

## Researching the Dynamics of National Social Policy in a Globalized Society. A Proposal for a De-Nationalized Analytical Framework

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*Abstract:* Epistemological hierarchies in the social sciences stipulate that sedentarism is naturalised as a normality, and that mobility is viewed as a deviation. This article sets out to propose an analytical framework that takes the analysis beyond this kind of nationalized knowledge production, and to empirically show the gains of de-nationalized frameworks for analysis of social protection and dynamics of in-/equality in the globalised society. I will do this relying on the empirical example of the public old-age pension scheme in Sweden.

*Keywords:* Sweden, old-age pension, social policy, migration, transnationalism

### Erforschung der Dynamik der nationalen Sozialpolitik in einer globalisierten Gesellschaft. Ein Vorschlag für einen ent-nationalisierten analytischen Rahmen

*Zusammenfassung:* Epistemologische Hierarchien in den Sozialwissenschaften legen nahe, dass Sesshaftigkeit als Normalität und Mobilität als Abweichung betrachtet werden. Dieser Artikel will einen analytischen Rahmen vorschlagen, der über diese Art nationalisierter Wissensproduktionen hinausführt, und empirisch zeigen, welche Vorteile ent-nationalisierte Rahmen für die Analyse der sozialen Sicherung und der Dynamik von Un-/Gleichheit in der globalisierten Gesellschaft haben. Ich werde mich dabei auf das Beispiel des Rentensystems in Schweden stützen.

*Schlüsselwörter:* Schweden, Altersrente, Sozialpolitik, Migration, Transnationalismus

### A la recherche d'une dynamique de la politique sociale nationale dans une société globalisée. Une proposition de cadre analytique dénationalisé transnationalisme

*Résumé:* Les hiérarchies épistémologiques dans les sciences sociales stipulent que la sédentarité est naturalisée en tant que norme, et que la mobilité est considérée comme une déviation. Cet article a pour but de proposer un cadre analytique qui amène l'analyse au-delà de ce type de production de connaissances nationalisées, et de montrer empiriquement les gains des cadres dénationalisés pour l'analyse de la protection sociale et de la dynamique de l'in-/égalité dans la société globalisée. Pour ce faire, je m'appuierai sur l'exemple empirique du régime public de pension de vieillesse en Suède.

*Mots-clés:* Suède, rente vieillesse, politique sociale, migration, transnationalisme

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## 1 Introduction

The epistemological hierarchy between sedentarism and mobility in the social sciences mirrors and reproduces the Westphalian condition of societies in which territory and people are divided into states and members of states. This means that, while sedentarism is naturalized as a normality, mobility is viewed as a deviation in our understanding of societies. This relationship between sedentarism and mobility is very visible in analyses at the intersection of the national welfare state and international migration. Such analyses commonly reduce processes of migration into one of immigration and, similarly, put the analytical focus on the integration of newcomers into national welfare services and schemes. In response to the critique of this epistemological hierarchy between sedentarism and mobility, often referred to as the critique of methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003), in this article, I will propose a de-nationalized analytical framework which is sensitive to varying forms of mobility. In addition, I will also empirically show the gains of such frameworks for our understanding of social protection and dynamics of social in-/equality in contemporary societies. To do this I use the empirical example of the public old-age pension scheme in Sweden.

When the Swedish old-age pension was introduced in 1913, it was the first universal public insurance to be introduced world-wide. It was tax-financed and included all pensioners on equal terms; in that sense it is an extreme example of a *national* social security scheme. Naturally, “all” was not *all*, but was framed by implicit assumptions about who belongs and who does not, which is why it is so suitable for my purpose here – namely to apply a framework for a de-nationalized analysis of national social policy. Empirically, the article answers to traditional social-policy questions of who is eligible and when, but in the limited purview of situations that involve international migration. However, in order to not reproduce frameworks assuming sedentarism, the questions are specified to cover eligibility for nationals and foreigners upon immigration and upon emigration. In this way, the contribution of the article is two-fold: empirical and methodological. I propose a methodological approach for de-nationalized analyses of national policy and, by applying this to the empirical example of the Swedish old-age pension, I show how this contributes new knowledge about national social policy that would otherwise not be highlighted and discussed.

Below I first review the critique of nation-state epistemologies in migration studies and position my contribution within this literature. Next I discuss scales of social protection; I position the national scale in relation to other scales and clarify how this can be approached from a transnational perspective. In the subsequent section I give a general frame to a de-nationalized framework for the study of national social policy, which I then relate to and specify for the empirical example of the Swedish old age pension. The analysis is divided into three sections. I outline the

transnational outreach of the basic part of the old-age pension and then discuss this in relation to various understandings of belonging and social in-/equality respectively. The article is summed up with some concluding remarks.

