "citizenship courses",

which later became Civic Orientation. In that context, the reporting on the minister's speech highlighted how such courses would focus on "foundational values" rather than "Swedish values". "Swedish values" appears again with the introduction of Civic Orientation programmes in 2010, yet again in reports that these programmes will *not* deal with "Swedish values" but "foundational values".

As the figure below shows, "Swedish values" appears 17 times in the years 2009–2012, but 257 times in the years following 2016. "Foundational values" appears 14 times in the years 2009–2012, and 46 times in the years following 2016. While they do not increase in the same exponential manner, both collocations co-appear in the same years across the corpus. Furthermore, the frequency graph shows that the two collocations have been present in the media discourses concerning Civic Orientation since the programme's inception.

Figure 4

Frequency of the expression "Swedish Values" (Svenska värderingar) and "Foundational Values" (Grundläggande värderingar)



In the graph, there is a spike in the expression "Swedish values" in 2016. This reflects the media response to the increase of asylum seekers in Sweden during 2015, which led to "path-breaking decisions on the regulation of refugee immigration to Sweden, as well as a reorientation of the political discourse on [migration]" (Hagelund, 2020, p. 7). These decisions included making it harder to obtain residency and reducing rights for non-citizens living in the country (Hernes, 2018). Relevant in the context of this paper is the simultaneous emergence of specifically "Swedish values" in the media discourse response. Just as residency rights were particularized, so were those values that were previously constructed as universal and "foundational". Although part of a longer trend

(see e.g. Schierup & Ålund, 2011), the nationalization of values in CO contradicts what has previously been argued for civic integration as a whole, namely that it represents a convergence around "liberal values" rather than "national values" (Joppke, 2007). Instead, the policy and discourse *nationalize* those very same "liberal values" (see also Fargues et al., 2023; Milani et al., 2022; Mouritsen et al., 2019).

The link between values and Swedishness was strongly emphasized in a 2016 op-ed in the national newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet* by then party leader of the centre-right-wing Moderate Party, Anna Kinberg Batra: "For Sweden to be a society where each and every one has the freedom to shape their own life, we need to continue to protect Swedish values such as industriousness, diligence, and togetherness" (*Svenska Dagbladet*, 2016-07-09). Unlike Sabuni and the local politician mentioned in sections 4.1 and 4.2 above, Kinberg Batra explicitly uses the expression "Swedish values" (*svenska värderingar*). Here again, the pronoun "we" functions as a demarcating agent, establishing and iterating an "us" vis-à-vis a "them". Although there is no explicit mention of who "they" are, Swedish values are said to be in need of protection from an assumed Other. Importantly, in a context where *värden* was previously used, *svenska värderingar* is now used instead to talk about comparable topics. It is the subjectification or, perhaps more aptly in this context, nationalization of values that we argue is emblematic of the discursive shift that has taken place in Sweden. Rather than universal foundational values, politicians and media practitioners instead articulate Swedish values in opposition to those values that migrants are assumed to hold. In addition, Kinberg Batra's statement shows the construction of the imagined Other as *outside* of both the universal and the particular, an anomaly which represents the antithesis of the Self.

In another speech roughly a year later, Kinberg Batra made it clear that:

> whilst we increase opportunities [for migrants], we shall show that Sweden is not a no-strings-attached community (kravlös gemenskap) . We want to introduce a duty to integrate (integrationsplikt), with demands on following Swedish values, partaking in Civic Orientation, and learning Swedish. (Expressen, 2017-07-09)

Here, she positions herself as someone who will offer opportunities, as a "tolerant, understanding leader", while at the same time constructing the undifferentiated group "migrants" as not adhering to Swedish values. If interpreted in good faith, the statement can be said to offer a bridge to

becoming part of the community, or Sweden. However, the imagined community of migrants is still constructed as antithetical to Sweden through a lack of specific values and language. Much research, both in Sweden and elsewhere, has established that learning a language is not just about acquiring syntax, grammar, or phonetics but also about being a particular speaker, one who is most often constructed as white and from the Global North (see e.g. Bijvoet, 2018; Nuottaniemi, 2023; Rosa, 2019; Rosa & Flores, 2017).

