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ACCEPT PLURALISM

Tolerance and Cultural Diversity Discourses in Sweden

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1. Overview National Discourses Background Country Reports



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ROBERT SCHUMAN CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES

Tolerance and cultural diversity in Sweden

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**Work Package 1 – Overview of Tolerance and
Cultural Diversity**

**D1.1 Country Reports on Tolerance and Cultural
Diversity**

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Tolerance, Pluralism and Social Cohesion: Responding to the Challenges of the 21st Century in Europe (ACCEPT PLURALISM)

ACCEPT PLURALISM is a Research Project, funded by the European Commission under the Seventh Framework Program. The project investigates whether European societies have become more or less tolerant during the past 20 years. In particular, the project aims to clarify: (a) how is tolerance defined conceptually, (b) how it is codified in norms, institutional arrangements, public policies and social practices, (c) how tolerance can be measured (whose tolerance, who is tolerated, and what if degrees of tolerance vary with reference to different minority groups). The ACCEPT PLURALISM consortium conducts original empirical research on key issues in school life and in politics that thematise different understandings and practices of tolerance. Bringing together empirical and theoretical findings, ACCEPT PLURALISM generates a State of the Art Report on Tolerance and Cultural Diversity in Europe, a Handbook on Ideas of Tolerance and Cultural Diversity in Europe, a Tolerance Indicators' Toolkit where qualitative and quantitative indicators may be used to score each country's performance on tolerating cultural diversity, and several academic publications (books, journal articles) on Tolerance, Pluralism and Cultural Diversity in Europe. The ACCEPT PLURALISM consortium is formed by 18 partner institutions covering 15 EU countries. The project is hosted by the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies and co-ordinated by Prof. Anna Triandafyllidou.

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Executive Summary

The present paper addresses the question of ethnic, cultural and religious diversity in Sweden and portrays the ways in which the aforementioned types of diversity have been dealt with so far in this Northern European country. In doing so, the report primarily delineates the main constitutive elements of the Swedish national identity (i.e. "who is considered to be Swedish") as well as some of the most important factors and historical conditions that have shaped the modern Swedish state. By explicating the formation of the modern Swedish state as well as the most common features of Swedish national identity, we also provide a basis for an understanding of the demarcations and limitations of Swedish citizenship.

In the introductory part of the paper, we describe some key features of Sweden, migration to Sweden, Swedish official policy on recognition and tolerance, and some of the challenges of cultural diversity that Sweden has faced during recent years. In its second part, the paper focuses on the formation of the Swedish state, and the development of a modern (or, rather, late-modern) Swedish national identity, and its constituents. Although the developments during modernity and late modernity are emphasized, some room is left for the earlier historical course of events. The Swedish state was formed rather early, in the 11th century, but remained a rather loosely organized formation until the 16th century, when the state was consolidated. During the wars in the 17th century, a highly centralized state was developed, showing a relatively early example of a rigorously organized state power. Since then, centralization has been one of the defining features in the execution of official power, increasingly shaping the relation between the state and the citizens. Later on, this specific tradition of centralization has also shaped the ways in which multicultural policies have been articulated and – above all – executed in Sweden.

In Sweden, the ideological heritage from romantic, idealistic nationalism, which flourished during the 19th century, has – as in most other European countries – shaped the prevalent different conceptions of a national identity. Still, some local particularities may also be noted. From the establishment of the centralized Swedish state and until the 19th century a "nationalism" with a sharp focus upon religion dominated the public discourse, a nationalism which allowed for a rather generous form of cultural diversity as long as the people expressed their belonging to the Lutheran church. Later on, the discourse on national identity was under heavy influence from racist and "scientific" (i.e. predominantly medical) discourses. Thus, during the end of the 19th and until the middle of the 20th century a racial and Social Darwinist form of nationalism dominated the public discourse and the state policies.

During the decades following the end of the Second World War, a Swedish national identity was developed, which was articulated in tandem with the ideological underpinnings of the Scandinavian welfare state model – and the relative success this model had shown in comparison to several other European countries. Swedes developed an understanding of themselves as a progressive and a modern group of citizens. According to their political inclination, people emphasized either economical and technological improvement or engineering skills as key features of the Swedish society and/or the success of the welfare state and the progressive, democratic and humanistic values that accompanied that political project. Following certain demographical changes (above all, an increased immigration), the decline of the Scandinavian model of the welfare state, and the relative success of neoliberal political models, the discursive prerequisites for the articulation of a national identity has changed. It could be said that present-day constituents of the Swedish identity on the one hand are shaped in line with the above-mentioned propensity to regard Swedishness as progressive, modern and democratic, and on the other directly worked out in relation to – and dissociation from – the migrant population and non-European ethnic groups.

In the third section of the paper, which is named “Main cultural challenges”, we outline the above mentioned change of prerequisites for the articulation of a Swedish identity. First, we depict the history of migration to Sweden since the Second World War, and then we provide a short survey of the minority groups which are living in Sweden. We also provide a short description of some ethnic or religious minority groups, which have encountered an explicit and even extensive opposition to their claims for recognition or tolerance of their group-specific practices. In line with the opposition that their claims have met, it could be argued that they exemplify what is perceived as a cultural challenge.

The modern era of immigration to Sweden can roughly be divided into four stages, each stage representing different types of immigrants and immigration: 1) refugees from neighboring countries, 2) labor immigration from Finland and southern Europe, 3) family reunification and refugees from developing countries, and 4) asylum seekers from southeastern and Eastern Europe, and the Middle east, and the free movement of EU citizens within the European Union. With the reception of migrations, Sweden’s demographical structure has changed in a manifest way, and over 10 % of the population is born outside Sweden or has parents who are born outside Sweden. Still, with the exception of Finns, most migrant groups have been relatively small in number throughout history.

The diversity of national minorities and the indigenous population the Saamis has been recognized through Sweden’s decision to ratify the Council of Europe’s Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Still, this special recognition of the national minorities constitutes a break with earlier political traditions. Sweden’s official multicultural policy earlier had a more integrated or uniform stance towards national minorities and immigrant communities. Since the middle of the 1970s has Sweden officially adopted multiculturalism as a guiding policy with respect to immigrants and national minorities (even though the official rhetoric of multiculturalism has been downgraded in later years). The needs and the interests the national minorities were more recognized in the light of the political attention directed towards immigrants. The basis for the policy was summarized through the concept “equality, freedom of choice, and cooperation”. In the Swedish Instrument of Government it is also emphasized that various groups defined through language, ethnicity and religion should be supported in order to maintain their cultural heritage and identities. Following recently conducted research; we claim that four minority groups in Sweden face particular opposition in their claims for tolerance and/or respect: Saami, Roma, Muslims and Sub-Saharan Africans.

In the fourth section of the report, it is outlined how questions of tolerance, acceptance and recognition has been articulated and formulated in migration- and minority policy during the last decades, with a specific emphasis upon the ten previous years. The multicultural policy that was officially adopted in 1975 was characterized by an endeavor for recognition of minority rights, but it could be defined as an extrapolation of the Swedish welfare model; the goals of equality was enlarged with the goal of “freedom of choice”, by assuring the members of ethnic and linguistic minorities a genuine choice between retaining and developing their cultural identity and assuming a Swedish cultural identity. Still, the policy was also influenced by a liberal, individualistic political philosophy, with its focus on individuals and individual rights and skepticism towards group-orientated rights, such as collective self-determination, land-rights and cultural autonomy. And - less than a decade after its implementation, an official discourse was articulated which stressed the limits of multiculturalism. The multicultural policy was circumscribed by a perceived need to clarify what was inherently Swedish culture, and a need to clarify which norms and values that are obligatory and unconditional in the Swedish society - and mandatory for migrants to conform to. Thus, we argue that a far-reaching program of tolerance and recognition was never fully implemented in Sweden in spite of the wide spread rhetoric of diversity and multiculturalism.

A distinctive shift in Swedish multiculturalism policy took place in the mid-1990’s. The issue of inclusion of migrants into society was by and large transformed to a matter of inclusion of migrants into the labour market, and integrations policy consisted mainly of measures promoting employability – although the legal rights of the minorities were left unchanged. From the vantage point of labour

market conditions, the new policy puts its emphasis on the responsibilities and rights of the individual - not his or her affiliations. From now on, the political rhetoric in Sweden's integration and minority politics focused more on "same rights and responsibilities" and "same possibilities". Hence, the ideal of recognition was downgraded and the emphasis was placed upon notions such as same formal rights and responsibilities and non-discrimination – especially in the labour market.

Lastly, it must be noted that a significant gulf between theory and practice haunts the political philosophy of multiculturalism – in Sweden as well as elsewhere. Partly counter to the relativist and pluralist core of the multiculturalism and the diversity oratory, practitioners of the welfare state repeatedly express a plea for conformity to perceived Swedish norms and standards. In official bodies we find an attitude of non-tolerance vis-à-vis those norms and customs of minority groups that are perceived to be not in tune with the basic norms of the majority culture.

Keywords

Sweden, recognition, tolerance, multiculturalism, policy, welfare state, citizenship, Saami, Roma, Muslims, Sub-Saharan Africans.

1. Introduction

Geographically, Sweden is located on the Scandinavian Peninsula in north-western Europe, bordering on Finland and Norway; also, it has maritime borders with Denmark, Germany, Poland, Russia, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, and is linked to Denmark in the southwest by the Öresund Bridge. The size of the country is 450.000 sq km and the current population is 9,26 million

Sweden has been described as one of the oldest nation states in Europe even though the country has had several multicultural elements, in terms of both cultural contacts (especially with Netherlands, Germany and England) and a diverse population structure with linguistic and ethnic pluralism –not at least through the presence of national minorities. A political tradition from 16th century with a centralized state in the foreground has also been a salient feature as well as a religious homogeneity in terms of the Lutheran church (a state church until the year of 2000). The historical facts concerning the character of the nation state could be seen as contributory causes to the prevalence of a so-called assimilationist model throughout history.

The aim of this report is to describe and analyze some of the more salient challenges that Sweden faces with regard to cultural diversity during the last 30 years. Cultural diversity is here understood as a societal fact, i.e. that Sweden as a country consists of citizens/inhabitants with different cultural backgrounds. This form of diversity has often been assumed to present political and ethical challenges to the society and the state, and with respect to the more regional and local spheres of society.

Even though large-scale migration to Sweden is a post world war II-phenomenon, Sweden has been characterized by cultural encounters between native inhabitants and so-called newcomers for many generations. In addition, cultural encounters between the majority population, national minorities and the indigenous population the Saami people show that the history of Sweden could be seen as multicultural in several ways. This report gives a presentation of this history. It also attempts to show how the multicultural history of Sweden reflects itself in the current situation and political debate.