## 2 The Critique of Nation-State-Centered Epistemologies

The nation-state centeredness of the social sciences began to be critiqued in the second half of the 1980s. It came from different disciplinary positions and was formulated in varied ways. For instance, Ulrich Beck (20) critiqued the use of “container theories”, as if nation-states were natural containers of economic, political and social activities and dynamics. John Urry (2000), associated with the so-called “mobility turn” in the social sciences, has argued that sedentarism should be critically scrutinised in its complex relation to mobilities. Others have, as I do here, formulated their critique as an argument favoring a de-nationalisation of the social sciences (see, e.g., Sassen 2010; Anderson 2019). Here I briefly discuss this line of critique as it has developed in the disciplines of migration and social policy studies.

In migration studies this critique, commonly framed as a critique of methodological nationalism, is rooted in transnational epistemologies of international migration. The transnational perspective on international migration emerged from frustrations over empirical observations, to which existing conceptual tools did not fit. This need of new concepts freed from assumptions of sedentarism led to the introduction of such concepts as transnational social fields and spaces (see Basch et al. 1994 and Faist 2000 respectively). The critique of methodological nationalism, as emphasized by Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller (2003), framed the development of the social sciences in a *longue durée* perspective from its birth towards the end of the nineteenth century and onwards, and showed how the social sciences were intertwined and overlapped with nation-state building – how social-science understandings of societies in non-/articulated ways were framed as nation-states and people as members of these.

This theoretical debate was not limited to the social sciences’ one-sided focus on migration as immigration but applies also to its one-sided focus on migrants. International migration as a social phenomenon, it is argued, does not involve only migrants – that is, those who are mobile across borders – but also their families, friends and sending and receiving societies. This is one of the bottom-line arguments in the conceptualisation of transnational social fields and spaces, as described above (see Basch et al. 1994; Faist 2000). This critique has recently been taken a step further and formulated as a plea to de-migrantise migration studies and to migrantise societies and their members (Dahinden 2016; Anderson 2019). Basically, it means that we should regard the dynamics between sedentarism and mobility, together

with experiences of it from varying societal positions, including both sedentary and mobile segments of the population.

The relationship between the social sciences and nation-building, from that same *longue durée* perspective, has also been analysed within the study of social policy and welfare-state development. The establishment and expansion of national welfare states has been explained in different ways but, be it from a functionalist perspective (e.g. Wilensky 1975) or from a perspective emphasising power resources (e.g. Esping-Andersen 1990), the nation-state framing of social policy was typically disregarded. This means that the logics of industrialisation – and the struggles between the ruling class and the workers – were equally assumed to be national in essence. The development of this national framing of welfare states, in politics as in research, was highlighted when analysed from an extended historical perspective. It showed how the organisation of social policy was shaped by the modern state as it emerged from the end of the nineteenth century, and how the production of scientific knowledge within the social field in the nineteenth century and, later, the formation and expansion of the social sciences within academia, played an important role in this development – i.e. how the social sciences and social policy developed in nation-state-framed feed-back loops (Wagner et al. 1991; Rueschemeyer and Skocpol 1996). Thus, it would not be far-fetched to argue that social policy is the social dimension of the nation-state, just as social rights are the social dimension of citizenship. It is national not only in reach but also in purpose (Clarke 2005; Ferrera 2005).

What is relevant to the argument made here is that both migration studies and social policy studies are subsections of the social sciences, with historical roots in nation-building. This is how we can understand the epistemological hierarchies in research at the intersection of social policy and international migration. Research is excessively focussed on the immigration side – not on the dynamics between sedentarism and mobility as a multidirectional phenomenon – and on the integration of foreign immigrants into schemes and services, not how these schemes and services respond to the varying needs of the population, including both its sedentary and mobile segments. In this article I present an approach that seeks to turn these hierarchies around; I do this by considering social policy as it responds to migration as a multidirectional phenomenon and with a comparative approach to how this is experienced from the positions of national and foreign citizens respectively. Before presenting this in more detail, I briefly position how social policy as a dimension of social protection in cross-border situations is approached.

### 3 Scales of Transnational Social Protection

As a concept, social protection entails both formal and informal protection systems and may involve a variety of actors – including, for instance, states, markets, non-governmental organizations, social movements and networks (Paul 2017). Transnational social protection refers to such social protection systems that extend across borders (Sabates-Wheeler and Feldman 2011; Levitt et al. 2017). These various aspects of transnational social protection have, often in fragmented ways, been addressed by different sets of literature. There is, for instance, a large body of migration literature about transnational family networks which, in part, engages with social and economic support within them, such as child- and elderly care and remittances. In the perspective applied here, this would typically classify as informal protection, though it sometimes intersects with formal protection and can be linked up with global care economies (e.g. Lutz 2008; Yeates 2008; Widding Isaksen 2012).

