



INSTITUTIONEN FÖR SOCIALT ARBETE

Vem får stanna?

**Om politiska problemrepresentationer av
rätten att stanna i Sverige 1936–1989**

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av

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ABSTRACT

Title: Who gets to stay? On Political Problem Representations of the Right to stay in Sweden 1936–1989

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In 2015, the Swedish government restricted the right to stay in Sweden, to reduce the number of asylum seekers seeking protection in the country. Since then, it has established a restrictive migration policy that only allows people who require a residence permit to stay permanently if they become self-sufficient and are strictly law abiding. Based on a genealogical approach, the aim of this thesis is to analyze changes concerning the right to stay during the period 1936–1989, to make visible assumptions and conditions that underlie a contemporary understanding of this right. This concretely means analyzing the problem representations that precede changes in immigration legislation and related government guidelines, the assumptions on which these are based, as well as the effects in the form of technologies of government that follow from different problem representations. The data comprises 13 government reports and government bills published between 1936–1989. The study's theoretical framework rest on a Foucauldian approach, combined with combined with selected parts from Bacchi's analytical framework 'What's the Problem Represented to be?', and analytical concepts from governmentality research and critical border studies.

The analysis shows that problem representations of the right to stay during the studied periods (1930s, 1950s, 1960s and 1980s) have recurrently rested on an underlying assumption that the state is responsible for creating an ordered society. This kind of assumption has legitimized problem constructions and subsequent conditions for the right to stay – historically as well as in 2015 – as a way of achieving such an ideal. Although this type of assumption has existed for a long time, it has taken on a different meaning and form in relation to different discourses. For example, an assumption of state responsibility for an ordered society was clearly linked to an equality discourse during the 1960s, leading to state welfare initiatives as solutions to 'the problem'. Following from the individualized, workfare discourse of 2015, however, the solutions to contemporary problem representations and underlying assumptions instead target individual asylum seekers, requiring them to prove that they deserve the right to stay permanently in Swedish society by becoming self-sufficient subjects. Moreover, governance within Swedish migration control has undergone multiple shifts during the studied periods, alternating between focusing on controlling territorial borders and making non-citizens in the country adapt to national norms. The contemporary use of temporary residence permits to discipline those granted residence permits towards norms of being self-sufficient and law-abiding thus contains clear traces of historical modes of governance.

This study has shown, among other things, that problem representations of the right to stay continuously rest on distinctions between deserving and underserving categories of migrants, although these categories have altered over time. Historically and at present, categories such as 'bogus refugees' and so-called unwanted aliens – with 'socio-economic' or criminal motivations – have been constructed as undeserving, while hard-working and law-abiding migrants have been constructed as deserving. These constructions have linked the right to stay to notions of who is a 'good' citizen and has influenced people's access to social work services. At the same time, the study has shown that historical problem representations provide political alternatives, such as the possibility to represent problems of the right to stay based on people's basic need for security.