Since the middle of the 1970s has Sweden officially adopted multiculturalism as a guiding policy with respect to immigrants and national minorities (even though immigrant groups were in focus when the policy was formulated). It is striking that the needs and the interests of so-called internal minorities such as the national minorities were more recognized in the light of the political attention directed towards immigrants, for example, with respect to language rights. The basis for the policy was summarized through the concept “equality, freedom of choice, and cooperation” which was used in the guidelines adopted by Parliament in 1975. In the Swedish Instrument of Government (Regeringsformen = “the constitution”) from 1974 it is also emphasized that various groups defined through language, ethnicity and religion should be supported in order to maintain their cultural heritage and identities. However, these multicultural guidelines were formulated more or less on the basis of the assumption that the main cultural diversity could be exemplified through the so-called man-power or labour immigration that increased during the 1950s and the 1960s. This immigration came mainly from the Mediterranean countries and Central Europe. One of the largest groups was also the Finnish migrants(a group that have migrated to Sweden for many centuries - not at least because of the fact the territories that are now Finnish belonged to Sweden until 1809) Language as a cultural identity marker became more salient than, for example, markers based upon religion (which was more important as an identity marker in previous centuries and defined the boundaries for citizenship) - and - the government focused upon special rights to “home language instruction”.

During the 1970s and the 1980s the migration pattern changed in a radical way. Sweden more or less closed the door for labour migration in the beginning of the 1970s and the following decades were characterized by immigration mainly through family reunification and refugee immigration. In the latter case the sending countries also changed in a striking way in comparison to the previous decades

of so-called man power immigration. Now the indeterminacy (and/or the tacit assumptions concerning cultural diversity) in the official guidelines became more or more obvious in political and academic circles. In different governmental reports the question of what should be seen as essential common values in a multicultural society set the tone for the discussions (Roth 1999). Hence, questions concerning the limits of pluralism grew in political importance. The official answers to these questions were often based upon references to Swedish criminal law and the declarations and conventions on human rights that Sweden at the time has signed and ratified.

One could say that one central challenge regarding cultural diversity in the last three decades has been the gap between theory and practice in the multicultural policies. This phenomenon also applies to Sweden's official endorsement (ratification) of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. Here the gap could be seen as practical in the sense that the authorities have not been engaged in any substantial measures in, for example, the field of education. Critics of the official guidelines both in political and academic circles have been eager to emphasize that the traditional assimilation model, which characterized Swedish policy for several decades in the post war period is – on the whole - far from dead, and that the cultural diversity which has been endorsed officially has been rather limited in nature. In addition to this “cultural discrimination” Sweden has also, according to some analysts, problems of discrimination both with respect to the labour market and with respect to the provision of various important goods and services such as housing and educational opportunities. These problems have often gone hand in hand. For example, the Romani people have faced both cultural and economic discrimination. In the case of the organized members of the indigenous population - the Saamis - one of their central cultural traits (“the reindeer enterprise”) also coincides with their main economic activity.

However, the demand of special land rights (in the sense of article 169 in the ILO convention) has not been seen favourably by the Swedish government who have had a long tradition of scepticism towards notions such as cultural autonomy and self-determination. Various immigrant groups from non-European countries have also members who are Muslims. These migrants have been exposed to discrimination and harassments with respect to their religion – and – they have, according to some researchers , also faced discrimination in the labour market on the basis of prejudice – either in terms of untenable generalizations concerning their working skills – or – in terms of assumptions concerning values and life styles where some of the these values have been seen as problematic and incompatible with the norms of the host society such as gender equity and the basic rights of the children. This latter argumentation was heavily used by the populist and anti-immigration party Sverigedemokraterna in the latest election 2010. Criticism towards the introduction of Sharia law in family matters has also been raised in various political circles (cf. Bauhn & Demirbag-Stéen 2010). However, this kind of proposal has not at all been raised extensively among the various Muslim groups in Sweden (Gardell 2010).

In the next section, the second, follows a very short description of Sweden's formation as a state, as well as an account of the main tenets in Swedish nationalism, and how Swedish national identity is constructed today. The third section, “Main cultural challenges”, contains a description of Sweden's modern immigration history, from the World War II and onwards, with a focus on the two last decades, and how the migrant legislation has changed during that period. Under this heading we also give a short account of four minority groups in present day Sweden; Saami, Roma, Muslims and sub-Saharan Africans, whose claims for acceptance, tolerance and recognition sometimes is met with indecision, opposition or – at least at the informal level of everyday life – with outright aversion. In the section preceding the conclusions, we discuss how questions of tolerance, acceptance and recognition has been articulated and formulated in migration- and minority policy during the last decades, with a focus on the ten previous years.

2. National identity and state formation

Commonly it is held that the formation of the Swedish state can be dated to the turn of the first millennium (1000 AD), although the center of the state most certainly had a quite limited command of its peripheries for the next couple of centuries. During the 12th century, Sweden was consolidated, and also conquered Finland, which remained a part of Sweden for the next six centuries. During the last two decades of the middle ages, Sweden fought recurrent wars with the Danes, and during the 15th century the country was forced into a union with Denmark and Norway, in the main under Danish sovereignty. Economically and culturally, Sweden was under extensive German influence during the late Middle Ages, including immigration of missionaries, knights, merchants and craftsmen. The German Hanseatic League also brought Sweden into a wider economic circle as the Swedish economy became part of the larger northern and Western European economy (Runblom 1996, Roth 2004).

Sweden gained independence from Denmark in the 16th century, during the reign of Gustav Vasa and his successors, and the Swedish nation state was considerably consolidated. During the 17th century, after winning wars against Denmark, Russia, and Poland, Sweden-Finland, emerged as a great power by taking direct control of the Baltic region. Still, with a population of scarcely more than 1 million inhabitants, the recurrent wars called for a rigorously organized state power, which could manage the large-scale recruitment of soldiers to the army. Thus, Sweden witnessed a centralization of power and a thoroughly effected bureaucratization as early as in the 17th century, and since then centralization has been one of the constituents in the execution of official power. (Later on, this specific tradition of centralization has also shaped the ways in which multicultural policies have been articulated and – above all - executed in Sweden; see below.)

In the period of consolidation of Swedish political power at the beginning of the early modern era, policies were characterized by pragmatism and a rather open attitude towards immigrants. Foreign ideas and groups were welcomed if they could contribute to state consolidation and development. In this period, many leading merchants, artisans and soldiers were of foreign origin. However, immigrants during the so-called great power era (especially during the 17th century) came in relatively small groups. In most cases the members were linguistically and religiously assimilated after a few generations and were integrated through marriage, residence, education and profession. This applied to the Germans in Stockholm, but also to Scots and the Dutch in Gothenburg who came in smaller numbers even though they also contributed to an important extent to the city life both in terms of culture and trade (Runblom 1995).

In some cases the assimilation policy was clear and strictly organised. Inhabitants in the conquered Danish areas, such as Skåne (*Scania*) in the south of Sweden, were subjected to a systematic assimilation policy during the second half of the seventeenth century – for example – through the establishment of a new university. Other groups, however, were treated in a more tolerant fashion. French speaking Walloons (with special skills concerning the production of iron) and Finnish speaking Finns engaged in burn-beating agriculture, to some extent enjoyed special status since they managed to maintain their cultural characteristics such as language for some generations (Svanberg & Tydén 1999).

During the heyday of the Swedish empire, several ethnic groups inhabited its territory; not only Swedes, but Finns, Estonians, Germans, Saami, Romas, Russians and others. With the loss of the Baltic and German provinces during the second decade of the 18th century, the territory of the Swedish state gradually came to take the shape of what today is considered to be Sweden, a process which was finished in the first years of the 19th century, when Finland was lost to the Russian empire. After the loss of Finland in 1809, the state authorities concentrated on building up Sweden as a national state and demarcating it from the outside world.

In general, the 19th century is often called the century of nationalism; romantic nationalism with its credo "one people, one nation, one nation" took root throughout Europe, and in Sweden this meant

greatly limited immigration during certain periods, and a highly introverted approach to the national identity and belonging, even though Scandinavianism and a growing Nordicism characterised certain intellectual and political circles, and there also was a considerable import of foreign ideas in connection with early industrialisation. Scandinavianism was an ideology that tried to find common denominators between Norway, Sweden and Denmark through references to old Nordic myths and tradition – especially among students. However, in practice it proved to be politically weak. For example, during the three years war (1848- 1850) Sweden did not provide any practical help to Denmark.

The loss of Finland had a negative impact on multicultural relations more generally. Arctic Scandinavia, which had previously been characterised by intense trading between the Saami, the Finnish-speaking population, Norwegians and Russians increasingly declined as a multicultural meeting place, now that there was a sharp focus on the geographical frontier with Finland, which had become a Grand Duchy of Russia. Furthermore, parts of northern Sweden became an extended area of colonisation, where the interests of the majority Swedes clashed with those of the Saami over hunting and fishing rights. The growing industrialization of Sweden in the late 19th century also meant that the Saamis and their culture were perceived as more and more irrelevant and obsolete with reference to the development of society (Ingvaldsen, Larsson & Pedersen 2009).

Although the nineteenth-century nation was assiduous in drawing up boundaries – geographical, ethnic and cultural – the frontiers with the outside world remained open in significant respects. For example, a passport was since 1860 not required for inland domestic travels. From the middle of the nineteenth century Sweden was also characterised by emigration, first and foremost to the U.S.A. In general, the causes behind the migration processes were mostly the widespread poverty, but also – at least during the first decades of migration – the lack of religious freedom and an authoritarian social climate with limited freedoms and democracy. Even though some of these migrants chose to return to Sweden after some years in the new country this migration meant a significant loss in terms of population which created a rather open attitude towards newcomers. Sweden's borders remained more or less open until World War I, when a strict law of deportation was introduced.

Thus, one could trace various forms of nationalism in the history of Sweden. From the period of the establishment of the centralized Swedish and until the 19th century a "nationalism" with a sharp focus upon religion dominated the public discourse, a nationalism which allowed for a rather generous form of cultural diversity as long as the people expressed their belonging to the Lutheran church. During the end of 19th and until the middle of the 20th century a racial form of nationalism dominated the public discourse and state policies, a nationalism that was heavily influenced by Social Darwinism and racial biology.¹ This nationalism or ideology also expressed itself through the sterilization laws that were introduced during the 1930s, laws that actually were in play until the middle of 1970. These laws meant that people who were seen as "unfit" for ordinary social life were forced to be sterilized. This targeted group was quite diverse and it included Roma people, mentally disabled and single mothers; cf. Svanberg & Tydén 1999).