The focus of this article is transnational social protection as framed in and by national social policy. The concepts used to discuss social policy from the point of view of transnational social protection include transnational, international and global social policy. There are no coherent and agreed-upon definitions of the concepts, but they are generally used to approach transnational social protection in varying ways. Here I relate the concepts to diverse scales. International social policy often refers to collaboration between states, typically through bi- and multilateral agreements. Global social policy, on the other hand, is more detached from national and other governments, and can involve social policy within global institutions (Deacon et al. 1997; Yeates and Holden 2009; see, for example, Righard and Spång 2020 for a discussion on how public health has shifted from international to global social policy). Transnational social policy refers to national social policy and how this responds to individuals and groups who move, and sometimes organise their lives, across state borders (Lightman 2011). This is the relevant concept for analysis which I pursue below. Moreover, formal social protection is mainly provided through national legislation, including for mobile populations (Sabates-Wheeler and Feldman 2011). However, as I will show in the analysis, national social policy intersects with and is sometimes influenced by international and global social policy.

Formalized rights to social protection through national social policy is, for migrants, about access and portability: access to rights in the country of residence and the portability of rights from previous countries of residence (Holzmann et al. 2005; Sabates-Wheeler et al. 2011). Sometimes this involves several countries and several periods of residence there, depending on the transnational outreach of both unilateral and bi- and multilateral measures. Unilateral measures refer to national regulations and bi- and multilateral measures to international agreements between two or more countries. The focus in my analysis is limited to unilateral measures. This means that multilateral agreements completed within the European Union (EU)

and other bi- and multilateral agreements are excluded, although, when relevant, I describe how the unilateral measures have been shaped by these agreements. In order to reach an understanding of the transnational dynamics of unilateral measures, we are interested in both the access to and the portability of rights that these measures enable. While empirical research on the portability of social rights is still limited in scope (for a review, see Holzmann and Wels 2018, 326–327), in general it is not combined with questions about access to social rights. Here I merge these two aspects into one common approach.

#### 4 A De-Nationalized Framework for the Study of National Social Policy and Migration – a Proposal

Social policy analysis is typically focussed on questions about who and what: *who* is eligible and for *what*. In the analysis of social policy and migration, the “who” – the immigrated foreigner – is usually given. The “what” is typically about that which immigrated foreigners have access to in their countries of residence. With the purpose of building a de-nationalized analytical framework, I here propose a more critical stance on the “who” question. Instead of talking of the immigration of foreigners, I suggest that the analysis should approach migration as a multidirectional mobility that can involve nationals and foreigners alike. International migration, as also in the view of social policy, is not limited to immigration but is also about emigration; nor is it limited to foreigners but is also about nationals. This framework is de-nationalized because it considers various forms of mobility and how public policy responds to these circumstances. This turnover begs for a slightly different set of questions. For instance, is it necessary to live in a country in order to be eligible for (public and unilateral) social rights? If so, how long should a person live in the receiving country after immigration before being eligible? Should eligibility expire after emigration – if so, after how long? And, finally, what is the role of national and foreign citizenship in these matters?

Questions are also included about the transnational outreach of, for instance, parental insurance or child allowance in situations where family members are dispersed in different countries, or where a person has lived and worked in one country, but later lives and becomes unemployed, sick or a pensioner in another. Are such situations responded to differently depending on whether it is emigration or immigration that is the issue, or on whether it concerns a national or a foreign citizen. Importantly, the “who” question has implications beyond who is eligible, or who is dependent on the person eligible. For instance, several family members can be dependent on the pension of one family member, even when the family is dispersed in two or more countries. The basic question concerns how national social protection

schemes respond to such transnational situations, involving both emigration and immigration, both nationals and foreigners, and both migrants and non-migrants.

To provide some substance to this approach, I rely on a study that shows how a state-led social policy scheme includes mobile populations, emigrants, immigrants, citizens and foreigners alike. The empirical focus is on Swedish public old-age pension arrangements in a historical perspective and reveals how the transnational outreach of the scheme has varied over time with varying impacts on equality among the elderly.

## 5 The Swedish Old-Age Pension – a Contextualization and Specification

In many societies being old and unable to support oneself means being poor. While old-age pension schemes are typically set up with the purpose of reducing this situation, they also vary considerable in a cross-national perspective. This was the case in Sweden when the first public old-age pension scheme was introduced in 1913 as the first universal public insurance to be introduced world-wide (Elmér 1960). At this point in time, a significant proportion of the elderly were dependent on poor relief. The new scheme was not means-tested, as in the UK; instead all pensioners were equally eligible independent of their individual resources. As in Germany, it was like an insurance but was not contributory; instead, all pensioners were equally eligible independent of any previous individual contributions (paid through taxes). It was tax-financed and included all pensioners on equal terms. Here “all” refers to Swedish citizens residing in Sweden. As a backdrop it was limited in scope and many elderly remained in poverty. It was extended stepwise, which meant that, as of 1946, Sweden had a universal flat-rate pension, the People’s Pension (*Folkpension*), which was sufficient to ensure a decent standard of living.