5. Meso level: Analysis of Organizers

Having outlined the macro-discursive context through an analysis of values in the CO policies and media representations of this initiative, we now consider how these discourses and discursive constructions have been interpreted and rearticulated on the meso level by CO organizers. What all the interviewees have in common is the fact that they were responsible for the interpretation and implementation of CO in three large municipalities when this new provision was introduced in 2010. Therefore, the interviews give an insight into how those in charge of running the programme interpreted the elements in the policy that can be taken as culturally relevant pedagogy.

According to the aforementioned policy documents, CO should be taught in the "mother tongue or another language which the participant has good command of" (SFS 2010:1138). The following reasoning was given:

> It is of the utmost importance that civic orientation is provided early on in the establishment process, and this in turn means that most [of the participants] do not have good enough command of Swedish to achieve the required level of understanding. (SOU 2010:16)

We consider this another element of culturally relevant pedagogy because CO is envisioned as a platform which should harness linguistic knowledge and skills already available to the students.

However, the interviews revealed that the rationale underpinning the use of the "mother tongue" is that communicators can be positive role models for the participants by showing that people who speak their language are already part of Swedish society. As one of the organizers we interviewed expressed it, "you meet a person from your own country maybe … who has a large, eh, network here, who knows the system" (Interview). By presenting people who speak their language and are

deemed part of Swedish society, migrants are presented with something they should also aspire to become.

Nonetheless, finding people who are able or willing to teach is especially hard for languages that are less commonly spoken in Sweden. The organizers said that this is mainly due to municipalities being unable to provide permanent contracts for communicators who may only be needed to teach one course every few months or even once a year. However, in some locations, this was seen as less of a problem because of a "relatively, eh, stable language basis [*språkunderlag*]" (Interview). While referring to a large number of speakers of a certain language is not necessarily a normative assessment, the construction of that group needs to be examined closer. What does it mean to be part of a group of speakers of certain languages?

One of our interviewees described their feeling of relief when the Arabic speaking communicators they had met did not express any "strange values" because they were well acquainted with "differences between what it is like when you come entirely … as newly arrived here and concerning values surrounding, well women, men, children" (Interview). Interestingly, the interviewee articulated the close connection between a certain group of speakers and the "values" associated with that group. According to the organizer's logic, the communicators have undergone the process of leaving behind "strange values" and now hold "good values" concerning equality.

When describing the recruitment process for the communicators, another organizer said that they

> Listen to them, test their language, written. Eh, there is a presentation in Arabic, so the mother tongue and English. Plus, there are also questions about values to see if this communicator is mature or immature. They talk about democracy, domestic violence. And we talk about, eh, this with se… homosexuality. Eh, child rearing and see if the person has a certain level of maturity. (Interview)

Here, the values held by prospective communicators are tied to "maturity". Since the communicators are meant to represent Sweden, "maturity" functions as a proxy used to discuss Swedishness and Swedish values. Interestingly, the specific values named are democracy and gender equality. Therefore, in this articulation, the assumption is that holding certain values also means having a certain level of maturity to be able to represent Sweden and Swedishness. This in turn echoes a general assumption of Swedishness being the unmarked "normal" (Eriksson, 2010).

Strikingly, but perhaps not surprisingly, the interview discussion about values also revolved around the WVS. Some of the organizers explicitly expressed negative views regarding the usage of the map in the classroom because they claimed it homogenizes too much and "does not leave room for people from different parts of the world to be different" (Interview). In their view, CO should not be based on the assumption that simply because some migrants speak the same language, they also share the same culture, religion, or values. They then questioned why the world had been divided up into nations in the first place, but they quickly added that their stance might come off like "a teenage rebellion" because of their critical questioning of the map. However, they emphasized the importance of maintaining some critical distance, because otherwise "one might fall for these simple explanations" (Interview). One organizer was not as explicitly critical of the map. Instead, the organizer was critical of how the Secretary General of the WVS, Bi Puranen, had presented the survey at a conference they had attended, namely the "assumption that everyone shall be moulded in a certain way". Nonetheless, the organizer still voiced Bi Puranen's idea that there is such a thing as Swedish values that migrants need to learn: "it will all be fine because we will all … all of us will get Swedish values sooner or later in this process" (Interview).