After the second world war the official form of nationalism and social belonging changed to more cultural forms of nationalism that were seen as more acceptable in the light of world politics. A common hypothesis among scholars is that the post war period of Sweden has been dominated by a rather thick cultural-ethnic nationalism in spite of an official multicultural ideology – especially during

¹ Racial biology also influenced Sweden's official immigration and minority policies during this period. According to those policies, certain ethnic groups, such as the European Jews were identified as "undesirable". By the end of the 1930s the door was almost completely closed to Jewish refugees. Jews were not seen as political refugees who meant that their chances of entering Sweden were minimal during the years 1938-1940. However, after 1943 Sweden changed its attitude and over 6.000 Danish Jews were granted a safe haven after their escape from Denmark, a change in mentality that was caused by several motives – among them - mercy and *realpolitik*. (Runblom 1995)

the two last decades of the 20th century (Svanberg & Tydén 1999, Roth 1996). In this national narrative the concept of the welfare state and its assumed Swedish expression (“folkhemmet”) has played an important role – especially for many of the supporters of the Swedish labour party – Socialdemokraterna. Still, the fact that the Swedish society has become a receiver of migration has changed it in a number of ways. To a certain extent, it has also changed the ways in which Swedes perceive themselves and others.

Nevertheless, the alterations in Swedish national identity which has occurred during the last three decades cannot only – or even primarily – be explained with the reference to the increased presence of other ethnicities. For example, numerous scholars (cf. Löfgren 1987, Daun 1996) have pointed to the fact that notions of modernity, progression and general welfare during the post-world war II period by the Swedes themselves was associated with Swedishness. In tandem with the political and economical development in Sweden during the decades after the war, Swedes developed an understanding of themselves as a progressive and modern group of citizens. Following your political inclination, one could emphasize either economical and technological improvement and engineering skills, or the success of the welfare state and the progressive, democratic and humanistic values that accompanied that political project. During the high modernity of Western Europe, Sweden was by many – particularly by the Swedes themselves – perceived as one of the most modern countries in the world, and Swedes as one of its most modern populations.

The new membership in EU 1995 meant that two cornerstones in the earlier Swedish national identity were challenged, i.e. the stance of neutrality and being a role model in “modernity” and welfare state policies. The entry meant that Sweden could no longer see itself as neutral in the sense that was prevailing in the national consciousness and in the official post war rhetoric. The political foundations for a rhetoric of neutrality was established during the 19th century - and - this rhetoric was given different interpretations and applications given the changing political circumstances during the 18th and 19th centuries– where concepts such as non-alliance became especially salient - not at least during the Cold War. After the Second World War Sweden’s neutrality policy also became intertwined with international commitments in support of developing countries within the framework of United Nations (Stråth 2004).

However, the new membership in EU/EEC, which was made possible after the fall of the iron wall and the ending of the Cold War, implied that Sweden no longer could see itself as a special role model in “modernity” and welfare state policies. The entrance into EU 1995 not only diminished Sweden’s independence in foreign policy matters, for example, with reference to its work in United Nations under the banner of neutrality. It also meant that Sweden more and more was seen by the states around the world as just one country among many in the European Community – a state struggling with more or less the same kind of economical and political problems as the other member states (Johansson 2004).

The will to resign from the positions and national images mentioned above varies. Needless to say, those who agree with political arrangements of the welfare state are in general more reluctant to change than those who disagree. But the constituents of the national identity vary with the political and/or normative orientation in other ways as well. For example, the attitude towards migrants and the political arrangements of multiculturalism doubtlessly influence the propensity to accommodate the notion of Sweden as a multicultural and multiethnic country. Some depict Swedish society as benefited by cultural and ethnic diversity, other perceive migrants as intruders, and foster romantic nostalgia for a perceived homogenous and monocultural society in pre-war Sweden (an attitude that is exemplified among many voters of the populist right wing party Sverigedemokraterna).

Some present-day constituents of the Swedish national identity are on the one hand shaped in line with the lingering propensity to regard Swedishness as progressive, modern and democratic, and on the other directly worked out in relation to - and dissociation from - the migrant population and non-

European ethnic groups. For example, equality of opportunity between women and men is often referred to – in policy as well as in public – as a typical Swedish value. In reverse, male migrants from the Middle East are frequently depicted as bearers of patriarchal cultures and thereby alien to the standards of the Swedish society (this argument is often deployed in the public debate by right-wing populists and other groupings that otherwise are quite indifferent to calls for equality between the sexes). A more formal aspect of the national identity in Sweden, the Swedish citizenship, will be discussed further below in this report, under the heading of “The definition of tolerance in Sweden”.

3. Main cultural challenges

Swedish society may – as was said before – be characterized as culturally diverse in several senses (i.e., external cultural influences, national minorities and certain migration flows from different parts of the world given the political crises and turmoil). Sweden did not become a country of immigration in a more substantial sense until after the World War II. It is important also to stress that different policies and official attitudes have appeared with reference to different minorities throughout history. (Roth 2005) In certain periods tolerance or respect has been shown towards certain immigrant groups and not to the national minorities. In later years, after 2000, and in some cases a positive recognition towards some of the national minorities and their customs and traditions has appeared (for example through educational support and language policies), a tolerance or a recognition that has not been granted towards several immigrant communities.

The modern era of immigration to Sweden in the post war period can roughly be divided into four stages, with each stage representing different types of immigrants and immigration: 1) refugees from neighboring countries (1938 to 1948); 2) labor immigration from Finland and southern Europe (1949 to 1971); 3) family reunification and refugees from developing countries (1972 to 1989), and 4) asylum seekers from southeastern and Eastern Europe, and the Middle east (1990 to present) and the free movement of EU citizens within the European Union. As a result of these differing flows, the once-dominant Scandinavians, who composed well over half of Sweden's foreign-born population in 1960, made up only one-fourth of the foreign born in 2004 (Westin 2006). The population of Sweden today (2010) is 9,26 million and it is estimated that more than 12 percent of the population is of so-called foreign background.

Since the years following the end of World War II, the pattern of migration to Sweden is similar to other Western European countries (Runblom 1994). From the late forties to the early sixties, the migration was characterized by free movement between the European Community member states and the Nordic countries. In 1954, the Nordic countries set up a common labour market, which enabled large-scale migration from Finland to Sweden during the 1950s and 1960s. A total of 550,000 Finns migrated to Sweden during this time period. Substantial numbers also arrived from Denmark, Norway and Italy. Much of the immigration was a planned recruitment by Swedish enterprises and the Swedish Labour Market Board, and formal agreements were made between the Swedish government and governments in Central and Southern European countries. Through Sweden's success in remaining outside the war, the country had a comparative advantage in the form of intact industrial facilities, which demanded an increased labour force after the end of the war – a situation which also characterises Switzerland.

Swedish companies also turned to Yugoslavia and Greece for manpower, which initiated a substantial migration from these countries – just about 60,000 and 20,000 labour migrants, respectively. During the sixties, the labour market migration tended to be more spontaneous. Besides the recruitment of foreign labour carried out by major industrial companies, an increasing number of migrants started to come to Sweden in the 1960s on their own accord to find jobs. The flow of immigrants peaked in 1970. Sweden did not set up a guest worker program like the German Federal Republic or Switzerland in order to meet labour demands. On the contrary, Sweden had a policy of permanent residence that treated labour migrants as future citizens (Westin 2006).

The spontaneous labour migration halted around 1973 in most West European countries, as a reaction to the so-called oil-crises and the following economic recession. Still, migration to Sweden halted one year earlier, just before the crisis, mainly as result of political pressure from the Swedish Trade Union Confederation, LO. This marks the beginning of a new phase, during which migration is dominated by refugees. Earlier, in the 1950s and 1960s, those granted refugee status were placed within the same general framework as labour migrants, and the National Board of Labour was responsible for their resettlement. When labour migration halted, the institutional arrangements changed, and refugee status became important as a ground for permanent residence (Hammar 1985, Westin 2006).

The first non-European refugees that were accepted by Sweden were the Ugandan Asians expelled in 1972. 70,000 were forced to leave, and roughly 1,000 came to Sweden. In 1973, about 5,000 refugees from Chile were accepted after the coup against Chilean President Salvador Allende. All in all, Sweden accepted 18,000 refugees from Chile between 1973 and 1989. At the same time, 6,000 refugees from other Latin American countries such as Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia, Brazil, and Peru also came to Sweden. In addition, many refugees came from the Middle East during the 1970s and 1980s. Christian Orthodox Syrians sought asylum because of religious persecution, and the Kurds were another salient group, seeking asylum on the grounds of political persecution, and emigrating from Eastern Turkey, Iran, and Iraq. The largest groups from the Middle East were from Iran and Iraq; the Iranians arrived in the 1980s, mainly as a result of the war against Iraq and in opposition to the Islamic government in Tehran. Kurdish Iraqis started to arrive in the 1990s, mostly in response to increasing political oppression (Westin & Dingu-Kyrklund 2003).

During this period, many migrants were granted asylum on humanitarian grounds. This allowed the immigration authorities meet the criticism from those liberal critics who claimed that Sweden didn't live up to its commitments to the UN. By not recognizing these asylum seekers as UN Convention refugees, they did not enjoy the full rights to protection as written in the convention. As Charles Westin (2006) points out, Swedish authorities instead interpreted "humanitarian grounds" without having to follow international conventions. Thus, the authorities could change their interpretations if necessary.

During the 1980s, the perception of an increased flow of refugees impelled the government to rule that political asylum applications would be treated more strictly and in accordance with the statements of the 1951 Geneva Convention. Then, humanitarian grounds for asylum would no longer be used. It is commonly held that this marks the beginning of new phase in Swedish immigration policy, when a stricter asylum policy was implemented. This step coincided with the collapse of the former Soviet Union and wars in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo.

In the early 1990s, a significant number of refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, and Kosovo arrived to Sweden, and the government introduced visa requirements for persons coming from the former Yugoslavia. Still, there was support in the public opinion for assisting refugees from the Balkans, and 50,000 asylum seekers (mainly from Bosnia-Herzegovina) were granted temporary residence without having their individual cases tried. Today, immigrants continue to come from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo through family reunification provisions. Moreover, asylum seekers have continued to come from Iraq, above all since the 2003 US invasion (Westin 2006).