It is true that old-age pension schemes in many countries have changed over time – including in Sweden, where the public pension scheme is typically referred to as two distinct systems, before and after its restructuring in the 1990s. While this general development is not the focus of my analysis, it is an important backdrop to the empirical understanding of it, therefore I now briefly flesh it out. I also present the empirical analysis in more detail, together with my research questions and empirical basis.

The introduction of the universal old-age pension scheme was not easy. The debate that preceded the parliamentary decision covered, among other things, the different costs of living in urban and rural areas, the varying life expectancy between men and women, and the diverse contributions of the working and non-working population. For instance, as living expenses were higher in urban areas, should the pension be higher there? Equally, as women had a longer average life expectancy, should their pension be lower so that it lasts longer? In the end, a universal pension scheme was introduced by law (see government bill, Prop. 1913:126; and Act SFS

1913:120). In this first version, the pension was too small to live on and did not suffice to lift the large numbers of elderly people out of poverty. In response, it was gradually extended through the implementation of new laws in 1935 and 1946 (see SFS 1935:434; SFS 1946:431). With the 1946 scheme, a basic protection that one could actually live on was put in place and named the People's Pension (*Folkpension*). In addition to this flat-rate basic protection, a complementary element was integrated into the public old-age pension scheme from 1959 (see SFS 1959:291). It was contributory, based on a person's taxed income over the 15 highest-earning of his/her 30 working years, and named Public Occupational Pension (*Allmän tilläggspension, ATP*). While the basic protection part of the pension aim to keep all elderly people off poor relief, the complementary part was designed to enable them to maintain their standard of living after retirement.

This design of the public old-age pension was then radically restructured in the 1990s. While this reform, in its direction, followed international trends (Orenstein 2008), the national policy discourse was primarily about a growing financial imbalance, as well as the implications of European Union membership. The financial imbalance referred to the growing discrepancy between the working population financing the pensions and the proportionally growing numbers of retired people drawing them. This situation was deemed unsustainable. The first steps towards a reform were taken in 1992 (SFS 1992:1277). In 1994, just before Sweden joined the European Union in 1995, it was decided that the system should be reformed (see Prop. 1993/94:250); it became law in 1998 (SFS 1998:674 and SFS 1998:702). Since 2010 the public pension scheme has been regulated through the Social Insurance Code (SFS 2010:110); however it has not changed in content but has brought together the various laws into one single law.

The so-called reformed public pension scheme consists of three parts. The principle part is the income-based pension. This Income Pension (*Inkomstpension*), is based on taxed income over the whole life-course. For those who have had a sufficient taxed income, this corresponds to both the basic and the occupational pension of the previous system. On top of this, a Premium Pension (*Premiepension*) was introduced. This is proportional to the bonus of pension premiums allocated from income tax. The money can be allocated to funds at the request of the individual or to a preselected government fund. This means that, for those with incomes sufficient for an income pension, the major part of the public pension is contributory, based on previous income, with a minor part based on premium bonuses. For those who have had no or too little taxed income to be eligible for the Income Pension a third alternative, a Guarantee Pension (*Garantipension*), was established. In order to be eligible for this pension individuals must have resided in Sweden for a minimum of three years. To be eligible for the full scheme it is necessary to have been a resident for forty years between the age of 25 and 65 years. Claimants with a shorter period of residence are eligible for 1/40 of the full pension for each year of residence in



Sweden. As regulated through unilateral measures, under this scheme eligibility is dependent on residency and contributions, and citizenship plays no role. Moreover, while the Income Pension is portable, the Guarantee Pension is not. The so-called reformed pensions system constitutes a radical rupture with the previous system, since the idea of basic protection for all, regardless of previous taxed income, was dissolved (see, for example, Kangas et al. 2010; see also Orenstein 2008).

My focus here is how this public old-age pension system covers persons who have emigrated or immigrated, and whether they are national or foreign citizens. From what we can see in the above brief presentation, it is clear that the pension scheme is not static, but a complex and moving target of analysis. I have limited the empirical focus to the part of the old-age pension aimed at basic protection, which has been regulated through unilateral policy documents and regulations. This means that, in the early period, my empirical focus is on the People's Pension; for the period after the reform in the 1990s, I apply a dual focus on the Income Pension and the Guarantee Pension. Empirically, the analysis covers a century, from 1913 and onwards.

My research questions are formulated to unsettle the epistemological privilege of sedentarism over mobility, and to contribute to knowledge production about a national social-security scheme in the light of a de-nationalized framework. They focus on questions about the access which both national and foreign citizens (after immigration to Sweden) have to the basic level of protection from the old-age pension, and on how portable this same basic protection is for national and foreign citizens after emigration and re-migration from Sweden. Of particular interest is how shifts between the different periods of time and in relation to the various groups have been legitimized. For the analysis I use historical content analysis (Bergström and Boréus 2012), considering how ideologies of policy vary over time, as expressed in documents mirroring government reasoning before the enactment of new – and amendments to already-existing – laws regulating basic protection for national and foreign immigrants and emigrants.

