



Immigrant Organizations and Labor Market Integration: The Case of Sweden

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Abstract

In line with recent trends in sociology of migration, the paper presents major research findings on Swedish immigrant organizations (SIOs) and their labor market integration activities. Analyses of engagement in these activities are particularly important as Sweden wrestles with significant problems of labor market marginalization, particularly among non-European migrants. Drawing on official data and interviews, we find surprisingly low incidence in direct labor market support but quite active indirect support. Our regression model shows significant correlation between region of origin and labor market activities, and further analyses using regional typologies indicate that SIOs' activities are partly driven by members' different modes of incorporation and relative integration, where Middle-Eastern SIOs stand out as particularly active. Our findings further indicate potential for scale-up of SIO-assistance in the Swedish Government's efforts towards increased immigrant labor market integration.

Keywords Migration, Immigrant organizations · Labor market integration · Sweden

Introduction

Labor market integration is officially viewed as key to the incorporation of immigrants into Swedish society (EU, 2020; Hellström, 2017), with integration being highly dependent on employment or labor market training in the Swedish language, social orientation, and other forms of vocational training (EU, 2020). There is however substantial marginalization of immigrants on the labor market with the largest gap in employment rates between native-born and immigrants among OECD countries (Statistics Sweden, 2021; OECD, 2016). Immigrants tend to have poorer

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knowledge of the Swedish language, lack of Swedish work experience, and fewer informal network contacts compared to natives. There is also evidence of labor market discrimination against immigrants and they tend to have more precarious and insecure jobs (Joyce, 2015; Bevelander & Irastorza, 2014; Bevelander & Pendakur, 2012; Bevelander, 2009). The gap is further explained by the high share of refugees and family dependents with lower human capital that often face difficulties in securing employment. Despite these problems, the role of immigrant organizations in labor market integration has not been studied comprehensively. Available sources indicate that their involvement could be advantageous due to multilingualism, exchanges of experiences, and social contacts that may lead to employment (Hellström, 2017). Yet, further studies are necessary in order to grasp their role.

To fill this research gap, this paper presents major findings based on research pertaining to activities performed by Swedish immigrant organizations (hereafter SIOs) receiving official state support in the period between 2015 and 2017. Specifically, we analyze their labor market integration activities and various constraints in the Swedish context. We draw on official data from the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society and interviews conducted with organization leaders. Our project follows a recent line of migration research elevating the unit of analysis from individuals and families to organizations. Country case studies involving immigrant organizations representing different ethnic communities seem particularly well-suited for this type of research since organizations' interactions with host countries have been found to be rather complex, with significant variation from case to case (Portes, 2015; Pries & Sezgin, 2012).

Sweden constitutes a particularly interesting case study for research on immigrant organizations for a number of reasons. First, Swedish population records one of the largest proportions of people with immigrant backgrounds. The total population exceeds 10 million, with some 19.6% born in another country, a figure rising to 25.5% including also persons born in Sweden with both parents born in another country (Statistics Sweden, 2020a). These rapidly changing population dynamics are evident in that the foreign-born population made up a mere 11.3% in 2000, some 70% of population growth in 2019 has been attributed to immigration (Statistics Sweden, 2020b),¹ and Sweden registered an unprecedented number of asylum-seekers in 2015, by far the largest per-capita inflow in Europe (Sandberg, 2018). Second, the country presents a historic presence of immigrant organizations dating back to the nineteenth century (Dahlstedt, 2003), with state support since 1975 (Byström & Frohnert, 2017). Most importantly, there is but limited research on SIOs' labor market integration activities. Sweden has not been included in recent international comparative studies (e.g., Portes & Fernández-Kelly, 2015; Pries & Sezgin, 2012), and existing studies on SIOs are few and rather outdated.

The next section presents relevant existing research on immigrant organizations and integration, followed by a section on the Swedish case where we present contextual overviews of labor market integration and the role of SIOs. The fourth section

¹ Syrians make up the largest share of foreign-born persons in Sweden, followed by immigrants from Iraq, Finland, Poland, Iran, Afghanistan and Somalia.

contains information on the methodology and data used in our research, while we present results in the fifth section. The discussion section further explains our findings in terms of organizational members' relative degree of integration on the Swedish labor market and assimilation into Swedish society. The final section presents our conclusions and recommendations.

Existing Research on Immigrant Organizations and Integration

The sociology of migration has traditionally focused on either micro-level of individuals and households or on the macro-level of national migration regimes and global trends. Aggregate decisions of individual migrants and their families have been found to have profound effects on both sender and receiving countries (e.g., Massey et al., 1999; Morales & Giugni, 2010). With the advent of transnationalism, here viewed as increased interaction and connectivity across national borders, there has been an increased focus on transnational activities by immigrant organizations (Morales & Ramiro, 2011; Portes & Fernández-Kelly, 2015; Pries & Sezgin, 2012).

Empirical research indicates that governments can benefit considerably from the activities of immigrant organizations. Available sources suggest that they can have a strong impact on incorporation and contribute to the integration of newcomers (Nijenhuis & Zoomers, 2015, p. 238). Portes et al. (2008) find that such organizations often play an important role in terms of civic and political integration despite their transnational identity. Underestimating their capacity in terms of contributions to the receiving country would therefore be a mistake. In a similar vein, Somerville et al. (2008) argue that diaspora organizations and so-called hometown associations have the potential to act as «integration intermediaries» (p. 14) in receiving countries. Based on a cross-national study, they conclude that organizations of this type are crucial in terms of spreading information about community services to newcomers and that they constitute breeding grounds for the attainment of civic skills. They also emphasize that the organizations often provide a wide range of services such as language courses, labor market training, and health services. Consequently, authorities' stronger emphasis on partnerships «may be a productive means to reach their intended clientele» (p. 15). Wessendorf and Phillimore (2019) further highlight organizations' relevance in demonstrating the important contribution of social relations with co-ethnics and other migrants for a sense of belonging while gaining access to resources supporting integration.