In the middle of the 1990s, Sweden became a member of the European Union (EU), and this exerted a profound influence on Swedish migration policy. In 1996, Sweden became a party to the Schengen agreement, which allows for free movement of people across all Member States. From now on, other EU citizens were allowed to work and live in Sweden. Still, most cross-border movement affecting Sweden is from (and to) neighbouring Nordic countries, although Germany sends the most labour migrants. In relation to the EU-15, migration *from* Sweden has commonly been slightly greater than

migration to Sweden - with an exception for migration from/to Denmark and Finland. In comparison to non-European immigration the numbers of EU immigrants are small, though (Westin 2006).

The table below (Table 1) gives a short survey of the main minority and immigrant groups in Sweden, which is the five national native minority groups and the 20 largest immigrant groups, categorized with reference to country of origin. In the category of Swedish Finns, the numbers for the migrant and native groups are added together. More than the actual size of the group, we will also try to show some of the mayor dimensions of difference and differentiation which are regularly paid attention to. The parenthesis enclosing the “x” in some of the columns indicate that the status may be uncertain, contested or in a state of transition. For instance, it could be questioned whether having English as first language is an emblem of difference in everyday Swedish life or not. It may also be noted, that since some of the migrants from Turkey and Syria - such as the Assyrians and the Syrians - are Christians, they do not denote alterity in the same way as Muslim migrants do, although the orthodox Christian practices by those groups significantly differ from the forms which are exercised by the native protestant population.

Moreover, some groups that earlier has been “othered” and categorized with reference to the racialized social category of “invandrare” (*immigrant*) has to gradually become associated with a general, neutral European identity. In general, there is a clear tendency that migrants from “western” countries - such as Denmark, Germany or the United States – very rarely if ever becomes categorized as “invandrare”, in Sweden, and the extension of that specific category is variable. Being categorized as “invandrare” is in general an experienced shared by migrants from the Asia, Latin America, Africa and – to certain extent – Eastern Europe, and not seldom also by their children, even though may be born in Sweden and hence lack experience of migration per se (Mulinari & Neergaard 2004). Rather than depicting an experience of migration, the category denotes a prescribed alterity. During the last decades, some migrants groups have gradually ceased to be regularly categorized as “invandrare”; the Finns are maybe the most apparent example of this redefinition.

Table 1: Main Minority Groups in Sweden and their Dimensions of Difference

Dimensions of difference	Number (thousands)	Citizenship	Racialized	Religious	Linguistic	Perceived "cultural distance"
National minorities						
Swedish Finns (born in Sweden) (born in Finland)	675 (500) (175)	X			(X)	1-2
Meänkieli *	40-70	X			(X)	-
Roma **	30-65	X	X			5-6
Jews **	25	X	(X)	X		4
Saami **	17	X	X		X	-
Immigrant minorities (country of origin)						
Iraq	118	X	X	X	X	5-6
former Yugoslavia	71	X	(X)		X	4-5*)
Poland	68	X	X		X	3-4
Iran	60	X	X	X	X	5-6
Bosnia-Herzegovina	56	X	X	X	X	4-5
Germany	48	X			X	2-3
Denmark	46	X				-
Norway	44	X				1-2
Turkey	41	X	X	(X)	X	5
Somalia	32	X	X	X	X	5-6
Thailand	29	X	X	X	X	4-5
Chile	28	X	X		X	4-5
Lebanon	24	X	X	X	X	-
China	21	X	X	X	X	5-6
United Kingdom	20	X			(X)	2-3
Syria	20	X	X	(X)	X	-
Other forms of categories						
Muslims ***	100-250	X	X	X	X	-
Sub Saharan Africans	80	X	X	X	X	-

Sources: SCB (Statistiska centralbyrån), except where indicated: * Sveriges Radio, ** Nationalencyklopedin, *** Stenberg (2002). Perceived "cultural distance" is a measure utilized by Mella & Palm (2009:46). *) The number comes from the categories "croatians" and "serbs".

The diversity of national minorities and the indigenous population the Saamis has been recognized through Sweden's decision to ratify the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Hence, the following groups and languages are ascribed national minority status: Saami (even though the self-perception often has been "an indigenous population"), Tornedal Finns (Meänkieli or Tornedals Finnish), Roma (Romany Chib) and Jews (Yiddish), Finns (Finnish). This special recognition of the national minorities constitutes a break with earlier political traditions. The multicultural policy of 1975, as exemplified through the notion of freedom of choice (see below), had a more integrated or uniform stance towards national minorities and immigrant communities. For example, home language instruction was initiated for the national minorities at the same time and on the same premises as for the immigrant groups.

The size of the minority groups in Sweden is hard to estimate because of the lack of ethnic statistics, which is forbidden in Sweden, as is statistics concerning religious background. However, more informal statistics circulates which could give a clue of the approximate numbers. What sets Sweden, Norway and Finland apart from other countries in Europe is the presence of an indigenous population – the Saamis - which presents special political and ethical challenges in comparison to other groups. The most striking issue has been the case of land rights and the debates concerning the importance of signing the ILO convention.

In general, it is possible to claim that Swedes has accepted the multicultural condition. At least, they report a relatively positive experiences of and attitudes towards migration and migrants (Mella & Palm 2008, 2009). More than 60 % of the population had good or very good *experiences* of working, studying or in other ways interacting with persons with immigrant background. No more than 14 % had negative or very negative experiences, and just above 20 % claim that they have no experiences of this specific kind of interaction. The experiences are not randomly distributed in the population though. A number of demographic or social factors have an effect: there is a positive correlation between level of education, sex/gender and the experiences concerned. The data shows data women and highly educated are more positive. The more educated a person were, the more positive his or her experiences were. But there are no significant findings when it comes to age; the differences are too small.

This is not the whole picture, however. There is a body of research that also reports the incidence of intolerance towards migrants and minority groups – which may manifest itself in such forms as discrimination, harassment, insults, threats and physical violence. For example, a number of reports from a governmental committee on *structural* discrimination (cf. Pincus 1994) shows that recurrent patterns of everyday racism and indirect discrimination characterizes or affect the migrant existence in Sweden (Dahlstedt & Hertzberg 2005, Neergaard 2006). Other studies point to the proliferation of exclusionary mechanisms on the labour market, primarily targeting migrants (Behtoui 2004, 2006). On the other hand, some researchers states that assumptions of discrimination in the labour market are exaggerated, and that the problems for newcomers have more to do with the lack of an appropriate education and a changing economy/ labour market which also has affected the opportunities for several members of the majority population in a negative way (Carlson & Rooth 2007).

The scope and signification of ethnic discrimination has, from time to time, been intensely debated in Swedish academia, and it's hard to draw a conclusion in this specific matter. Nevertheless, it would definitely not make sense to deny the occurrences of racism and discrimination in everyday life of many migrants and minorities. It is relevant in this context to mention that segregation (such as housing segregation) may have its ground in various forms of discrimination and is often structured on the basis of non-Swedishness and not necessarily on the basis of specific ethnic backgrounds. Hence, the poorer neighbourhoods in the suburbs of the major cities of Sweden such as Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö are genuinely multi-ethnic, consisting of people of many origins (Bosnia, Chile, Somalia, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon etc; Westin 2003).

The lack of tolerance and respect that native and/or migrant minority groups in Sweden experience come from different sources, and have different causes. Sometimes it targets groups which are ethnically defined, sometimes groups which are religiously defined. Sometimes it targets singular norms and customs, which could be more or less shared by different groups. And even though the social category of “race” is rejected in mainstream media and public debate, and common only in the discourses of right-wing extremist social movements, some exclusionary practices may undoubtedly be defined as “racialized” or overtly racist. In the following section, we will review the position of a number of minority groups in Sweden, whose practices and worldviews sometimes are met with a lack of respect and tolerance, and also suffer from outright discrimination. Following the argument outlined above, we will focus on different forms of group formations – religiously, ethnically and “racially” defined – and how they are treated by the ethno-nationalistic defined majority.

Saami

The Sámi are Europe’s northernmost and the Nordic countries’ only indigenous people. Saami ancestral lands span an area of approximately 388,350 km², almost the size of Sweden. The Saami languages are a part of the Finno-Lappic group of the Uralic language family. Traditionally, the Saami have pursued a variety of livelihoods, including coastal fishing, fur trapping, and sheep herding. Their best known means of livelihood is semi-nomadic reindeer herding. Only about 10% of the total Saami population is connected with it, but it remains an important industry among Saami in Sweden. The estimated (inofficial) number of Saami living in Sweden is somewhere between 20 000 and 35 000, of which 8 000 has registered for voting in the Saami parliament.

Trade between externals and the Saami began during the middle ages, as did the colonization of the Saami area and the exploitation of its resources by non-Saami, and this process was intensified during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Following the consolidation of the states adjacent to the Saami area, several states claimed sovereignty in the region and the Saami were forced to pay tax to several crowns. Also, Christianization followed during this process of intensified pressure from the outside. In time, the nations that had claimed Saami as their own divided up the Saami area.

In 1751, the border was drawn up by Sweden and Denmark-Norway, dividing Saami along the mountain ridge from Jämtland to Finnmark. The border between Sweden and Finland was established in 1809, and in 1826 the border between Norway and Russia was established, thereby completing the division of Saami. Despite the colonization and division of the Saami area, the Saami people were able to maintain some independence. When the national border between Sweden and Denmark-Norway was established, the Saami were guaranteed ownership of land and water in what was known as the Codicil to the Border Treaty (1751).

The land issue continues to be of uttermost importance for the Saami group, even in the present. With the practice of reindeer herding, which is central to the Saami way of life and often regarded as the defining feature of Sami culture, the Saami exhibit a slightly different form of territorial organization, which could be characterized as flexible and overlapping, in comparison to the modern property system of the European states which colonized them. Contradictions between these two conceptions of territoriality have been a defining feature of state-Sami relations in the following ways:

1. Nordic states viewed the Sami as nomadic, thus having no ownership of their land.
2. Traditional Sami activities, notably reindeer herding, were viewed as illegitimate or backwards, resulting in the privileging of modern forms of land use such as agriculture.
3. Where states did feel an impulse to protect the Sami way of life, they viewed nomadic pastoralism as economically non-viable, prompting systems of administration which increased state regulation of herding (Forrest 1998:ii, cf. Eide 2001).

During the last decades, roughly one thousand land owners has taken Saami reindeer herds to court, in an effort to keep them from grazing reindeer in private forests (Borchert 2001). The landowners base their law suits on claims that the reindeers rub the antlers on young trees, which damages their private pine plantations. The courts that try the numerous cases require proof that the use of the land in question is a part of an ancient tradition, and in general they require proofs that are different from the ones the defendant Saami has provided, namely written documents that demonstrate an almost century long period of continuous grazing-use for the land under dispute. The history and traditions of the Saami are mainly oral, and the kinds of documents required simply do not exist, however. The claims of the court has, because of that, been acknowledged as absurd from a Saami viewpoint, especially in those cases where archeological evidence of Saami land use can be found (Borchert 2001, p. 42).