The portability of and access to the basic level of protection of the Swedish old-age pension are regulated by law and enacted by the Swedish parliament (*Sveriges riksdag*), and rely on so-called government “rights documents” (*Rättsdokument*) which include written reports, communications and bills. In general, the government appoints a Committee of Inquiry (*Statlig utredning*) to conduct an in-depth study of the issue. These studies, which convey the opinion of various groups in society, are published as numbered Commission Reports of the Swedish Government (*Statens Offentliga Utredningar*, *SOU*). The government lays down its proposal for new legislation in government bills (*Proposition*, *Prop.*), sometimes also issuing written communications (*Skrivelse*, *Skr.*) to parliament. Government bills and written communications convey the opinion, as well as the arguments, of the government. The various government departments might also issue reports and proposals reflecting

their opinion and arguments; these are published in the Government Department Series (*Departementsserien, Ds.*). These written documents are relevant sources of empirical data for the analysis of the normative underpinning and legitimation of Swedish laws and are referred to in the analysis below.

## 6 The Transnational Outreach of the Swedish Old-Age Pension

The Swedish old-age pension has changed in its trans-/national outreach over time. The analysis presented here, relying on policy documents and unilateral regulations of the basic protection of the old-age pension over a one-hundred-year period, shows that it can be divided into four sequential steps of development (see also Righard 2017). The first period is characterised by a scheme for nationals in Sweden; in the second this is extended to include nationals living outside Sweden and those return-migrating there; in the third period the scheme is further extended to include foreigners in Sweden and the fourth, which is framed by the reformed old-age pension, is characterised by a transnational scheme for the wealthy and a sedentarist scheme for the poor.

The first period, starting with the implementation of the first old-age pension in 1913, was characterised by a scheme for nationals registered as domiciled in Sweden only; the transnational outreach is non-existent. In these first regulations of the pension scheme, differences between national and foreign citizens were not mentioned; the government reports and bills made it seem quite “natural” that the old-age pension should only cover national citizens registered and residing in Sweden (see Prop. 1913:126; Prop. 1935:217; Prop. 1946:220). This did not change until the early 1960s.

The second period, starting in the early 1960s, reached out to nationals who had emigrated, and to nationals who had return-migrated to Sweden. This reach-out emerged due to a concern that Swedes who had worked their entire lives in Sweden would not be able to access their pension on retirement if they had moved out of the country; upon return to Sweden they would only be able to access it after a delayed administrative procedure of domicile registration that could take up to 18 months. It was argued that citizens with “strong ties” to Sweden should be able to access their pension both abroad and immediately on return to the country.

In 1962 the regulation of the old-age pension was revised to include national citizens both living abroad and returning to Sweden (see Prop. 1962:90). The revision was limited to nationals with “strong ties” to Sweden, and the preparatory work preceding the bill saw lengthy discussion about the meaning of these ties. It was agreed that, if a person had been registered as domiciled in Sweden for a minimum of five years close to her/his pension age (65 years) – i. e. between the ages of 57 and 62 – it was very probable that he/she had “strong ties”. It was named the 57–62 rule

and meant that national citizens who fulfilled this criterium were eligible for the full People's Pension for an unlimited time after emigration from Sweden. Reading the documents, the rationale for this rule – which was later criticized for being too arbitrary – remains unclear,

In 1967, the regulations of the old-age pension scheme were amended to further strengthen the rights for national citizens. From now, all the latter who migrated back to Sweden would access the pension immediately without having to wait for domiciliary registration to pass through the administrative machinery. In practice, this only had relevance for national return-migrants who did not have immediate access according to the 57–62 rule (Prop. 1967:73).

The third change to the transnational outreach scheme was implemented in 1979. It involved not only an extension of access to the People's Pension for foreigners in Sweden, but also an amendment of the criticised 57–62 rule (Prop. 1978/79:75). The driver in this development was a growing critique of the existing rules allowing national citizens with “strong ties” to Sweden to receive the public old-age pension abroad, whereas foreign citizens in Sweden, sometimes following a long working career and, in many cases, with strong ties to Sweden, were not entitled to the basic level of old-age pension.

In this debate, the eligibility criteria of the People's Pension and the Public Occupational Pension were discussed in conjunction. It was argued that the People's Pension, which was a flat-rate sum, should instead be considered ‘contributory’, like the Public Occupational Pension, and calculated in proportion to the number of years worked in Sweden. This meant that a wider group of citizens were eligible for the pension while abroad, but not necessarily for the full benefits. The same government bill introduced access to the People's Pension for foreign citizens who had resided in the country for ten years or more, (see Prop. 1978/79:75). While, until then, transnational outreach had been all about emigrated national citizens, here access for foreign citizens was introduced. It is also noteworthy that the portability of the pension for foreign citizens was never an issue. Moreover, it can also be argued that it was here, and not in the 1990s, that the basic protection of the old age pension was first conceptualised as a contributory factor relative to number of years of residence – a form of territorial rootedness.