Most European cases demonstrate evolutions of organizations' focus that typically begins with settlement and focus on host-country integration, followed by increased professionalization and subsequent focus also on activities directed towards countries of origin (Lacroix & Dumont, 2015). Country cases across Europe demonstrate vast heterogeneity in activities and foci depending on the country of origin. Yet, cultural activities assume a great importance across European cases (Portes & Fernández-Kelly, 2015). In contrast to established research on US immigrant organizations and their significant host-country-directed activities (Portes et al., 2008), research at the European level on immigrant organizations' contribution to integration is still in its infancy (Nijenhuis & Zoomers, 2015). However, based on recent research there

seem to be some discernible differences pertaining to formalization of host-country integration efforts, such as labor market integration activities.

Existing research on the Swedish case indicates that employment activities of immigrant organizations for the purpose of integration has been problematic. Despite the contemporary significance of network governance and partnership with civil society actors, such undertakings have often been managed in a top-down fashion without offering a substantial role to SIOs and other stakeholders (cf. Emilsson, 2015; Lidén et al., 2015; Ålund et al., 2008). Hellström (2017) argues that the Swedish case of general marginalization of immigrant organizations as integration intermediaries stands in stark contrast to countries, like Canada, where immigrant organizations are vital in the realization of public services. Similarly, Scaramuzzino (2013) finds that while their capacity to voice interests and needs within their communities is considered important, their contributions have not been fully prioritized, they have often found it difficult to compete with other collaboration partners, and their role has largely been consultative and many organizations are not cooperating with state authorities. This may also reflect the fact that civil society organizations in Sweden have historically been amalgamated with the state in a form of corporativism, providing them primarily with an advisory role in organizing welfare and social services. In retrospect, their institutional function has not been associated with the delivery of such services until very recently (Wijkström, 2015). In the process of contributing more actively to public goals like integration, this may imply path dependence where immigrant organizations find it difficult to adapt to new demands and expectations (Scaramuzzino, 2013).

Overview of Sweden's Labor Market Integration and Policies

Labor Market Integration

Integration is currently a main political concern in Sweden, partly due to increasing polarization on the Swedish labor market and slow integration, exacerbated by the entrenchment of a new migration regime. As discussed above, Sweden has performed rather poorly in terms of labor market integration. This is particularly the case for refugees, where recent data from Statistics Sweden (2021) show that in 2019, labor participation among refugees aged between 20 and 64 was 59.9%, compared to 77.3% among other immigrants, and 86.2% among native Swedes.

Furthermore, Swedish labor market integration of refugees is particularly slow. Registry data for refugees aged 20–64 who arrived in 2000 shows that it took 8 years before 50% of the refugees were working. While the majority of refugees spend the first 2 years upon receiving a residence permit in education and introduction programs, some 43% of men and 26% of women worked after 5 years. After 15 years in Sweden, refugee working rates of 64% among men and 59% among women are still lagging well behind natives' working rates, where 83% of men and 82% of women work. Slow labor market integration has been found to have detrimental effects for certain migrant groups. In 2014, Sweden registry data on median labor income for foreign-born aged 30–55 show that median labor income remains zero during

4 years after arrival among immigrants from Iraq and Eritrea, while remaining zero for 9 years among Somalian migrants (Statistics Sweden, 2017).

The country's industrial and economic expansion between 1950 and 1970s primarily attracted labor migrants, whereas in recent years migrants to Sweden have tended to be refugees and family dependents. Out of a total of 814,293 granted residence permits during the period between 2010 and 2016, over half, or 442,722 permits pertain to family reunifications and asylum seekers, compared with 161,954 permits for labor migrants and 73,610 for students (Swedish Migration Board, 2021). The new migration regime entails a unique shift from supply to demand-driven labor migration from countries outside of the EU and was introduced in December of 2008 to ease labor shortages while meeting the demographic challenges of an aging population. Essentially, any migrant with an employment contract with stipulated salary requirements is granted a work permit in Sweden (Emilsson et al., 2014).

While integration measures have existed since the 1970s, amalgamation with regular labor market measures has become increasingly stronger. At present, the Swedish model is one with minimum labor market integration policy or program targeting immigrants per se. The exception is the Establishment Program provided by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, where labor market training in the form of language courses, social orientation, and vocational training are associated with integration (SKR, 2020). Apart from the Establishment Program, immigrants have access to the same general benefits and support and must abide by the same general rules, as any unemployed citizen in Sweden (EU, 2020). This position has been further strengthened and recent governments have focused on incorporating newly arrived immigrants in various, general introduction programs provided by public authorities, notably the Public Employment Service and the Swedish Social Insurance Agency. Migrants are thereby requested to improve their chances of securing employment through various forms of education and validation of existing skills. Hence, whereas outright demands on integration are largely unexpressed in policies, the issue is rather being addressed through requests for active labor market training and general unemployment benefits. For instance, the introduction of benefits, provided to all unemployed citizens by the Swedish Social Insurance Agency, plays a crucial role in this respect. The allowance currently amounts to 231 SEK per day, increasing to 308 SEK per day once the Public Employment Service has made an agreement with the applicant regarding the required type of training. Additional benefits are provided in the form of rent supplements and allowances for applicants with children. Benefits are conditional and subject to reduction or suspension once the applicant's behavior deviates from agreed stipulations with the employment service, e.g., by not applying for jobs or refusing to participate in training (Swedish Public Employment Service, 2021).