Other organizers held positive views of the WVS. One of them said that the WVS is useful as an aid to talk about norms and values in relation to Swedish legislation. They believed that it could be a good starting point to discuss "what it means that we are one of the world's most secular countries. One of the world's most gender equal countries". These comments show a blurring of the lines between Sweden as state and legislation and Sweden as a nation and population. This further complicates the discursive construction of "Swedish values" as reflecting progressive legislation, on the one hand, and values held by Swedes, on the other. Another organizer was unequivocally supportive of the usage of the WVS and said "yes, but of course at the start of the course you need to show the World Values map and have it as a kind of starting point throughout" (Interview). They believed it was a good representation especially because it made it "very clear that you are not the ones that are different, and it is not your home countries. It is us, Sweden that is weird and crazy" (Interview). Importantly, when showing Sweden as an outlier, the WVS indexes the country as "most developed" on the map. Consequently, the migrants in CO might indeed be told that Sweden is abnormal, but they are simultaneously taught that this abnormality is a form of superiority; it is still the best country in the world.

The next section shows how this perspectivization of Sweden and Swedish values is discussed in the classrooms, both through the WVS map and through pronouncements about gender equality as inherently Swedish.

6. Micro Level: Discourses in the Classroom

The WVS was not explicitly brought up or used in all of the courses we followed, but its perspectives and conclusions were discursively present throughout the courses. In one of the courses where the cultural map (Figure 2) was used, the participants were asked to locate Sweden and then Switzerland.

> What does that mean? A student says it means that Sweden is more secular than Switzerland. "Are your countries somewhere here?" The communicator points to the bottom left corner, where the "traditional" and "survival" oriented countries are located. One participant says she is from Uganda, another from Nigeria. They are both in that corner. (Fieldnotes, March 2020)

In this interaction, Sweden is first contrasted with another country in the Global North, Switzerland, to point out that it is positioned in the very top left corner. Thereafter, the participants are shown how the location of Sweden is diametrically opposite to their countries of origin. By using the map, the communicator visualizes the distance between Swedish values and the supposed values of the participants' countries. Thus, the map functions as a reminder to migrants of the difference between Sweden and the rest of the world. Crucially, this is not just a matter of cultural difference but also carries moral implications because Sweden is constructed as ultimately more developed and "better" on the cultural map.

The contrast between Swedish values and those of the participants' countries is evident and is frequently emphasized in the courses. For instance, in one course, a communicator emphasized the benefits of Swedish values in contrast to "the participants' culture and values which, in most cases, he described as in need of change" (Fieldnotes, March 2020). While their traditions and culture were articulated as "rules" that they need to adhere to, Swedish cultural values were presented as "flexible and dependent on the individual's own desires" (Fieldnotes, March 2020). Taken together, we see in these statements how non-Swedish values are portrayed almost as cages

in which the participants are trapped. As a solution, participants are presented with opportunities to escape these cultural prisons and be free by instead embracing Swedish values.

Another form of contrasting Swedish and non-Swedish values in the courses concerned tolerance. In another course, a communicator explained that people are "supposed to live and practice their religions and traditions but at the same time accept the other" (Fieldnotes, May 2020). In other words, migrants taking part in CO are assumed yet again to be less tolerant. This discursive move is reminiscent of what has also been observed in France, where "ethno-cultural minorities [are] more or less suspect of non-loyalty to 'common values'" (Fargues et al., 2023, p. 2). Therefore, migrants in Sweden are also told that "[y]ou never have the right to judge others or treat them based on their sexual, religious or even political beliefs; this is classified as discrimination in Sweden and requires penalty" (Fieldnotes, March 2020). The pronouns "you" and "them" are of interest here as they further construct the participant(s) as the one(s) who are doing the judging and not adhering to Swedish values. In contrast to culturally relevant pedagogy and CO policy documents that highlight participants as agents and focus on dialogue and reflection, the teaching emphasizes what the participants are believed to be doing wrong and, therefore, that they are in need of being educated.

Throughout the courses we observed, equality in relation to gender and sexuality was presented as constituting the main difference between the participants and Sweden. In one of the courses, the participants were presented with a timeline of different events that have impacted and thus reflect Swedish values:

> 1921 Females receive voting rights; 1944 Homosexuality is decriminalized; 1955 Sex education in schools becomes obligatory; 1965 Marital rape becomes punishable; 1975 the Law on free abortion is passed; 1988 The cohabitation act becomes the same for everyone; 2003 Right to same-sex adoption is established; 2009 Gender-neutral matrimonial law applies; 2014 Marriage coercion becomes a criminal offence; 2018 New "Consent law" is passed; 2018 Recognizing foreign child marriages is prohibited. (Fieldnotes, May 2020)