The fourth period of transnational outreach occurred at the backdrop of the restructuring of the scheme and involved two major amendments. In 1994, the government decided that the public old-age pension scheme should be reformed (see government bill Prop. 1993/94:250), and in 1998 it was changed by law (Prop. 1997/98:151; Prop. 1997/98:152). While these decisions are generally identified as pivotal to the reforms of the 1990s, this development pathway was already laid down in 1992 when the access to and portability of the basic protection of the old-age pension were changed.

In 1992 Sweden signed the European Economic Area (EEA) agreement. This meant that the country entered a single market with the free movement of persons, goods, services and capital. It also meant that member-states' citizens had the right to access the basic level of protection of their retirement pension after immigration to Sweden, and to maintain it after emigration to another member-state. This would, from a Swedish perspective, entail unacceptable costs (SOU 1990:76). Later that same year, the government then decided that Sweden should reform its pension scheme so that eligibility was based on residency and contributions (see Ds. 1992:89). While it resembled the revision of the scheme in the late 1970s, this was the first time that ideas of a contributory scheme were explicitly pronounced. It was institutionalized in a stepwise manner, first through adaptation to the European Community Regulations in 1992 (see Prop. 1992/93:7; SFS 1992:1277), then through the 1994 decision to reform the pension system (Prop. 1993/94:250), and, finally, the introduction of the Guarantee Pension and Income Pension in 1998 (Prop. 1997/98:151; Prop. 1997/98:152).

Interestingly, while there are strong links in content between these three decisions, there is a discrepancy between the problem definition in 1992 compared to those in 1994 and 1998. While, in 1992, it was intra-EEA mobility that was problematised, in 1994 and 1998 it was instead demographic trends and an economic instability built in to the system. The problem with demographic trends refers to population ageing, which means that the working population is shrinking in proportion to the pensioners it has to support. The problem with built-in economic instability means that pension payments followed the price index instead of the wage index, resulting in pension payments not being proportionate to paid contributions. These situations called for a reform of the pension system, at least according to government bills (Prop. 1997/98:151; Prop. 1997/98:152). From a wider perspective they occurred in conjunction with pension reforms in many other countries and can, thus, be regarded a product of global social policy, altering the postwar social contract between the state and its people and instead increasingly relying on paid contributions (Orenstein 2008). In terms of transnational outreach, it is noteworthy that, while the reform had its set-off in response to intra-EU mobility, it ended with a system which, in its unilateral regulation, involved high degrees of mobility for retirees on an Income Pension, and low degrees of mobility for pensioners with a Guarantee Pension. While the reforms in the 1910s and 1960s/70s involved redistribution both across the life course and between groups, in the 1990s it was less focussed on the former and more on the latter.

## 7 Layers of Access and Portability

Belonging is generally crucial in relation to welfare-state entitlements. The conceptualisation of this belonging after immigration and emigration has varied for nationals and foreigners, as well as over time. Most significantly, as regards the old-age pension, it was initially only nationals who had access; today citizenship does not play a role, at least not in its regulation –however, in its consequences it does.

Initially pension rights were only accessible for nationals within the nation. They were later extended to include both nationals – post-emigration and immediately (without waiting time) following return migration – and post-immigration foreigners. Under the old pension system, the portability of rights was never introduced for foreigners. These differences of access and portability between nationals and foreigners were abolished with the introduction of the reformed system in the 1990s, the regulations of which were independent of citizenship and applied equally for all. While this might give the impression that it functions to strengthen equality between groups, in fact it has contributed to their increased inequality. What comes into play here are bi- and multilateral international agreements within the social field, discussed above in terms of international social policy. In Sweden, international agreements were first made possible through the act on the People's Pension in 1935 (SFS 1935:434). From the 1950s onwards, Sweden concluded a large number of such agreements (see Boguslaw 2012). All were negotiated separately and varied in content, but had in common that they specified how social rights could be transferred between the contract countries by their citizens.

There is, as regards social rights in situations of emigration and immigration, a principle choice between universalism and particularism. Particularistic regulations give access to and/or enable the portability of social rights for certain groups of emigrants and immigrants. Universal regulations, on the other hand, are the same for all, but can, at least sometimes, be combined with international agreements, thus enabling the transfer of social rights between countries when the universal regulations do not suffice. This choice of principle was a contentious issue which was discussed before the introduction of the first particularistic regulation in 1962. The government bill points out that “The ongoing international development of international social policy seems to be developing in favour of the abolition of nationality as grounds for the right to social benefits and to be against special regulation where their own national citizens are concerned” (Prop. 1962:90, 279). This means that the Swedish government was in favour of universalism and international agreements, and that the special regulations of 1962 and 1979 were implemented with some hesitation.