The emphasis on employment and the limited attention to other possible integration measures suggest that Sweden has adopted a narrow approach to migrant incorporation with high expectations on the process of acculturation. To essentially view integration as synonymous with employment appears to be associated with the assumption that migrants are prepared to adjust to the demands of assimilationist labor market policies and their behavioral nudges. While labor market inclusion is

important, integration processes are usually complex and must also be understood against the backdrop of aspects like social safety, access to social networks, and the prevalence of social and political institutions that correspond to the plethora of capabilities and needs that exist in culturally diverse societies (cf. Ager & Strang, 2008; Berry, 2005). In this respect, there seems to be a need for more diversity-based and flexible integration policies in the Swedish case (cf. Zapata-Barrero, 2015).

Role of SIOs

SIOs covered in this study were founded during different times after WWII, partly reflecting Swedish migration waves during the post-war period. The first SIOs, with members from the Baltic countries were founded during Sweden's industrial expansion and labor migration between 1945 and 1969. Subsequently, seven SIOs with more varied origins were founded between 1970 and 1980. A larger expansion of 16 additional SIOs took place between 1991 and 2000 as Swedish migration had drastically changed from labor to refugee and family-dependent migration. The relatively large increase in SIOs during this period is also a result of the fact that it coincided with the disintegration of Yugoslavia, resulting in the fragmentation into several new SIOs. Finally, an additional 18 SIOs with varying origins were founded between 2001 and 2013 during the continued dominance of refugee and family-dependent migration.

It is important to note that there is no formal distinction in Sweden between immigrant and ethnic organizations. Eligibility for state-funding requires that at least 51% of an organization's members have immigrant background, that activities are non-profit, and the total number of paying members exceeds 1000 persons either centrally or locally affiliated (Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society, 2018). Descriptive statistics reveal that SIOs receive relatively low state support with median benefits at roughly US30,000 per year, which constitutes on average roughly 56% of organizations' total budgets. SIOs in our dataset have operated on average 23 years in Sweden, where organizational members range from 244 to 8662 nationwide. There is roughly equal representation of female and male members and SIOs have on average 18 local organizations throughout the country.² The majority of SIOs (approximately 73%) are either small or very small, with roughly 15% here categorized as large and 11.5% vary large.³

As reported by Frödin et al. (2021), policies of sponsoring immigrant organizations are grounded in the Nordic popular movement of societal integration through membership in groups and organizations. Apart from linkages to the wider structure of popular movements, these policies are directly aligned with its particular democratic and bureaucratic ideals. The former requires organizational structures that mirror their members' preferences, while the latter calls for formalized management based on rules and impersonal principles, with democratically elected leadership.

² For details on organizational statistics, please see Table 2 in appendix.

³ For distribution of size across our sample, please see Fig. 3 in appendix.

This bureaucratic norm is in turn largely based on the idea that civil society organizations provide members with a collective voice and entrance into the country's political system (Takle, 2015). Hence, understanding of support to immigrant organizations must move beyond an ethnic lens and also be understood in the wider context in which civic associations are expected to contribute to integrating the wider population (not merely immigrants) into the political system. There has however been a debate regarding immigrants' receiving support for organizing on ethnic grounds that dates back to the 1960s. Policies of support to immigrant organizations have effectually been ambivalent as they have oscillated between a Canadian-influenced multiculturalism (i.e., preservation and reproduction of immigrants' ethnic and cultural traits) and assimilation (Dahlström, 2004).

By the 1980s, Sweden had established a bureaucratically-structured system of national associations that were incorporated into the larger system of state institutions, political parties, and other civil society associations. Local immigrant organizations had to merge into one national association in order to receive support. This corporatist system has undergone significant changes during the last four decades, with a substantial weakening of the close ties between the state and interest groups, and shifted focus between multiculturalism and assimilation. This rather ambivalent partnership between the Government and SIOs could be traced to major changes in required integration efforts during the last two decades. That is, significant differences in required integration efforts between those stipulated in SFS 2008: 63 and those in SFS 2000: 63. Based on the Government's position in 1997 that financial support to ethnic organizations ought to be aligned with political goals for integration (Government of Sweden, 1998), regulation SFS 2000:16 stipulates that state-funding requires organizations to demonstrate clearly that their activities promote integration. In fact, the regulation stipulated that state funding required organizations' demonstration of at least 2 years of work promoting integration, accompanied with detailed plans outlining how the organizations would enhance integration during the next 3 years. These requirements, and political integration targets, were removed in regulation SFS 2008: 63. The current declared aim of state financial support for ethnic organizations is to strengthen activities pertaining both to culture, language, identity, and participation in society. Furthermore, the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (2018), separates this type of financial support from other state-provided benefits for organizations, as support for SIOs expects effects neither on recipients' position on an individual level nor on a societal level. Simultaneously, the agency expects participation requirements to lead to an elevated level of participation in Swedish society by both beneficiary organizations and their members.

Methodology and Data

Our research process has primarily been guided by the following two research questions:

Rq 1: How engaged are SIOs in labor market integration activities? Relative to their other activities?

Rq 2: Which types of labor market integration activities do SIOs primarily focus on?

In addition, a secondary aim has been to shed further light on which drivers are discernable behind observed activity levels, how SIOs could plausibly be typologized to account for systematic divergencies in activity foci, and which contextual and structural constraints may inhibit SIOs' activities.

We used a mixed-methods approach where we combined documentary and quantitative analyses of SIOs' submitted annual reports with semi-structured interviews. This approach was deemed optimal in order to both analyze activities pertaining to our two research questions and obtain contextual and structural information not provided in the standard annual reports. The first step in our research process involved documentary analysis and creating a database in Excel where we inserted all relevant information from SIO annual reports submitted to the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society. These consist of a section of standard numerical data required by the funding agency, audited financial statements, and detailed accounts of operations and activities performed during the fiscal year 2016. To map out organizational characteristics, organizational data on SIOs were tabulated and analyzed using the SPSS statistical software. We discarded six of the total of 58 SIOs obtaining funds, five of which constitute national umbrella organizations for the other SIOs, and one SIO failing to submit an annual report in 2017. Hence, all analyses after this initial stage have been conducted using $N=52$ organizations.