Needless to say, since this conflict influence one of the cornerstones – if not *the* cornerstone – of Saami economy, way of living and group identity, it has far-reaching consequences for the group (Borchert 2001). Threats to the reindeer herding has a potential to undermine notions of autonomy, self-determination, group distinctiveness and cohesion – at least among Saami in Sweden. According to Saami organizations, the claims of the landowners challenge the customary rights of the Saami people. Still, the judgment went in favor of the Saami defendants on the lower juridical instances, but no verdict has been recorded in the Supreme Court yet.

Furthermore, reindeer breeding and keeping has often been counteracted on local level. There are a number of examples when conflicts have arisen around land rights. The rights and the interests of farmers and landowners in northern Sweden have clashed with the rights and the interests of the Saami, when migratory reindeers have damaged plants in forests and arable land. Although the rights of the Sami in part are regulated in law, the prejudices and negative stereotyping to Sami among other people living in northern Sweden has been accompanied with a marked lack of tolerance towards their rights to preserve their main industry, and thereby their way of living.

A quick glance at the Swedish history of ideas shows that the knowledge on the Saami group that was produced during the 19th and early 20th century, and circulated in academia and mainstream media, was informed of the racializing stereotypes and representational conventions that were common back then. The Saami were regularly depicted as the inferior Other, belonging to another race and not having reached the same level of civilization as the rest of the population. In line with this frame of interpretation, collected from racial biology and Social Darwinism, segregation laws were formulated during the first decades of the twentieth century.

Segregation took a number of forms. The Saami group suffered from this in a number of ways. One example in the field of education was the nomadic "kåta schools" introduced after 1913, where Saami children received an education that was said to be adapted to their specific life conditions in the Arctic tundra. Here the Saami received an inadequate education characterized by stereotypes and insufficient means, which reinforced their alienation from the Swedish state and the rest of society. A group such as the Saami has been exposed to both segregation and assimilation strategies from the state depending upon the sphere of activity and the specific time and context. With respect to religion (Lutheran Christianity) the general stance from the state could often be characterizes as assimilatory been assimilation while segregation strategies often prevailed in areas such as social life, work and education.

For several decades during the 20th century, speaking Saami languages was not allowed in the elementary school during school time. Sami wasn't even a school subject in the nomadic school. The Sami children were not given the opportunity to learn to read and write in their own language. It was quite common among older generations of Sami of have Saami only as a social language, and use Swedish to read and write. Thus, the right to education in their own languages has been a key issue for Saami activists.

The generation exposed to unpleasant experiences from their school years chose to a greater part to not speak Sami with their own children. As adults, many of the 60's and 70's generations cannot speak Sami "although they should be able to". They have Sami as a passive language to a more or less degree. It can be a rather steep threshold to reclaim one's language, and many speak of "psychological barriers". Here there is a need for great education efforts and a positive attitude from the surrounding society, both the Sami and the Swedish (Sametinget 2011).

Still, the right to education in Saami language is seldom contested in present day Sweden. There is a state funded Saami school in Sweden today, centrally administrated by Sameskolstyrelsen (SamS, *The Sami Education Board*), although education in the Saami language at primary or secondary level did not exist until 1976, when the Swedish government introduced home language education for immigrant children and linguistic minorities. The goals of Sami school education are stated in the curriculum. The Sami school is responsible that every pupil after graduating: a) is familiar with his or her Sami background and cultural heritage, b) can speak, read and write in Saami. In addition to this the regular goals of the compulsory school system apply. According to the Saami School Decree all education should be given in Sami and Swedish, and the subject Saami is obligatory in every grade (SamS 2011).

Thus, it could reasonably be argued that the right to education in Saami language is publically and officially accepted and recognized, and could be described through the notion of recognition. In reverse, the land claims by Saami are neither publically nor officially accepted and/or recognized in their entirety. As noted earlier, the demand of special land rights - in the sense of article 169 in the ILO convention - has not been seen favourably by the Swedish government, which has had a long tradition of scepticism towards notions such as cultural autonomy and self-determination. Hence, this negative stance could be described with the notion of non-tolerance.

As noted above, there are several and recurrent disputes between Saami reindeer herds and non-Saami land-owners on the local level, and between juridical bodies and Saami actors on regional and national level. As a guarded conclusion, it could reasonably be said that the conflicts over land-use remains to be a question where Saami claims are neither fully accepted nor recognized – although it would be a mistake to categorize the viewpoint of Swedish authorities as totally indifferent or neglectful of Saami land interests.

Roma

As in many other European countries, the discrimination, hostility and lack of tolerance of Roma have a long history. For example, during the so-called Age of Liberty (1718- 1772), when Sweden began its retreat to small power status, policies regarding cultural divergence were tightened. There was a particular focus on religious and behavioural "deviants". As a typical example of increasing xenophobia during this period, the historian Hugo Valentin cites a statute of 1741 which decreed that

all Jews, Savoyards, tightrope walkers, actors and other jesters ... Tartars and Gypsies who with diverse ungodliness, fortune telling and lies cause great trouble and inconvenience to ordinary people, and also other such foreigners, who with barometers, different sorts of glass, tea and such less necessary goods arrive and who abscond with honest money" shall immediately be expelled from the kingdom (Valentin 1964).

Although members of the Roma group today share the formal civil and political rights which are included in Swedish citizenship, it could be argued that they lack some of the significant social rights in terms of their fulfilment such as educational rights. During the span of the 20th century, they were more or less forced to abandon their main industries, and the life forms associated with it; this process was completed in the 1960s. Since then, the policy towards Roma from official bodies has been characterized by different inclusionary - rather than excluding - measures, albeit seldom designed "from the inside", in other words how the needs of the group are assessed by the members themselves. Moreover, their religious or cultural rights have not often been denied by official bodies. (In this

context it is relevant to claim that the Roma group is heterogeneous in terms of religious belongings, depending upon the members historical backgrounds. However, in recent years many members of the Roma community have gravitated towards Christian evangelical churches in Sweden; cf. Roth 2005.)

Since Sweden does not allow for ethnic registration, and thus do not have statistical databases relevant for an estimation of the living conditions among the Roma, all descriptions of the social conditions must be tentative. However, other sources of information concludes that the living conditions of Roma in Sweden is relatively poor, and that they are more or less excluded from mainstream Swedish society (cf. SOU 2010:55). One can discern a strong pattern of social, economic and political exclusion and marginalization. Living standards are lower than average. Considerable health problems are reported, and life expectancy is judged to be clearly below average. At a rough estimate, 80 percent of adult Roma are unemployed. Most Roma children do not complete primary school, and very few continue to secondary school. This being so, even fewer reaches university level.

Discrimination is widespread. Attitudes towards Roma are more negative than towards any other group, and they suffer strongly from labour market exclusion. According to Geza Nagy (2007, in Palusuo 2008), the unemployment rate is considerably over the average. The exclusion is, Nagy continues, a consequence of several factors, such as failures in the educational system, lack of demand for services from “traditional” Roma industries, and widespread negative attitudes towards Roma in general. The governmental white paper quoted above draws a similar conclusion:

Attitudes towards Roma are more negative than towards any other group. They remain the most clearly discriminated group on the labour market at all stages: when they seek a job, during the interview, and in case they did get the job they risk losing it if their ethnicity becomes known. (SOU 2010:55, p. 36, cf. Westin & Tan Marti 2008)

Moreover, discrimination in the housing sector is also reported, in public as well as private housing; discrimination within the housing market stands out as a very large problem for Romanies, it is concluded in report from the governmental agency Diskrimineringsombudsmannen (DO, *the Equality Ombudsman*; DO 2003), which put together complaints from Roma during the last two decades. Some of the complaints concern statements where Romanies are named as undesirable tenants. They also encounter negative attitudes, prejudice and insults from neighbours. There are examples of tenants protesting with name lists against Roma who about to move in to a building, and of neighbours organising against them moving into an area, out of fear that their residences will depreciate in value.

Since they have met far-reaching difficulties in entering the labour market, and also been subject to negative stereotyping and ethnic discrimination, and partly (or mainly) as a consequence of those excluding activities, they have not been able to obtain the rights implied by the social citizenship of the welfare state (Marshall 1950). Their access to the political rights implied in the notion of citizenship may also be questioned, at least in the sense that a lack of representation can be noted. “Roma are virtually absent from politics” (SOU 2010:55, s. 36) the above mentioned white paper claims; their civic organisations are weakly developed and they lack official representation as a minority, and there is no “umbrella” organisation on the national level.

Apart from the general exclusion processes, a certain lack of recognition can be noted, in the educational system (Rodell Olgac 2006) and elsewhere. For instance, children do not have full access to education in their mother tongue as stipulated in law (Skolverket 2007), and there is no or little mentioning of Roma as a national minority in school books. Moreover, Roma cultural institutions and media are few and with scarce resources and do not have a secure financial situation. The culture and language of Roma Travellers is endangered, much because of the stigma connected with being a Traveller.

Some of the cases of discrimination that have been filed at the DO (DO 2003), and that concerns discrimination in everyday life, may also give a hint of how the lack of tolerance and recognition vis-

à-vis Roma in Sweden is constituted. In general, it concerns the forms of discrimination that makes goods and services unavailable. Not making goods and services available is form of discrimination treated under the Swedish law on discrimination (2003:307) in the Penal Code. Discrimination concerning goods and services is often about Roma being denied access to shops, restaurants and hotels, or in other ways are being treated in a discriminatory fashion by establishments.

In a questionnaire survey in the DO report, 27 percent report that they have been refused entry into shops, on one or several occasions, and almost 40 percent state that they have been refused entry into restaurants during the past two years. The same numbers say that they have been treated badly in shops or restaurants during the past year. In the report, it becomes obvious the acts of discrimination occur when one or more female members of a group wears the traditional dress that many women among the Kaali Roma - a group that migrated from Finland to Sweden in the 1950:s and 60:s – wear (DO 2003, p. 18). It seems like that this dress, consisting of blouses with embroideries and heavy skirts of thick, black velvet, becomes a highly visible symbol for a rejected Roma identity, which triggers of a discriminatory agency.