The reformed pension system presents us with both general regulations combined with international agreements. Its unilateral regulation makes distinctions not between national and foreign citizens but, rather, between persons both with and without certain levels of income. Public pension rights for persons with an income

are mobile, but for those with no or a limited income, not only is access dependent on an extended period of residence in the country, but they must also remain in residence to maintain their rights, at least if they are not citizens of a country with an international agreement. However, and as a downside, at least from a social justice perspective, the conclusion of international agreements follows certain patterns. In effect, the reformed pension scheme has contributed to increased inequality gaps between pensioners in Sweden, with retirees from countries with no international agreements being overrepresented among the older poor. As we might expect, these are often elderly people who have moved to Sweden from a non-member country of the Organisation for Cooperation and Development (OECD) (SOU 2010:105). In this way, the public pension scheme functions to reproduce patterns of global inequality within the national population.

A relevant question for further research regards how contract countries are selected and how the contents of international agreements are negotiated. Are these countries, for instance, primarily relevant from an emigration or an immigration perspective? Or are migration pathways maybe not providing guidance but concern, instead, industrial or economic relations between the countries?

## 8 Old-Age Pensions as a Redistribution across the Individual Life Course vs between Groups

The preparatory work in commission reports and government bills leading up to the establishment of the first old-age pension in 1913 echoes an engaged voice unconcerned with prevalent social injustices. The focus was on redistribution over the life course and between classes, with the prime aim of taking the masses of dependent elderly people off poverty relief. Foreign citizens had no access and portability was not an option at all. While this definitely was a period of assumed sedentarism, it was also one of national solidarity. This same voice of solidarity continues to speak through the commission reports and government bills up until the fully-fledged People's Pension was put in place in 1946.

As a mobility perspective was integral to the debate in the 1960s, it was first included in relation to nationals and, later, to foreigners. The first case was a matter of enabling national emigrants to maintain rights that were already theirs; the second case, however, at least to some extent, replicates the voice heard in the 1910s. The government reports and bills echo an engaged voice, this time unconcerned with the large numbers of foreign immigrants who could not access the People's Pension. It was also argued that foreigners residing in the country should be able to maintain their foreign citizenship; this was regarded as an important aspect of a multicultural society. These lines of argumentation can be understood in the light of contemporary developments in global social policy, as discussed above.

In the 1960s, the principle of equal treatment between national and foreign citizens grew in strength and became an international issue taken up by, for instance, the International Labour Organization (ILO). In the view of this, it can be regarded as a global policy. In 1964, Sweden ratified ILO Convention No. 118 about the right of foreigners to be on an equal footing with host-country nationals regarding social protection (SFS 1964:57). The equal treatment of national and foreign citizens was also strongly emphasized in the commission reports from the so-called Immigrant Investigation (*Invandrarutredningen*) that functioned in 1968–1975. One of the reports presented figures showing that 13 per cent of the foreign citizens in the group of elderly people in Sweden did not access even the basic level of old-age pension, the People's Pension. The situation was problematised as serious and the commission suggested that foreigners, after a period of residence in Sweden, should be able to access a basic pension (SOU 1974:69, 148). The principle of equal treatment was integrated into different social protection schemes at varying speeds (see Johansson 2010 for a comparison of the People's Pension and the Public Occupational Pension). In 1979, foreign citizens gained access to the People's Pension after ten years of residence in the country (Prop. 1978/79:75).

In the preparatory work leading up to the reforms of the 1990s, the government reports and bills echo quite another voice. At that time, it was emphasised that, if you had worked and had a good income, this would also be visible in your (high) pension; likewise, if your income had been low, the pension would also be low. Of course, this mirrors the overall and different political climates of the 1960s and 1990s, the former being a decade marked by the radicalisation of the social, and the 1990s by the radicalization of individual responsabilization. However, while it is obvious from the national government reports that the development was influenced by global actors in the 1960s, we can see that it was less so in the 1990s. Yet, studying pension reforms in the 1990s from a cross-national perspective shows that, in the 1990s, too, global actors were influencing the development – to the extent that it has been argued that it should be understood as global policy (Orenstein 2005). This is, at least partly, how we can understand the implementation of particularistic solutions in the 1960s and the abolishment of these in the 1990s from a multiscale perspective.

## 9 Concluding Remarks

The aim of this article has been two-fold. It set out to present a de-nationalized analytical framework for the study of national social policy, and to show how this contributes new insights compared to more sedentarist approaches. The empirical analysis focussed on the Swedish public old-age pension. It posed questions about access to and the portability of rights to the basic public old-age pension for national

and foreign citizens after immigration to and emigration from Sweden, and about how policy shift can be understood from a historical perspective. It has drawn on a content analysis of unilateral regulations, including government reports and bills, and shown how the Swedish pension scheme has developed from being sedentarist – including nationals in Sweden – over a period, with some compensatory tools for emigrated nationals and immigrated nationals and foreigners, and become a scheme that is mobile for those with sufficient pensionable income and sedentarist for those with low or no incomes.