To analyze types and levels of SIOs' activities pertaining to research question 1, we organized information from SIOs' submitted annual reports in a first cycle of coding according to found activities. Following Ragin's (1987) QCA method, we mapped out found activities using Boolean algebra in a general truth table where SIOs received the score of «1» if they engage in an activity, and a score of «0» if they do not. Second cycle coding resulted in a more condensed truth table covering the twelve types of activities with the highest frequency. These activities include labor market support, non-labor related integration, political opinion/lobbying, parties and festivities, development projects, cultural activities involving home culture, home-country holiday celebrations, information on home-country politics and elections, social work and health services, women's activities, children's and sports activities, and economic and legal counseling.

Pertaining to the relative focus on labor market integration activities in research question 2, we first conducted further analyses on systematic differences concerning the twelve activities in focus using comparative incidence (i.e., percentage of activity within each size or region). Subsequent QCA analyses focused on labor market integration activities in Sweden—a research site deemed particularly important as Sweden struggles with pronounced labor market marginalization of immigrants (Calmfors et al., 2018).

Our secondary aim to explore systematic differences in SIOs' activities first centered on regression analyses to test potential correlations between activities and a set of independent variables found in the annual reports. We thereafter complemented

statistical tests with analyses using typologies, an analytical heuristic that enables comparative analyses with small-N and substantial heterogeneity. After testing different typologies, we have opted for two major type-categories: size and geographical regions of origin. First, we recoded organization-size measured by the total number of members into an ordinal variable of four different categories. These categories range from very small (244–1500 members), Small (1501–2500 members), Large (2501–5000 members), and Very Large (5001–8662 members) covering the entire range in our dataset from 244 to 8662 members. Our operative typology on regions contains four types, where type 1 pertains to SIOs with European origin, type 2 with those from the MENA region, type 3 with organizations from Asia, and type 4 pertaining to those from Africa.⁴ This region-based typology captures differences in modes of incorporation and relative degrees of integration on the Swedish labor market and in society at large, while indirectly covering time spent in Sweden. To further test the regional typology, we ran a hierarchical regression model controlling for size.

In parallel, we conducted semi-structured interviews with organizational leaders to gather in-depth information pertaining to research questions 1 and 2, while furthering our secondary aim of exploring contextual and structural constraints that may inhibit SIOs' activities. We used stratified random sampling, with a random selection of an equal number of organizations pertaining to each of our four regional types. This sampling design turned into convenience sampling about halfway through the interview process, as remaining organizational leaders declined to be interviewed. Our final sample ($n=18$) includes five SIOs pertaining to type 1, five SIOs from type 2, three SIOs from type 3, and four SIOs pertaining to Type 4.

Interview data were analyzed using the Nvivo analytical software, with a second-cycle thematic coding in terms of key activities. In spite of likely biases in subjective remembering and recalling of past events and activities (Simandan, 2019; Kahneman, 2011), these interviews provided important information and examples of different objectives, historic backgrounds, and contextual factors within which key activities were performed.

Results

Activities in Annual Reports

In aggregate, SIOs engage in a limited number of activity types, with a handful of organizations showing an elevated number of types undertaken. On average, SIOs engage in 5.19 types of activities, with a median of 5, and 6 types being the most frequent value and a standard deviation of 2.142. Incidence rates for the 52 SIOs, based on Boolean algebra of «0» and «1» for each of the 12 activities (max score 12), shows that most SIOs are neither very active nor very inactive. None of the SIOs are «all-in» (score of 12/12) or «all-out» (0/12), with frequencies clustering

⁴ For details on countries in each regional typology, please see Table 1 in appendix.

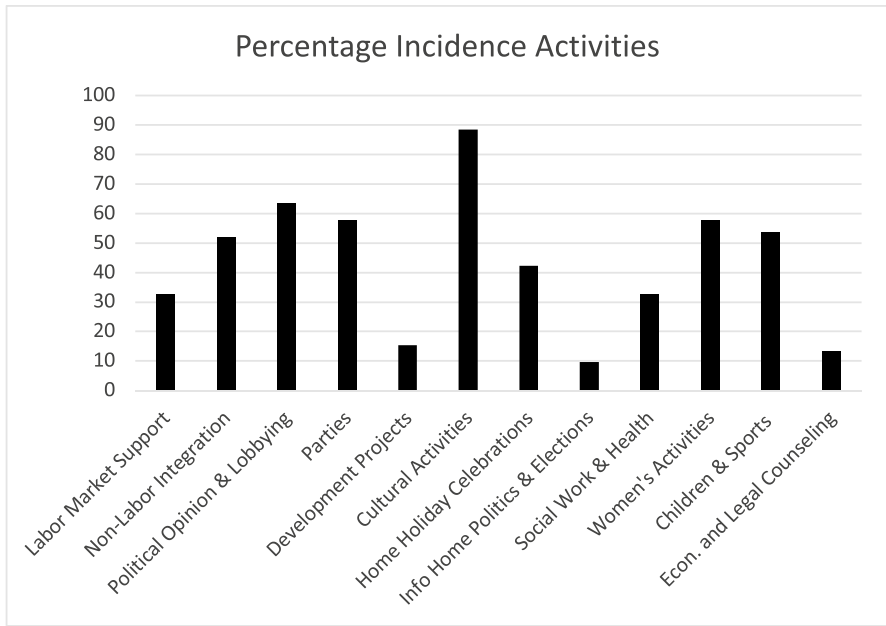


Fig. 1 Incidence of Particular Activities

more towards medium-to-lower levels of types of activities. Figure 1 above shows that the greatest number of SIOs engage in cultural activities (88.50% of SIOs). Pertaining to research question 1, less than one-third (32.7%) of SIOs engage in labor market support activities.