Thus, it can be said that Roma claims on acceptance and recognition has been met at the official level – but only to a certain degree. What is lacking is the financial and organizational official support that follows from at least some strong definitions of recognition, i.e. the definition inherent in the official Swedish multiculturalism from 1975. Following the argument outlined just above, it could also be argued that tolerance and recognition towards some cultural practices which express a Roma identity is absent in the everyday life of mainstream Swedish society. For instance, the (female) followers of the traditional dress-code of Kaali Roma identity runs the risk of discriminated in restaurants, hotels and/or shops.

Muslims

As in many other European countries, at least west European, Muslims in general and religious Muslims in particular has been singled out in Sweden as a matter of interest, suspicion and debate during the decade following the attack on World Trade Centre, New York, in 2001. Muslims has become a highly visible minority in Swedish society, and the enactment of Muslim belief practices has caught public attention in many different ways. Still, the attention is frequently mixed with suspicion, and anti-Muslim sentiments and opinions have been reported, as well as relatively high frequency of outright discrimination. Against the background of militant forms of Islam and terrorist attacks - lately the suicide bomber in Stockholm in December 2010 - generalizations and stereotypes about Islam and Muslims have become more widespread and amounts to “Islamophobia” especially among members of right-wing populist parties (Gardell 2010).

What characterizes the group in itself? Arguably, Sweden has one of the most heterogeneous Muslim populations of all Western European countries. They have different ethnic, political, linguistic and/or educational backgrounds. They come from over forty different countries in north and sub-Saharan Africa; from Arabic, Turkish or Persian parts of Asia, and from Europe. They come from secularized states as Turkey, religious states such as Iran, and from former socialistic states such as Bosnia-Herzegovina and several of the new states that formerly belonged to the Soviet Union. Clearly, this heterogeneity makes it hard to make categorizations about Muslims in general (Sander 2004).

The Islamic institutionalization in Sweden has, from a slow start in the 1960s and 1970s, begun to move into a consolidation phase during the past few years has. Swedish Muslims have now achieved what Åke Sander (2004) calls a “rudimentary institutional completeness”; i.e. many of the most essential Islamic and Muslim institutions - such as mosques, *musallas*, Muslim periodicals, Muslim burial grounds, pre-schools, schools and shops - now exists in Sweden. According to Sander, it could be argued that they are manifesting a physical and ideological presence in Sweden, and more and more Swedes are beginning to consider them an integral part of Swedish domestic religious life, as Swedish Muslims.

Despite the fact that the institutionalization of Islam has developed during the last decade, it could also be said that many Muslims find it hard to enact their religiosity in a proper way, according to the norms and beliefs inherent in their faith (Sander 2004). One reason for this could, according to Åke Sander (2004), be found in the discrepancies between different perspectives on religion; or, more exactly, different viewpoints on the notion, nature, position and place of religion in a society. In Sweden, there is widespread notion – which probably is common in other secular countries as well – that religion should not be allowed to affect your behaviour outside your very private sphere, in the public life. Society, its institutions and representatives should be impartial, rational and objective, i.e. non-religious and secular. With this slightly secular perspective on religion, it could be said that it has disappeared as common or wide-spread “frame of interpretation”, as way of see, interpret and understand how other people act and think.

When applying this “secular frame of interpretation”, it could be hard to understand that some religion could mean something else than for a secular person, and that the scope and application of religiously motivated norms, rules, attitudes and practices by far exceed what is generally perceived as appropriate in (for example) Sweden, viz. confined to the private sphere. The presence of a “secular frame of interpretation” might also explain why so many expressions of Islamic faith have received negative attention during the last decade. For example, the construction of Mosques does seldom take place in silence; frequent and high-pitched voices of rejection and disapproval are common, and when the buildings once are completed, the congregations receive numerous threats and insults (Gardell 2010). The opposition is evident (Integrationsverket 2005, 2006), and two mosques has been burned down. Moreover, women wearing burqa or niqab report being harassed in public (Berge & Manga 2006, Gardell 2010). Widespread calls for prohibition of burqa and niqab are raised. Those acts of depreciation are not only caused by different views on religiosity or piety; as Mattias Gardell (2010) has argued, one can also track the effect of *Islamophobic* ways of thinking in present-day Sweden. There is a tendency to understand and depict the agency of migrants from Muslim societies in general and Islamic believers in particular as unreflective, rigid and fundamentalist.

Nevertheless, it must be said that certain claims from active Islamic believers are met in Sweden, at least formally. Despite the limitations discussed in the beginning, the institutionalization of Islam is in process. The most basic religious needs have been met, with certain degree of support from local municipalities, the Swedish church, etc. On the other hand, a wide-spread (but actually declining; cf. Gardell 2010, pp. 223-24) suspicion - or even contempt - to certain belief practices continues to constitute an obstacle to the enactment of Islam in Sweden, and towards a fully developed recognition, or even acceptance, of Islam in Sweden.

Sub-Saharan Africans

The groups of Sub-Saharan migrants in Sweden come up to just above 80 000 persons. They are composed of the most nationalities from the African continent, but among the most numerous groups we find migrants from Somalia (32 000), Ethiopia (13 000), Eritrea (9 000), Gambia (3 500) and Uganda (3 000). (As a geographical term, *Sub-Saharan* refers to the area of the African continent which lies south of the Sahara. The political definition of Sub-Saharan Africa, instead, covers African countries which are fully or partially located south of the Sahara.)

Different measures for estimating the economic integration of migrants in Sweden suggest concordant conclusions: Sub-Saharan migrants face the most far-reaching obstacles in their efforts to get a position in the Swedish society. African-born migrants are the group most likely to be unemployed or subjected to discrimination in the Swedish labour market, and employers perceive African-born as more different than the European-born migrants. For example, the chance for a migrant from Sub-Saharan Africa to find a job which matches his/her education or training is over 60 percent less compared to a native Swede (Integrationsverket 2002). Also, the most low-paid groups in the Swedish labour market are found among the African born migrants (Englund 2003).

The relative lack of economical integration in Swedish society is to a certain degree followed by a lack of social integration. Numerous studies of “perceived cultural distance” among native Swedes point in that direction (Lange 1992, Mella & Palm 2008, 2009, 2010). The category of Africans or specific African nationalities such as the Somali (Mella & Palm 2008, 2009, 2010) is thus placed at the far end of a continuous scale where notions of similarity or difference should be measured. Obviously, what is perceived and constructed as “African culture” - or “Somali culture” - among Swedes moulds a *gestalt* that signifies difference, or even radical difference. Needless to say, this affects those who are forced to represent this alterity. In-depths studies (Sawyer 2000, 2008) and reports (Gärding 2009) of the identity formations of young people of African descent in Sweden shows that the experience of racial categorization and harassment is a manifest part of their everyday life – although the strategies developed to cope with it differ in a variety of ways.

A number of scholars (Mulinari & Neergaard 2005, Sawyer 2000, 2008) claim that the willingness to acknowledge the scope of those expressions are very limited, for instance among scholars, civil servants and other “key actors”. During a fieldwork on the formation of Black, African identities in Sweden, social anthropologist Lena Sawyer noted that

National and transnational stories of Sweden and Swedes are often imbued with a particular righteous morality. And though Swedish informants generally did not discuss, or even name, the Atlantic slave trade I would argue that Sweden's absence from this past subtly imbues this (national) locality and people with a particular moral character in relation to discussions of racism. [...] If Swedish morality is achieved, in part, through exclusion from hegemonic historiographies of the Atlantic slave trade, Swede's often built upon narratives of peripherality and marginality to continental European history when discussing racism. [...] If at all, in Sweden racism was most often described as the violent behaviors of deviant, confused, unemployed boys and men who lived in small rural communities. Their stories all seemed to quietly say “racism is something foreign to the Swedish society” as they metaphorically pointed their fingers outward, away from themselves, and sought to locate the “real” racists (Sawyer 2008, pp. 16-17)

Thus, following Sawyer's argument, the historical experience of being located at the margins of the Europeans society has facilitated the formation of a national identity in which a particular righteous morality and a denial of racism is a characteristic feature. Although a righteous morality generally could be viewed as a part of ethnic or national self-presentations, not only in Sweden (cf. Eriksen 1993), it may still be claimed that this quite widespread and generic denial make it hard for young persons of sub-Saharan descent to cope with the actual occurrences of racism (cf. Sawyer 2005).

In tandem with the argument that we outlined about the acceptance and recognition of Roma culture, that the prevalence of racist or racializing stereotypes make up certain obstacles to the enactment of the norms, values and expressions that sub-Saharan Africans share, whether they are related to an ethnic or national identity, or a general African identity. Although there's a lack of research on this particular topic in Sweden, it might be said that stereotyping, discrimination and hostility have a restraining effect to the public display of cultural expressions. Still, there is no particular cultural expression of sub-Saharan African groups in Sweden that has been opposed as frequent and large-scale as the opposition to the construction of mosques and the wearing of burqa or the niqab.

4. The definition of tolerance in Sweden

Policies towards different immigrant and minority groups during the first two decades of the post-war era were in general purely assimilatory, and the tolerance for or recognition of various cultural identities and customs was by and large absent from the official political agenda and the public discussion. In addition, there was no systematic reception policy. The period of assimilationist policy was not put to an end until 1975, when multiculturalism became an important element in the Swedish model of welfare-state politics. The new policy established the principles that have guided Sweden's

immigration policy ever since: According to Ålund and Schierup (1991), Sweden's multicultural immigrant policy could be viewed as a rejection of a “guest worker” strategy for labour import; with its quest to create social equality among ethnic groups, respect for immigrants ways of living, and with an emphasis on providing immigrants and ethnic minorities with resources to exercise political influence. In Swedish multiculturalism, welfare ideology objectives focused on “equality” (*jämlikhet*) occupy a central position. Other policy objectives include “freedom of choice” (*valfrihet*) and “partnership” (*samverkan*).

Tomas Hammar (1985) summarizes the original intent of these three principles - which paraphrases the French revolution's *liberte, egalite, et fraternite* - as follows:

The goal of *equality* implies the continued efforts to give immigrants the same living standard as the rest of the population. The goal of *freedom of choice* implies that public initiatives are to be taken to assure members of ethnic and linguistic minorities domiciled in Sweden a genuine choice between retaining and developing their cultural identity and assuming a Swedish cultural identity. The goal of *partnership* implies that the different immigrant and minority groups on the one hand and the native population on the other both benefit from working together (Hammar 1985: 33)

These goals were formulated in the mid-1970s, and it was implicated in this program that foreigners not only would enjoy the same legal privileges as Swedish citizens, but also that the general public should accept multicultural aims. Moreover, the proclaimed egalitarian and multicultural ideology has substantial legal backing. In most important matters, formal equality before the law holds true, as for example equal access to unemployment contributions and a large number of other social welfare benefits.