The use of this de-nationalized approach provides us with important insights that could not be captured by an analytical framework questioning immigrant integration. Apparently, a concern about emigrated and returned nationals seems to be one of several drivers to include foreign immigrants in public social security schemes. The transnational outreach of the public pension scheme, as it developed in the 1960s and 1970s, was first established for nationals, and only later for foreigners. Importantly, the historical perspective contributes insights into how these dynamics change over time. Today, pension rights are dependent on contributions and years of residency. Nationality has no direct impact, only indirect. While the role of bi- and multilateral agreements goes beyond the scope of the empirical analysis presented here, obviously citizenship impacts on how pension rights can be transferred between countries, with far-reaching consequences for the dynamics of social inequality among the elderly in Sweden.

We know from previous research that the elderly take into consideration the old-age pension schemes in their migration decision, although access to and the portability of them is typically only one out of several factors influencing this decision (Ackers and Dwyer 2004; Gehring 2017). This historical analysis, reliant on unilateral measures, indicates that the old-age pension scheme can function to lock in the poor, since the Guarantee Pension cannot be drawn outside Sweden, but can benefit the mobility of the rich since the Income Pension is portable. On this point, Sweden differs from countries like France and the Netherlands, which have special schemes providing a life-long benefit for non-national elderly people with low incomes and who return to their home countries on a permanent or semi-permanent basis (Böcker and Hunter 2017). While globalization, uncontestedly, is an uneven phenomenon across locations and between groups, my analysis has indicated that the public old-age pension scheme also functions to strengthen this inequality.



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## 11 Government Bills, Communications, Reports and Acts

- Ds. 1992:89 Ett reformerat pensionssystem. Bakgrund, principer och skiss. [A Reformed Pension System. Background, principles and a plan].
- Prop. 1913:126 Kungl. Maj:ts nädiga proposition till riksdagen med förslag till Lag om allmän pensionsförsäkring och till Lag om ändrad lydelse av 17 Kap. 12 § Handelsbalken; given Stockholms slott den 28 mars 1913. [Government bill about public pension insurance]

- Prop. 1935:217 Kungl. Maj:ts proposition till riksdagen med förslag till Lag om folkpensionering m.m.; given Stockholms slott den 22 mars 1935. [Government bill about people's pensions]
- Prop. 1946:220 Kungl. Maj:ts proposition till riksdagen med förslag till Lag om folkpensionering, m.m.; given Stockholms slott den 5 april 1946. [Government bill about an act about People's pensions]
- Prop. 1962:90 Kungl. Maj:ts proposition till riksdagen med förslag till Lag om allmän försäkring, m. m.; given Stockholms slott den 9 mars 1962. [Government bill about an act for public insurance]
- Prop. 1967:73 Kungl. Maj:ts proposition till riksdagen med förslag till Lag angående ändring i lagen den 25 maj 1962 (Nr 381) om allmän försäkring, m. m.; Given Stockholms slott den 17 mars 1967. [Government bill with proposals about an amendment on 25 May 1962 in the Act about public insurance]
- Prop. 1978/79:75 Om vissa pensionsfrågor; beslutad den 30 november 1978. [Government bill about pension-related questions]
- Prop. 1992/93:7 Om rätten till folkpension m. m. [Government bill about access to the People's Pension]
- Prop. 1993/94:250 Reformeringen av det allmänna pensionssystemet. [Government bill about a reform of the public pension scheme]
- Prop. 1997/98:151 Inkomstgrundad ålderspension, m. m. [Government bill about income-based old-age pension]
- Prop. 1997/98:152 Garantipension, m. m. [Government bill about Guarantee Pension]
- SFS 1913:120 Lag om allmän pensionsförsäkring [Act on General Pension Insurance]
- SFS 1935:434 Lag om folkpensionering [Act on People's Pension]
- SFS 1946: 431 Lag om folkpensionering [Act about People's Pension]
- SFS 1959: 291 Lag om allmän tilläggspension [Act about Public Occupational Pension]
- SFS 1964:57 Kungl. Maj:ts kungörelse om tillämpningen av en av Internationella arbetskonferensen antagen konvention (nr. 118) angående utlänningars likställande med ett lands egna medborgare i fråga om social trygghet [Ordinance about the application of the convention Nr 118 about equality between foreigners and national citizens as regards social protection]
- SFS 1992:1277 Lag om ändring i lagen (1962:381) om allmän försäkring [Act about Amendment of the Act (1962:381) about Public Insurance ]
- SFS 1998:674 Lag om inkomstgrundad ålderspension [Act about Income-based Old Age Pension]
- SFS 1998:702 Lag om garantipension [Act about Guarantee Pension]
- SFS 2010:110 Socialförsäkringsbalk [Social Insurance Code]
- SOU 1974:69 Invandrarutredningen 3. Invandrarna och minoriteterna [The Immigrant Inquiry]
- SOU 1990:76 Allmän pension [Public Pension]
- SOU 2010:105 Ålderspension för invandrare från länder utanför OECD-området [Old Age Pension for Immigrants from Countries Outside of the OECD Area]