Tests of correlations reveal that both size and regions of origin are statistically correlated with total activities engagement. Comparison of means tests reveals a statistically significant correlation between size and total activities ($p = .043$) where size explains some 15.5% of variances in total activities ($\eta^2 = .155$). Potentially an even stronger driver of total activities, region of origin is statistically significant ($p = .011$) and explains a larger share of variances in total activities at roughly 21% ($\eta^2 = .206$).

We control for size in our hierarchical multiple regression model and find that model 1 explains some 11% of variances in total activities ($R^2 = .110$), while model 2 that also includes region of origin, with African SIOs as the reference category, explains roughly 27% of variances in total activities ($R^2 = .269$). Hence, our model leaves some 73% of variances in total activities unexplained, while the explanatory value increases by roughly 16 percentage points when we include region of origin. It is however important to point out that while our model is statistically significant, and does not violate MRA assumptions, the MENA-dummy is the only statistically significant region-dummy, indicating that SIOs from the MENA-region engage on average in two types of activities more than the African.⁵

⁵ For more details pertaining to our model, please see Table 3 in appendix.

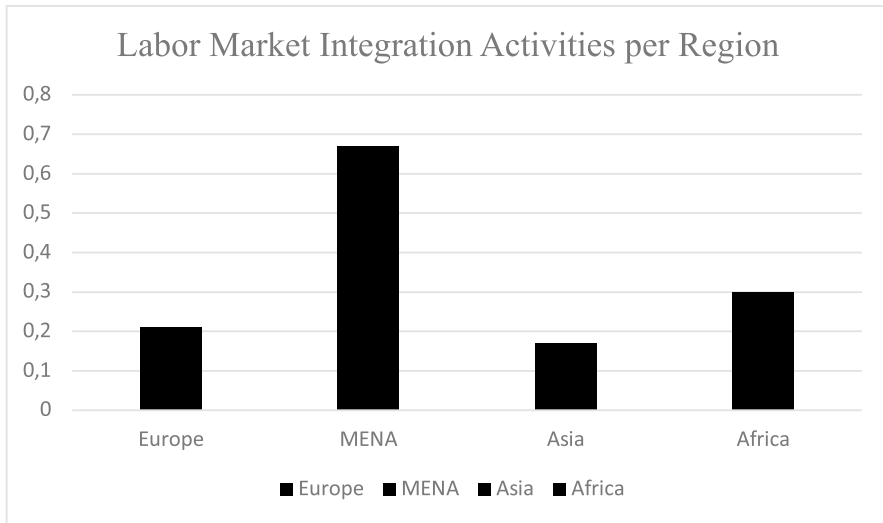


Fig. 2 Labor Market Integration Activities per Region

Breaking down the analysis to labor market integration activities, we find a fairly strong (Cramer's $V = .406$) and statistically significant correlation between region and labor market support activities ($p = .036$). Comparison of within-group incidences in Fig. 2 above shows that MENA-region SIOs clearly score the highest in labor market support activities (incidence rate of 67%). In contrast, European SIOs score second-lowest on labor market support (at 21%). Asian SIOs' demonstrate the lowest incidence of all regional types in labor-market support activities, with only 17% engaging in such activities, and lastly, African SIOs incidence in labor-market support activities is also comparatively low at 30%, plausibly due to their overwhelmingly small size.

In terms of research question 2, our findings suggest that activities targeted towards employment per se are rare, while support activities related to integration are more frequent. A majority of SIOs report activities such as training in social/civic skills, language training, and social orientations. Training or education that aim to increase human capital appears to be the most common labor market integration activities, and include, for instance, courses in Swedish and English, courses in entrepreneurship, civics, information technology, accounting, courses in CV-writing, schooling, and assistance with homework for children. This is followed by the dissemination of information about the labor market to unemployed members, newly arrived immigrants, or countrymen who intend to migrate. Occasionally, these activities occur in projects with specific target groups, such as unemployed women or people with disabilities, often carried out in partnership with a Swedish study association or through external funding. Yet, collaboration with agencies like the Swedish Public Employment Agency is rare and was only reported by nine organizations. Activities directly associated with employment such as mediation of traineeships are also rare—only three organizations in our sample reported such undertakings.

Results from Interviews⁶

Pertaining to research question 2, most of the interviewed representatives explained that their organizations have been active in various types of labor market support. At the same time, the level of engagement varies from case to case. Some of them stressed the importance of assisting members to integrate on the labor market while others took a laxer approach. The interviews suggest that the scale of unemployment among members or the group that the organization represents partly explains these variances. Thus, if the incidence of unemployment is high, the organization may prioritize activities that potentially lead to employment, whereas the opposite is discernible among organizations with a higher degree of employed members.

An example pertains to organizations established during the waves of labor immigration to Sweden in the 1960s and 1970s. Representatives of these organizations often emphasized that labor market support no longer is a major concern since most members already have a job (SIO 1; SIO 2). For one of them, the purpose of the organization is rather to sustain cultural ties to the home country in response to the hybrid cultural belonging that has emerged in their community after many years in Sweden (SIO 1).

By comparison, the need for support seems more acute among organizations where the incidence of unemployment among the members is perceived to be higher. Representatives of these communities conveyed an account of activities and approaches that differs from the aforementioned group. Yet, the number and types of activities that the organizations employ to solve these problems vary. Some organizations are working to identify jobs that match the skills of their members (SIO 5; SIO 6) or have established contacts with the public employment agency (SIO 7; SIO 8; SIO 5), while others mainly provide information about educational requirements and employment procedures (SIO 9) or share tips and advice about job opportunities within their networks (SIO 10). A possible reason resides with the profile of these organizations. Some of them (SIO 9; SIO 11) are focusing extensively on political issues that relate to the home country, while others concentrate more on social problems facing their community in Sweden (SIO 5). Further explanations could be the intensity of migration flows from the home country, ethnic discrimination in the labor market, and stocks of human capital that newcomers could tap into when arriving in Sweden. Such aspects, or a combination of them, were sometimes said to influence the rate of employment among members and the need for support (SIO 6; SIO 9; SIO 5; SIO 12; SIO 13; SIO 14).