While the events in question have indeed taken place, they are a good example of how laws can be utilized to convey Swedish values as objective facts and as a string of unavoidable events. The choice of events (re)affirms the idea of gender equality as the inevitable outcome of Swedish history

(cf. Martinsson et al., 2016). At the end of that class, the communicator went back to the list of events and commented that it "is the most important slide perhaps; it's the evolution of the Swedish welfare state, and it is very important" (Fieldnotes, May 2020). By selecting these events, CO presents a story wherein gender equality not only comes to represent Swedish values but is also part and parcel of the evolution of the welfare state. Taken in context with our previous analysis of how the participants are positioned as being from places that hold values diametrically opposite to values in Sweden, such representation of gender equality presents the participants with a choice: They either hold on to their "less developed values" or leave them behind and become gender equal Swedes.

7. Conclusion

In this article, we have sought to investigate whether and, if so, how CO is an example of culturally relevant pedagogy. To do so, we used a multi-level mixed-method discourse analytical approach to look specifically at "values" as a discursive sign, following its discursive chains and intertextual links. By adopting the framework outlined by the Douglas Fir Group (2016), our analysis has illustrated the complexity of education policy and practice, showing how discourse and discursive constructions operate and connect on the macro, meso, and micro levels. Although the policy documents contain explicit statements about drawing on the newly arrived migrants' knowledge and previous experience to encourage dialogue and reflection, these statements need to be viewed and analysed in the macro discursive context. In the media discourses, we were able to show how "democracy", "human rights", and "gender equality" become increasingly nationalized, turning into "Swedish values". Conversely, the knowledge and experiences held by the participants are viewed and constructed as "less developed" and "not mature" and, therefore, in need of change. Accordingly, through CO, the state seeks to use the participants' knowledge and experiences in order to make them realize that they have been wrong and need to modify their behaviours. Therefore, rather than being a form of empowering education, CO functions as an instrument that seeks to make prospective citizens fit into what is discursively articulated as a more "mature" and "developed" mould.

Consequently, it is fruitful to question what is *actually* meant by "values" as a whole. By following the intertextual links, we have shown how each individual link of "values" is slightly different. What "foundational values" (*värdegrund*) are cannot be established *a priori* but is the result of decisions and

choices. In policy documents, foundational values are never explicitly defined but acquire meaning by association to "human rights and democratic values". These word clusters, in turn, become discursive "common sense" constructions (Fairclough, 2001). Such constructions are difficult to spot or even question as they are thought to be universally shared and therefore do not necessitate further definition. However, it is when implementing policy that the meanings of "values" come to surface and become more explicit.

In a macro discursive context, where discussions about migration and integration policies are formulated in terms of the nation and Swedishness, concepts such as "democracy", "human rights", and "gender equality" are co-opted into marking a boundary between the Swedish Self and the Immigrant Other. Thus, instrumentalizing "foundational values" as part of what defines the nation is murky business as it risks particularizing such a shared foundation and simultaneously excluding those deemed not part of the nation. This is diametrically opposed to the principles of culturally relevant pedagogy, according to which we should be "asking a different question" and focusing on what knowledges and experiences those in the classroom already hold rather than on what we believe they do not (c.f. Ladson-Billings, 2021).

Throughout the data, "democratic" and "gender equality" keep reappearing. Our analysis has shown how these discursive constructions, as they move from macro to meso to micro level, become less abstract in their articulation. In practice, we see how the WVS is used to position Swedish values not only as the most extreme in the world but also as the best, most developed, and most mature. Crucially, when viewed in the light of the macro media discourse, "democratic" strongly collocates with "Sweden" and "Swedish" values in such a way that one only needs to see the one to think of the other (Baker et al., 2008, p. 11). Unsurprisingly, these articulations become most direct in the classroom, where the participants are constructed as the antithesis of "democratic" and are taught what "gender equality" is. We have seen multiple examples of articulations concerning choice and respect for individuals as being at the core of Swedish society, yet these are somehow contradictory to the rest of the discursive constructions due to the construction of Swedish values as inevitable and better than any other values. Although we do not propose cultural relativism as a solution, we argue that the homogenization of the rest of the world vis-à-vis Sweden makes a mutually constitutive and respectful dialogue impossible in practice.

While the aims of CO, as expressed in policy documents, seem closely related to culturally relevant pedagogy, our analysis has shown that it is not the case in practice.

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The authors declare no conflicts of interests.

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