Officially, there has been a strong emphasis on the formula “same rights-same responsibilities” in public policymaking. Models of differentiated citizenship, implying different rights and provisions depending on one's groups status, has not gained wide-spread acceptance in the public debate, and have never exerted any influence on Swedish citizenship legislation. As Dag Blank and Mattias Tydén notes, “one salient characteristic of the Swedish welfare state during the 20th century has been a model of general and uniform policies, for all citizens” (Blank & Tydén 1995, p. 64). It is obvious that this political tradition influences contemporary legislation and policy. Nevertheless, Sweden introduced a new citizenship law in 2001, and then it became possible to have dual citizenship.

The Swedish Citizenship Act of 2001 differs in several respects from previous laws such as the citizenship laws of 1894, 1924 and 1950. The law of 2001 has opened up the door for some *ius solis* considerations with the purpose to avoid statelessness even though the *ius sanguinis* principle is still operating in a striking way. According to the current legislation a child acquires Swedish citizenship by birth under condition that the mother is a Swedish citizen and the child can also get citizenship by birth if the child was born in Sweden and if the father is a Swedish citizen. However, in the previous mentioned citizenship laws the principle of *ius sanguinis* was the main, overriding principle. The Citizenship Act of 2001 also accepts dual nationality which was previously not allowed and the act has also strengthened the importance of the principle of domicile and the will to engage and identify oneself with the new country. (Lokrantz Bernitz 2010, Sandesjö & Björk 2009)

The content of the requirements for gaining citizenship in the Citizenship Act of 2001 is rather “thin” compared to several other countries in Europe, (and other countries in the world). There is no language requirement in the Swedish citizenship law and the new citizens do not need to express an oath of loyalty to the country. Different political debates during the last decade have shown how controversial the language requirement is. According to some critics it has often been interpreted as a strategy of “blaming the victim” in cases where the authorities have not provided enough educational support or – as an unnecessary requirement - given the plausible assumption that it is in the interest of long term residents to master the language of the majority population (Roth 2005); however, a “good conduct”

requirement has been more emphasized in recent years which imply that persons who have committed crimes have to wait longer until they gain citizenship status (Lokrantz Bernitz 2010, Bengtsson, Strömblad & Bay 2010). The rights that are exclusive for citizens - compared to more or less permanent residents - are also few, as for example the right to vote in elections for Parliament, the prohibition against deportation and the status of being eligible for important public offices.

The introduction of the Citizenship Act of 2001 could be seen in the light of an increased internationalization of the Swedish society. As was mentioned before, Sweden became a member of the EU in 1995 which opened up the doors for more migrants from EU countries. The increased migration from various countries around the world also meant that more “multinational” marriages evolved. Before the new act on citizenship was introduced Sweden ratified the European Convention of Nationality from 1997. This convention, which has been ratified by 12 countries in Europe, has as one of its main purposes to make it easier to gain dual citizenship and introduce “good practice” in the field of citizenship law such as more reliability, “neutrality” and inclusiveness. The convention is open not just for members of the European Council but also for other countries - including Non-European states. However, in the Swedish case members of the neighbouring Nordic countries still receive a so-called preferential treatment, concerning principles of naturalisation and the conditions for acquiring citizenship through notifications.

Another important legal achievement of Swedish immigrant policy has been the granting to foreign citizens of the right to vote in local elections, which first was exercised in the local elections of 1976. The voting rights amendment to the Swedish constitution was also considered as a way means of giving immigrants access to the advantages of the welfare state, and at the same time safeguarding their right to autonomous cultural development (Ålund & Schierup 1991). All in all, it could be said that the policy of multiculturalism provided a legal and moral foundation to support “freedom of choice”, to encourage “partnership”, to give “equality” a social basis, and to prevent ethnic conflicts and the development of a segregated society. A political consensus was instituted, which embraced government and state institutions, as well as political parties (across the traditional left-right spectrum) and important social movements.

The policies of Swedish multiculturalism - and the concomitant legislation - of 1975 were characterized by an endeavor for recognition of minority rights, but it could also be defined as an extrapolation of the Swedish welfare model. It was held that the goal of equality should be enlarged with the goal of “freedom of choice”, by assuring the members of ethnic and linguistic minorities a genuine choice between retaining and developing their cultural identity and assuming a Swedish cultural identity. In so far, the reformist socialist ideas of the Social democracy underpinned this policy, with its emphasis on equality. But the policy was also influenced by a liberal, individualistic political philosophy, with its focus on individuals and individual rights and skepticism towards group-orientated rights, such as collective self-determination, land-rights and cultural autonomy. As an example of this particular skepticism, we find the long-time prohibition of butchery in line with Halal and Kosher rules. The regulation on animal husbandry has always been overridden the freedom of religion in this particular issue (Blanck & Tydén 1995). More generally, the Swedish legal system has shown very limited interest in and acceptance of the idea that ethnic belonging and cultural traits could be recognized as a reason for differential legal treatment (Nygren 1999).

Thus, it might be said that the policy of 1975 suffered from compartmentalization: calls for recognition of collective, cultural practices was mixed together with a classical, liberal emphasis of individual rights. Consequently, it did not take long until the multicultural policy was heavily criticized. For instance, some scholars claimed that the policy as designed from the vantage point of an *aesthetic* and narrow conception of culture (e.g. Rojas 1993 & Roth 1996; cf. Hertzberg 2003). The expressions promoted under the heading of “freedom of choice” were besides the publication of exile newspapers, magazines or journals, mainly folkloristic in character: literature, poetry, dances and music. Consequently, the prospect of possible conflicts between values, norms and ways of living

were seldom addressed especially concerning family matters. Although these issues has been discussed in the state sponsored research commission mentioned above, the development of a praxis during the late 1970s and early 1980s following the guidelines inherent in multicultural policy reveals that the full complexity of the cultures implied in the notion multiculturalism was slightly underestimated.

But a change was about to come. Subsequently, the authorities recognized that the multiculturalism developed in practice was limited in scope. During the 1980s, a number of governmental white papers pointed to the need of recognizing the width of promises inherent in liberal, multicultural political philosophy. Moreover, they also highlighted a perceived risk of “cultural clashes” between norms and considered to be “typically” Swedish such as the ideal of gender equality and those held to be alien and external to Swedish society. Less than a decade after its implementation, a discourse was articulated which stressed the limits to multiculturalism; the relatively progressive articulation of multicultural policy was circumscribed by a perceived need to clarify what was inherently Swedish culture, and a need to clarify which norms and values that are unconditional to the Swedish society (and thus mandatory for migrants to conform to). Hence, the scope of what was tolerated and recognized was diminished. Still, one central mechanism for fulfilling the multiculturalistic goal of recognition was by and large left intact. The minority organizations still had the possibility to receive economical support for activities that strengthened their culture and ethnic identity (Ålund & Schierup 1991).

It might be said that the wish to narrow the scope of multiculturalism followed a changing pattern in migration. As stated earlier, the migration changed quite dramatically in the early 1970’ies, when labour migration halted and gradually was replaced by refugee migration. From now on, the majority of the migrants came from countries outside Europe (in Latin America, the Middle East or Africa). Earlier on, during the 1960’ies, it was claimed in governmental white papers that migration from so-called “culturally distant” countries necessitated a stronger emphasis on what was perceived as inevitable and unconditional in Swedish society (Hertzberg 2003), in order to avoid “adaption problems”. Whether this call for making the “unconditionally Swedish” explicit during the 1980’ies was caused by concerns for - or fears of? - the “culturally distant” or not hasn’t really been examined, though.

We witnessed a distinctive shift in Swedish multiculturalism policy during the mid-1990’s. In 1995, the multicultural policy based on equality, freedom of choice and partnership was replaced with a new policy, with a focus on integration. The issue of inclusion of migrants into society was by and large transformed to a matter of inclusion of migrants into *the labour market*, and integrations policy consisted mainly of measures promoting employability (still, it must also be stressed that the legal rights of the minorities were left unchanged). From the vantage point of labour market conditions, the new policy puts its emphasis on the responsibilities and rights of the *individual* - not his or her affiliations. Thereafter, the political rhetoric in Sweden’s integration and minority politics often contains the words “same rights and responsibilities” and “same possibilities” (Roth 2006), although the focus in public debate was firmly put on migrant *responsibilities*, not minority *rights*. But the rights of the migrants were not altogether forgotten, we also witnessed an increased attention to ethnic discrimination, and the non-discriminatory laws were strengthened. But the ideal of a multicultural Sweden as well as the recognition of cultural differences was more and more downgraded. When affirmative action or special rights for minorities were accepted, they were only seen as something that could be employed temporarily, as a way of solving problems for relatively newly arrived immigrant groups.

Some other important changes during the 1990’s in the discourse on multiculturalism and tolerance could be noted. It became more and more usual that advocates of multiculturalism – or similar political ideas – tended to support *the value* of a multiethnic or multicultural society. The notion of “mångfald” (diversity) became a catch-word in policy and public debate, focussing on economical

values and other positive effects, but not so much on the moral virtues of tolerance and respect (de los Reyes 2001). Thus, the language of economics gained priority over the language of ethics and human rights in many debates on migration and the multiethnic condition, especially in the field of “integrationspolitik” - i.e. policies aimed at integrating migrants in different spheres in Swedish society (Hertzberg 2003).

All the same, the attempts to delineate the basic norms of Swedish society has since the late 1980'ies been a central issue in the public policies on integration, tolerance and recognition (Hertzberg 2003). For instance, when a new educational policy for primary and secondary education, Lpo 94 and Lpf 94, was developed during the mid 1990s, it was clearly stated that education in Swedish schools should be firmly based on a set of values considered to be Swedish, and also derived from a Western and Christian tradition. This statement was especially expressed by the Christian democrats (KD) in the right wing government in the beginning of the 1990s.

Another discussion has evolved during the last decade on the pros and cons of private faith schools, where especially leading members of the Social Democratic party has been critical of their presence from the perspective of social and cultural integration (Roth 2006). However, several parties in parliament have been more inclined to show tolerance instead of non-tolerance as Sweden has ratified well known human rights conventions such as the European Convention that open up the door for these kinds of schools. The establishment of private faith schools followed the “free-school” reform in Sweden in 1992, when private actors was allowed to arrange education, but has by many been seen as an unintended consequence of an reform which first and foremost was intended to open up for new educational philosophies, freedom of choice and/or parental-run cooperative schools. Still, the lack of conclusive empirical evidence concerning their social and educational effects has also encouraged an attitude of tolerance instead of a full blown rejection or a positive endorsement or respect.