A case in point is SIO 5, which engages ardently to break the frequency of unemployment among the members. Since difficulties of securing employment relate to numerous, simultaneous disadvantages, such as illiteracy, age, discrimination, and intergenerational unemployment, the organization is engaged in information campaigns that initially aim to create public awareness of the problems and subsequently to find specific solutions based on these circumstances. These efforts are mainly directed towards municipalities where the members reside and to businesses

⁶ The names of SIOs have been anonymized in order to protect confidentiality of the informants.

associated with the chamber of commerce in which the organization is involved. Cooperation is also established with labor market pilots that are invited on a regular basis to provide members with information on job opportunities. In addition, the labor market is continuously surveilled to identify professions in need of employees that members could apply to, alternatively prepare for, through education and training.

Similar activities were mentioned by the representatives of the other organizations in this group. SIO 15, for instance, offers training on how to write a CV, translates job announcements from Swedish into the mother tongue of the community, and provides assistance to members who will conduct theory tests for a Swedish driving license. A further example is SIO 5 which evaluates foreign qualifications for members looking for work in Sweden, establishes action plans for job seekers, and arranges labor market workshops. Activities of this type were also mentioned by the representatives of SIO 13 and SIO 6, and have occasionally paved the way for traineeships and regular employment. A common feature among these organizations is that they represent people from non-European countries and newly arrived immigrants. As a result, they are often involved in coaching in the Swedish language, social orientation, and other forms of vocational training that could potentially raise levels of human capital and integration. Such coaching is often conducted in cooperation with Swedish study associations, like the Workers' Educational Association (ABF).

In addition to coaching, some of them emphasize social aspects and the importance of adjusting to Swedish norms. The representative of SIO 5, for instance, reported that the organization contributes to a higher degree of awareness among members about Swedish culture and social values, particularly in terms of «do's and don'ts» of social life. In a similar vein, the representative of SIO 13 underscored that a key aim of the organization is to push members to adjust to the secular political culture in Sweden, and to «wake up» from the restraints of religion in the home country. According to the representative of SIO 10, adaptation to the rules of associational life in Sweden inevitably also means that members are trained in democratic decision-making. Engaging with the organization, therefore, entails an educational dimension that is assumed to benefit Swedish society as a whole, and possibly also the chances of members entering the labor market.

Thus, our interview-data point to the fact that many of the organizations are engaged in activities that are indirectly associated with labor market integration. As stated previously, the current policy framework is not targeting employment per se. The development of skills that supposedly enhance the possibility of employment is deemed equally important and is often synonymous with integration. In this respect, our findings indicate that SIOs engage both in regular procedures of job seeking and various forms of training that correspond to these ends. A further conclusion is that selected undertakings are partly driven by the needs of the community the organizations represent. While organizations whose members suffer from joblessness appear to engage more in labor market support, the opposite seems to be the case among SIOs with a higher degree of integrated members. By comparison, these findings align well with findings in the analysis of submitted annual reports presented above. The interviews suggest that mainly organizations with non-European

origin are engaged in labor market support, while a different pattern is discernable among organizations of European descent or those with proximity to Europe. As mentioned before, the reasons to this could be regional origin, which seems to correlate with the incidence of labor market support activities. These correlations are possibly also strengthened by the fact that the interviewed organizations with several activities are large and represent immigrants from countries that generally have the highest rate of unemployment in Sweden.

Contributing to our secondary aim, interviews provided information on contextual and structural constraints facing SIOs. They reveal a major constraint pertaining to size in that most of SIOs' members are rather old and they have had severe difficulties attracting new and younger members. The demographic mismatch between predominantly older members and comparatively young populations immigrating to Sweden during the last 20 years, is partly behind the fact that SIO members constitute a relatively low representation of quite large diasporas in Sweden. Moving beyond but incorporating the driving factors of size and region, we discuss below a set of contextual factors that could further explain our results. In essence, we propose that SIOs' respective engagements depend on identified, particular needs and priorities of SIOs' members that partly result from their relative degree of integration and assimilation in Sweden, and the particular Swedish state-SIO context.

Discussion

It seems quite logical that greater membership numbers would produce greater diversity of needs, which in turn would drive engagement in more types of activities. As pointed out by Babis (2016), it is rather difficult to ascertain how immigrant organizations impact segmented assimilation and the rather complex integration processes, particularly since these processes are long-term, resulting from numerous interrelated factors pertaining both to the individual and to structure (Portes & Zhou, 1993). In addition, small differences in terms of individuals' network relations and connections with others may produce disproportionately large aggregated effects (Hedström, 2005). However, in our study, SIOs' engagement in labor market support seems to be partly driven by members' relative degree of integration on the Swedish labor market and assimilation into Swedish society. This in turn seems to depend on time spent in Sweden and particular modes of incorporation. Along these lines, the elevated engagement in labor market support activities among MENA-region SIOs could be attributed to the fact that immigrants from the region remain relatively marginalized on the Swedish labor market and poorly integrated in society at large, with predominant refugee- and family-dependent immigration. Furthermore, their registering the highest score on social gathering activities may be explained by a relative lack of assimilation into Swedish society, whereby in-group socialization becomes inherently important.

