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Max Planck researchers collaborate with partners from more than 120 countries. Here they describe their personal experiences and impressions. Henrik-Alexander Schubert, a doctoral student at the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research in Rostock, traveled to the Swedish capital, which is one of the top destinations for demographers. The researcher from the Max Planck Institute talks about lively parties, productive breaks, and where to get the best cinnamon buns in town.

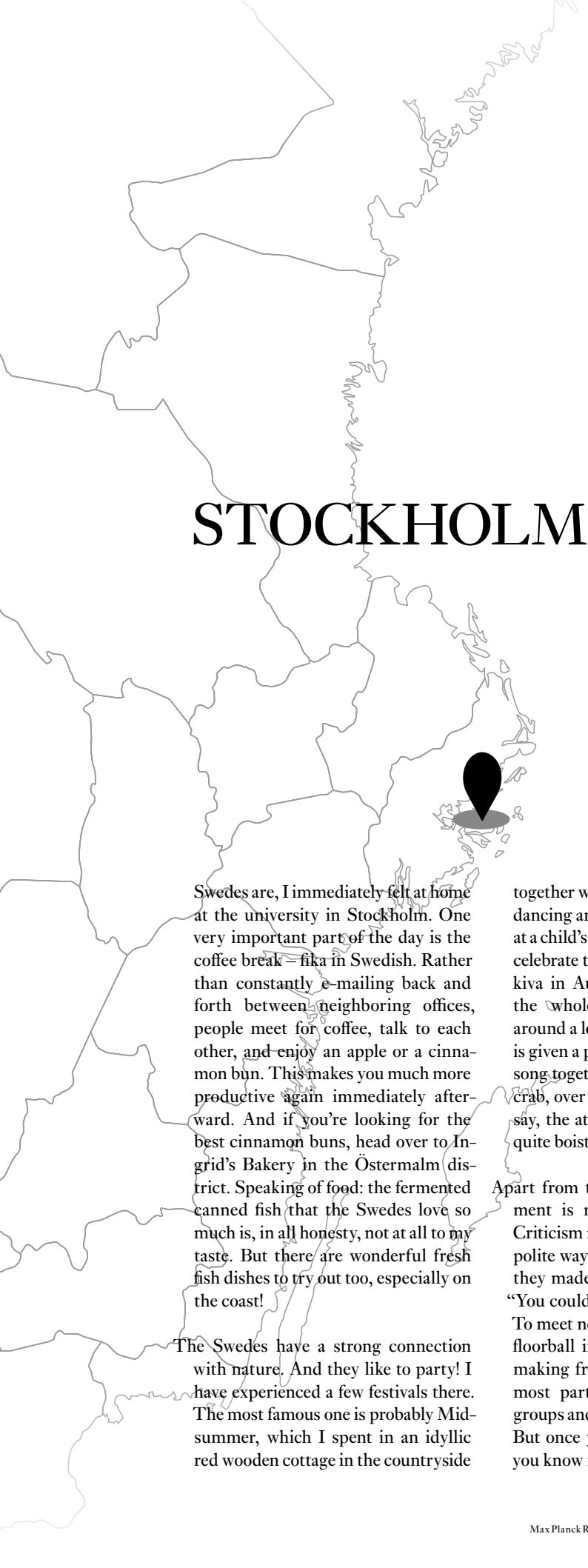
Many people have a clear idea of how many children they would like to have one day. In Germany, the average is 1.96. However, the actual number of children born to each woman is only 1.53. Why is there a difference here, and what influences how many children a person has? These are the

kinds of questions we grapple with at the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research in Rostock. My thesis compares male fertility in eighteen different developed countries, looking for factors that influence the number of children. To do this, I used computers to analyze demographic registry data from a variety of time frames. This showed that the overall number of births declined after events such as the financial crisis or the coronavirus pandemic, but only in the short term. Conversely, regional imbalances in the dating scene have long-term effects: for example, it is often difficult for men in rural areas to find partners as many women migrate to the cities. What I find so exciting about this field of research is the multidisciplinary approach. To be able to correctly interpret the data, demography always needs to be linked to other sciences such as politics or biology. Each discipline approaches the same question from a different angle.

When summer draws to a close, the Swedes celebrate their crayfish festival, *kräftskiva*. The crustaceans, traditionally prepared with lots of dill, are the culinary focus.

There are only a small number of universities and institutes around the world that focus on demographic research. These include the Max Planck Institute in Rostock and the University of Stockholm. That is why this university is also a partner of the International Max Planck Research School for Population, Health, and Data Science, where I am doing my PhD. I was already familiar with Stockholm from a trip I took after graduating high school, and it immediately caught my interest. Its nickname, the “Venice of the North”, is completely accurate – there are countless bridges and jetties, and you’re never far from the water. Stockholm inspired me to start learning Swedish while I was studying. For German native speakers, it’s not so difficult: many of the words are similar, and Swedish grammar is simpler than German grammar. My language skills have certainly proven to be very useful. Because of how relaxed the

## STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN



Swedes are, I immediately felt at home at the university in Stockholm. One very important part of the day is the coffee break – fika in Swedish. Rather than constantly e-mailing back and forth between neighboring offices, people meet for coffee, talk to each other, and enjoy an apple or a cinnamon bun. This makes you much more productive again immediately afterward. And if you're looking for the best cinnamon buns, head over to Ingrid's Bakery in the Östermalm district. Speaking of food: the fermented canned fish that the Swedes love so much is, in all honesty, not at all to my taste. But there are wonderful fresh fish dishes to try out too, especially on the coast!

The Swedes have a strong connection with nature. And they like to party! I have experienced a few festivals there. The most famous one is probably Midsummer, which I spent in an idyllic red wooden cottage in the countryside

together with some friends. There was dancing and group games, almost like at a child's birthday party. The Swedes celebrate the crayfish festival of kräftskiva in August. During this festival, the whole family comes together around a long outdoor table. Everyone is given a paper hat to wear. You sing a song together, drink a shot, then eat a crab, over and over again. Needless to say, the atmosphere quickly becomes quite boisterous!

Apart from that, the Swedish temperament is rather quiet and reserved. Criticism is always expressed in a very polite way. Instead of telling someone they made a mistake, they would say, "You could have done that differently." To meet new people, I started playing floorball in Stockholm. Despite this, making friends was not easy: for the most part, you run into tight-knit groups and have a hard time getting in. But once you've formed a friendship, you know it's one that will last.



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Henrik-Alexander Schubert

26, studied political science and sociology at the University of Rostock before specializing in demography. He is currently studying towards his doctorate at the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research in Rostock. He compares data from eighteen countries in the fertility and wellbeing research area, which is led by Mikko Myrskylä, to find out which factors influence fertility in men.