“The veil debate” has also figured in public debate, even though the use of the burqa and the niqab has not been frequent, and the Liberal party used it as a symbol issue in the election to parliament 2010. Religious customs such as the headscarf have received mixed emotions and the overall stance could probably be described as tolerance (in comparison to the burqa or the niqab which have attracted a more negative stance such as non-tolerance). For instance, in 2003, The National Agency of Education allowed for a prohibition of niqab and burqa, on the basis of educational concerns. However, the juridical legitimacy of this prohibition has been questioned, with reference to the law against discrimination, and no verdict – and precedent - has yet been recorded.

Many political commentators from different political quarters have - in the light of the dramatic examples mentioned above – been eager to draw lines between norms that could be seen as central in public and private lives (not at least for sustaining a common social identity) and norms that could be more negotiable and flexible. The candidates for the first kind of norms have often been - as was mentioned before - principles in criminal law and well known basic norms in human rights instruments such as the right to life, physical integrity, anti-discrimination principles, the protection of the basic interests of the child (“the best for the child”) and freedom of expression (Roth 2005).

This shift has taken place in a more explicit way during the period of the Social democratic government in the beginning of the 21st century and it has been even more emphasized during the present right wing government (2010). From the current right wing government's perspective - and from the perspective of the previous Social Democratic government - there has not occurred any inclination to delineate any special ethnic groups as groups in need of special protection or assistance. A general anti-discrimination policy has prevailed where all groups in society should receive the same kind of assistance in terms of equal rights and responsibilities. The governments have left the job to give more specific assistance to the local municipalities as the problems for various ethnic or national groups may differ depending upon the specific context.

In Sweden as elsewhere, the significant gulf between theory and practice haunts the political philosophy of multiculturalism. A number of studies (for a summary, see Hertzberg 2006) of the policy developed in the practice of street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky 1980) clearly show a tendency to assimilatory ambitions. Although a considerable number of those studies are conducted with qualitative methods, in a fashion that makes the overall reliability hard to measure, it must be said the prevalence of this tendency seems hard to deny. Partly counter to the relativistic or the pluralist core of the multiculturalism and the diversity oratory, the practitioners of the welfare state repeatedly express – in discourse as well as in practice – a plea for conformity to perceived Swedish norms and standards. Hence, there is an attitude of non-tolerance vis-à-vis the norms and customs of minority groups that are perceived to be not in tune with the norms of the majority culture.

At least in the cases where they are described as alien with respect to the Swedish legal system and prevailing (official) norms in family life such as gender equity and children's rights. The cultures and of non-Swedish groups is – together with the socioeconomic segregation – are understood as a key factor explaining unemployment and social problems among migrants (Hertzberg 2003). Conformity to the Swedish ways of acting and thinking are held to be a necessary – if not sufficient – condition for inclusion to the labour market and other central social arenas. What is striking in the context is the fact that these so-called Swedish norms and customs more and more are phrased with the help of a more universal human rights vocabulary such as gender equity and respect for non-discrimination and democracy (Roth 2010).

When it comes to positive acceptance or respect it may be true that prevailing attitudes in Swedish society could be described through the well-known concept of “boutique multiculturalism” as the concept has been used by the American scholar Stanley Fish (1997). The customs, norms or rituals that are endorsed in a more full-fledged sense of the term concern phenomenon such as music, cuisine and art. This fact also highlights the critical question concerning the thick cultural “character” of the Swedish majority institutions and the welfare traditions that were developed during the 20th century – especially during the post war period.

5. Concluding remarks

The Swedish state formation is relatively old. For a large portion of its history as a political entity, Sweden has exemplified cultural diversity in different senses - in terms of cultural contacts as well as population structure. Cultural exchanges with other countries have always taken place, and members of ethnic groups from other countries have been a constant presence, even though the numbers compared to the period after 1945 have been comparatively speaking rather small. From the period of the establishment of the centralized Swedish state and until the 19th century, a “nationalism” with a sharp focus upon religion dominated the public discourse, a nationalism which allowed for a rather generous form of cultural diversity as long as the people expressed their belonging to the Lutheran church.

After the second world war the official form of nationalism and social belonging changed to more cultural forms of nationalism that were seen as more acceptable in the light of world politics. The post war period of Sweden has been dominated by a cultural-ethnic nationalism in spite of an official multicultural ideology – especially during the two last decades of the 20th century. In this national narrative the concept of the welfare state and its assumed Swedish expression (“folkhemmet”) has played an important role. During the first decades following the second world war, the policies towards different immigrant and minority groups were in general purely assimilatory and the tolerance or respect for various cultural identities and customs were not very widespread. In addition, there was no systematic reception policy. For example, there was no planned reception policy when the Jewish and Estonian refugees arrived in Sweden after the end of the war.

In the middle of the 1970's, multiculturalism became an important element in the Swedish model of welfare-state politics. It established the principles that have guided Sweden's immigration policy ever since: equality, freedom of choice and partnership. It states *equality of opportunity* in all fields of social and economic life, *freedom of choice* as to the cultural identity the immigrant wants to assume, and *partnership* between immigrants, their associations and the larger society. The proclaimed egalitarian and multicultural ideology has legal backing. In most important matters, formal equality before the law holds true, as for example equal access to unemployment contributions and a large number of other social welfare benefits.

During the mid-1990's, we witnessed a shift in Swedish multiculturalism policy. Thereafter, the political rhetoric in Sweden's integration and minority politics often contains the words "same rights and responsibilities" and "same possibilities". The ideal of a multicultural Sweden was more and more downgraded and the emphasis was instead placed upon notions such as same rights and responsibilities and non-discrimination. If affirmative action or special rights for minorities were accepted it was only seen as a limited policy in the initial phases for the immigrant groups. This shift has taken place in a more explicit way during the period of the Social democratic government in the beginning of the 21st century and it has been even more emphasized during the present right wing government (2010).

During the last three decades, one central challenge regarding cultural diversity has been the gap between theory and practice in the multicultural policies. This also applies to Sweden's ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. The gap could be seen as practical in the sense that the authorities have not been engaged in any substantial measures in, for example, the field of education. Critics of the official guidelines both in political and academic circles have been eager to emphasize that the traditional assimilation model, which characterized Swedish policy for several decades in the post war period is – on the whole - far from dead, and that the cultural diversity which has been endorsed officially has been rather limited in nature.

According to some analysts, Sweden has also problems of discrimination both with respect to the labour market and with respect to the provision of various important goods and services such as housing and educational opportunities. These problems have often gone hand in hand. For example, the Romani people have faced both cultural and economic discrimination. In the case of the organized members of the indigenous population - the Saamis - one of their central ways of living - the reindeer enterprise - also clashes with the economic activities of the majority population in Northern Sweden, and the property rights institution of the modern market economy.

The critical question concerning how tolerance (and recognition) as a norm, public policy and everyday practice is conceived in Sweden needs to be formulated in more concrete terms, i.e., from the perspective of whom and concerning which groups or individuals, in what areas. As an introductory remark, it is worth mentioning that public policy in Sweden – during the post-war era - has been focused on the individual member of various groups, mainly focussing on individual rather than collective rights. As stated above, Sweden refusal to ratify the ILO convention on land rights for indigenous people could be seen as an illustrative example of this stance.

As a concept in official discourse, tolerance is - for example - among the core values in the national curriculum of 1994 for primary and secondary education (a curriculum that will be changed in the year of 2011). In addition to values such as democracy, generosity, gender equity tolerance is here seen as a cornerstone in the civic education of the public school system. However, it is fair to say that the concept of tolerance has not received so much public attention and endorsement in the general public debate in recent years (Roth 2010). Concept such as acceptance and respect are seen as more in tune with ideas of multiculturalism and integration as they mainly have been expressed by left-wing parties in parliament (Roth 1999).

Advocates of a multicultural society often express that multiculturalism in various forms are seen as a positive asset for all citizens – and – integration is also seen as a two way process which also include the majority population. During the last 15 years, though, advocates of multiculturalism – or similar political ideas – ha tended to advocate *the value* of a multiethnic or multicultural society. The notion of “mångfald” (diversity) has, to a considerably larger extent been a catch-word in policy and public debate, thereby rather focussing on economical values and other positive effects, but not so much on the moral virtues of tolerance and respect. The language of economics has gained priority over the language of ethics and human rights in many debates on migration and the multiethnic condition, especially in policies aimed at integrating migrants in different spheres in Swedish society.²

From the perspective of anti-discrimination law and officially endorsed human rights principles, intolerance is shown towards cultural traits and norms that are seen as violations of basic rights such as the respect for human dignity, physical integrity and life. As was mentioned above, honory killings and violence are seen as non-tolerable practices as well as practices that violate gender equity or practices that express homophobic attitudes. In certain areas the practices and rituals may be contested in the sense that there are advocates for but also critics that completely reject the practices.

The case of halal and kosher meat is another representative example. Here one finds fierce criticism from animal rights activists as well as positive acceptance from those political circles that strive to extend the content and the scope of the principle of freedom of religion (Roth 2010). Other religious customs such as dress codes receive mixed attitudes depending upon their characteristics. Thus, the perceived intolerance of migrant groups has been as much discussed as the perceived tolerance of the majority towards the minority (if not more, from time to time). As was mentioned above the occurrences of burqa and niqab often receive heavy criticism in the public debate. Obviously, the questions of tolerance and recognition of the practices of religious and cultural minorities has changed depending upon which values are emphasized. As in the example of burqa and niqab, tolerance and recognition of claims from religious minorities – in this case, Muslims – has repeatedly been turned down in various political settings with reference to universal human rights.

Some scholars claim that the strategy of the majority to employ universal rights in order to restrict the minorities' freedom of religion, and deny the enactment of cultural practices, is a way of enforcing assimilation rather than a pluralistic integration (Billig 1992), not least when concept of human rights is couched in a nationalistic idiom. Tolerance can also be, according to Brown (Brown 2006), comprehended in terms of power and as a productive force – a force that fashions, regulates and positions subjects, citizens and states as well as one that legitimates certain kinds of action. The history of Swedish multiculturalism shows how different political traditions inevitably shape – and even obstruct - the implementation of tolerance and recognition, even when there may be benevolence behind the scheme. The complexity at hand calls for a close attention to the national as well as the local contexts, where the religious practices in question, for instance the wearing of burqa or niqab, become an issue.



² However, this conclusion might not hold, when it comes to the public discourse on national minorities, such as the Sami, the Tornedal and Swedish Finns, the Roma and the Jewish group; in this case is presumably more often focused on rights, such as those inscribed in the European Framework Convention from the European Council (Roth 2010).

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