Along these lines, the comparatively low scores in labor-market support by European SIOs are arguably due to their relatively long time spent in Sweden, where members have mainly immigrated in times of labor migrant incorporation. Hence members have comparatively limited needs for integration activities. For instance, several of the

«oldest» European SIOs, like those from the Baltics and Southern Europe, have since long accomplished economic integration and seem to focus much of their organizational efforts on preserving ethnic cultures. The comparatively high score on political opinion and lobbying activities suggests that the long-time in Sweden and relatively high degree of assimilation enables SIOs to navigate Swedish policymaking and media. This inference would plausibly explain in reverse the relatively low, within-group social activities organized by European SIOs as assimilation into Swedish society has progressed with time. Asian SIOs' low engagement in labor market support activities is perhaps expected since they represent immigrants who are relatively well integrated on the Swedish labor market, many of whom have been incorporated in Sweden through labor migration. However, the comparatively high incidence rate of 67% in non-labor integration activities, together with their high engagement in social activities indicate that members are not yet fully assimilated in Swedish society. Lastly, we had expected even higher engagement in labor-market support activities to ameliorate prevalent labor market marginalization among many African immigrant groups in Sweden (Calmfors et al., 2018).

Limitations

There are important caveats pertaining to our presented findings presented as our methodology and data have inherent limitations. First, we have analyzed the 52 national organizations and their local affiliates receiving state funds as ethnic organizations, while there are an estimated total of 3500 immigrant organizations in Sweden. However, most of these other organizations are difficult to analyze since they are not legally bound to publicly disclose their operations and they are notoriously difficult to access (Dahlstedt, 2003; Scaramuzzino, 2013). Second, there is an inherent bias in our data as they pertain exclusively to SIOs' self-reported activities—hence, activities may intentionally or unintentionally have been excluded from such reporting, particularly in cases where such activities are not compatible with funding requirements and guidelines. Third, found statistical correlations carry the caveat that we are dealing with small-N, requiring further analyses using measures of incidence and typology. There are most definitely alternative ways of systematizing and categorizing such information. Fourth, while interviews were conducted in order to move beyond the presence/absence of an activity, such knowledge has been limited by the fact that our sample was reduced to 18 organizations due to the remaining being unavailable for interviews. It should be noted that our research project has coincided with an increasingly heated debate in media concerning potential fraudulent behavior by immigrant organizations in Sweden, a reason raised by several organization-leaders for abstaining from interviews.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Drawing on official data and interviews, we find engagement in labor market integration activities in roughly one-third of all SIOs, which is substantially lower than those found in cultural and political activities. We further find rather low incidence

of direct labor market activities (e.g., job matching and formal partnerships with the public employment agency), but quite active indirect support activities (e.g., further education, CV writing, and provision of information about educational requirements and employment procedures). To fully answer our two research questions and arrive at holistic accounts of immigrant organizational activities, these findings should be coupled with existing analyses of individual and household-level factors. Inaction or relatively low levels of labor market integration activity in certain organizations may well be attributed to individuals or households tapping into other social networks or finding alternative ways to satisfy employment needs.

Pertaining to our secondary aim, Middle-eastern SIOs stand out as particularly active and we propose that region of origin captures an important chain of driving factors, where labor market support activity levels seem to depend partly on the length of establishment in Sweden and mode of incorporation. Hence, accumulated understanding of organizational migration is likely to be driven by multi-level, mid-range theories (Merton, 1936; Portes, 2010), drawing on evidence from numerous case-study analyses using ideal types as an analytic heuristic. Our region-based typologization provides one such foundation for ideal-type analyses in future research—findings presented in this paper indirectly cover historic shifts in immigration policies with varying modes of incorporation of immigrants.

We further propose that the particular state-SIO nexus in Sweden provides contextual factors that influence SIOs' operations, inferring that SIOs' numerous activities are achieved in spite of an ambivalent and historically paradoxical, state-assigned role. Hence, while SIOs operate in a particular organizational context, this Swedish case study contributes to ongoing international research where future research on immigrant organizations and their activities must account for proper contextualization in countries' particular political systems. Furthermore, while labor market inclusion is certainly of significant importance in increasingly segmented societies, integration measures and particular capabilities of newcomers seem misaligned with «one-size-fits-all,» assimilationist solutions often pursued by employment agencies. The use of an overly rigid approach inhibits flexibility which is necessary in order to meet demographic challenges of talent and experience (cf. Zapata-Barrero, 2015).

Finally, the results of our study point to potentials for increased state-SIO collaboration, as well as investigating other forms of their utilization to spur integration. Major transformations have led to increased labor market segmentation by way of bifurcation (Calmfors et al., 2018), with radical change in labor demand towards high skills and specific knowledge and outsourcing low-skilled manufacturing jobs. On the one hand, the new economy provides ample opportunities for the upward mobility of highly-educated people, particularly in competitive industries in the global knowledge economy. On the other hand, low-skilled workers in the new economy increasingly find themselves redundant or stuck in precarious employment mainly in the service sector, competing for the 4–5% of all jobs in the Swedish economy that require little or no education (Sandberg, 2018). The

newly arrived immigrant law has so far not been able to accelerate labor market integration, and the state is increasingly having to battle downward mobilization among young, second-generation immigrants, with increased criminalization and radicalization. Direct and indirect labor support activities provided by SIOs could arguably be scaled-up through a strengthened Government mandate enhancing their opportunity structures and hence contribute even further in efforts to reduce the socio-economic exclusion of immigrants in post-industrial Sweden. This policy recommendation of scale-up would arguably require increased State-funding of SIOs, more adequately aligned with those obtained by other key civil society organizations partnering with the Swedish state. As mentioned above, the majority of SIO budgets are provided by The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society. Yet, this state-funding amounts to a mere total of 25 million SEK (USD 2.17 million) annually to all SIOs, while the state provides over 260 million SEK (USD 22.6 million) in funding to a single civil society partner organization for overseas development assistance (Fredholm et al., 2022).

Furthermore, this recommended increased utilization of SIOs for labor market integration would in fact require a systematic shift. As mentioned above, the Swedish way of supporting immigrant organizations is based on the Nordic tradition of popular movements (*folkrörelser*), according to which different groups of society are politically represented through mass membership in civic organizations (Frödin et al., 2021). The idea behind this system is that membership in civil society organizations gives different groups a «voice function» in relation to the political system. At the same time, the popular movement organizations are to function as schools of democracy and administration. As schools of democracy, the popular movement organizations also have a «career function,» in that they enable social mobility for individual members, while also making up talent pools for the recruitment of future political leaders. As the popular movements grew in importance and size, they did not compete with public authorities as service providers. However, according to Wijkström (2015), there has been a tendency of popular movement organizations to assume various service functions since the 1990s. The historical role of civic organization likely explains the relatively low levels of service provision on the part of the investigated organizations. Thus, while the government could further mobilize immigrant organizations and promote them as vehicles for labor market integration, this would represent a break with the past role of civic organizations in the Swedish system.

Appendix

Table 1 Typology based on region of origin

Regional types and SIOs
Type 1 European region
Latvian National Association
Lithuanian National Association
Estonian National Association
Finnish National Association
Italian National Association
Serbian National Association in Sweden
Greek National Association
Hungarian National Association
Polish National Association
Croatian National Association
Portuguese National Association
Polish Congress in Sweden
Slovenian National Associations
Bosnian-Herzegovina National Association
Macedonian National Association
Serbian National Association
Banja Luka National Associations
Bosnian-Herzegovina Women's Association
Bosnian-Herzegovina Swedish Women's Association
Russian National Association
Albanian Union of Associations
Albanian Iliria National Association
Ukrainian Alliance
Bjeljina-Janja National Association
Type 2 MENA-region
Assyrian National Association
Kurdish National Association
Syrian National Association
Iranian Refugees' National Association
Kurdish Council
Iranian National Association
Kurdish Union National Association
Iranian and Kurdish Integration' National Association (I.K.I.R)
Kaldeian National Association
Swedish-Kurdish National Association
Yarsan National Association
Sunbul National Association

Table 1 (continued)

Regional types and SIOs
Type 3 Asian region
Armenian National Association
Bangladesh National Association
Chinese National Association
Sweden's Chinese National Association
Azarbajdzjani Congress
Mongolian National Association
Type 4 African region
ERIS Eritrean National Association
Eritrean National Association
Afro-Swedish National Association
Somalian National Association
Djibouti Women's National Association
Somaliland National Association
Sudanese National Association
Somalian Institute for Democratic Alternative
National Association Khaatumo State of Somalia
Tanzanian National Association

Table 2 General overview of SIOs' organizational feature

	Total	Average	Median	Minimum	Maximum
SIOs	52				
MUCF benefit 2017	18 505 000 SEK	319 925	29 6825	80 000	633 073
MUCF benefit 2015	18 424 999 SEK	260 908	278 977	0*	594 520
% MUCF benefit of Total revenues		55.62%	65.50%	0*	99%
Year of establishment			1994	1945	2013
Years of operations		23.25	20.50	2	70
Number of members	127 935	2 460	1 671	244	8662
% Female	51.3%				
% Male	48.7%				
Local associations	1 046	17.81	15.50	4	58
Municipalities		6.88	7	2	15

Table 3 Hierarchical regression model

Model summary									
Model	R	R square change	Std. error	R square change	F change	df1	df2	Sig. F	
1	.331a	.110	2.041	.110	6.167	1	50	.016	
2	.518b	.269	1.909	.159	3.403	3	47	.025	
a Predictors: (constant), total members									
b Predictors: (constant), total members, DummyEurope, DummyAsia, DummyMENA									
c Dependent variable: total activities									
ANOVA									
Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.			
1	Regression	25.700	1	25.700	6.167	.016b			
	Residual	208.377	50	4.168					
	Total	234.077	51						
2	Regression	62.882	4	15.721	4.316	.005c			
	Residual	171.195	47	3.642					
	Total	234.077	51						
a Dependent Variable: Total Activities									
b Predictors: (constant), total members									
c Predictors: (constant), total members, DummyEurope, DummyAsia, DummyMENA									
Coefficients									
Model	Unstandardized coefficients			Standardized coefficients					
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.				
1	(Constant)	4.330	.448	9.665	.000				
	Total Members	.000	.000	2.483	.016				

Table 3 (continued)

Model summary						
2	(Constant)	3.853	.643	5.988	.000	
	Total Members	.000	.000	2.003	.051	
	DummyEurope	.200	.733	.272	.786	
	DummyMENA	2.209	.842	2.623	.012	
	DummyAsia	.515	.986	.522	.604	

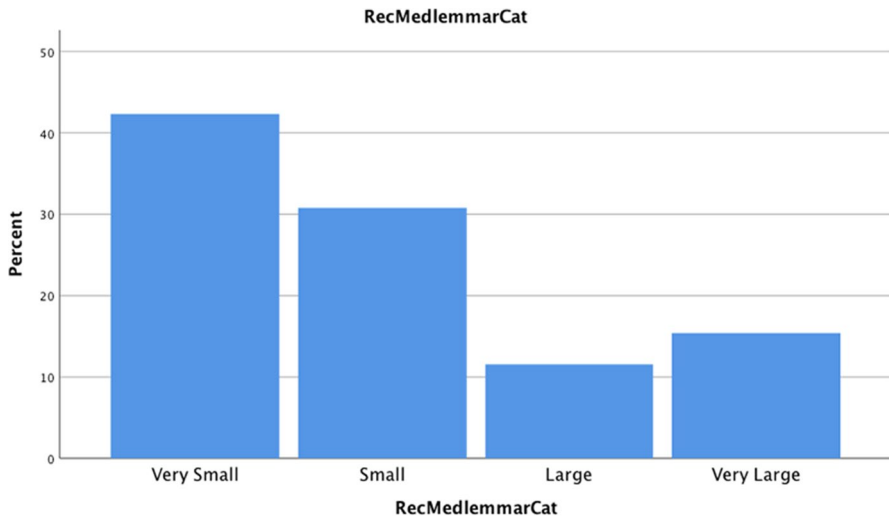


Fig. 3 Distribution of Organizational Member sizes

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