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Introduction

The aim of this report is to describe and analyse 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 Sámi 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 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, Central Europe and Finland.

During the 1970s and the 1980s the migration pattern changed in a radical way. Sweden closed the door for labour migration in the beginning of the 1970s and the following decades were characterized by immigration 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. 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. Hence, questions concerning the limits of pluralism grew in political importance.

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.

National identity and State formation

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.

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.

During the heyday of the Swedish empire, several ethnic groups inhabited its territory; not only Swedes, but Finns, Estonians, Germans, Sámi, 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, 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 station" 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.

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 Sámi, 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 Sámi over hunting and fishing rights. The growing industrialization of Sweden in the late 19th century also meant that the Sámi's and their culture were perceived as more and more irrelevant and obsolete with reference to the development of society (Ingvaldsen, Larsson andPedersen, 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. 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   lack of religious freedom and an authoritarian social climate with limited freedoms. 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.

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, 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 racialized form of nationalism, heavily influenced by Social Darwinism and racial biology, dominated the public discourse and state policies. This nationalism 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.

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 rather thick cultural-ethnic nationalism in spite of an official multicultural ideology – especially during the two last decades of the 20th century (Svanberg and Tydén, 1999). 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.

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. 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 economic development in Sweden during the decades after the war, Swedes developed an understanding of themselves as a progressive and modern. Following your political inclination, one could emphasize either economic 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.

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. 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. 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). The new membership in EU/EEC 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. 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 economic and political problems as the other member states (Johansson, 2004).

Some present-day constituents of the Swedish national identity are 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 in 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.

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 until after the World War II. It is important to stress those different policies and official attitudes have appeared with reference to different minorities throughout history. In certain periods tolerance or respect has been shown towards certain immigrant groups and not to the national minorities. In later years, after 2000, a positive recognition towards some of the national minorities has appeared (for example through educational support and language policies), a tolerance or a recognition that has not been granted towards the 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. 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. 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. 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.

The spontaneous labor migration halted around 1973 in most West European countries, as a reaction to the so-called oil-crises and the following economic recession. 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.

The first non-European refugees that were accepted by Sweden were the Ugandan Asians expelled in 1972. Following the coup against Chilean President Salvador Allende, Sweden accepted 18,000 refugees from Chile between 1973 and 1989 and 6,000 refugees from other Latin American countries. 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 and 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. 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. 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 were granted temporary residence. 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. In comparison to non-European immigration, the numbers of EU immigrants are small, though.

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.

Moreover, some groups that earlier has been "othered" with reference to the racialized category of "invandrare" (*immigrant*) has to gradually become associated with a general, neutral European identity. There is a clear tendency in Sweden that migrants from "western" countries - such as Denmark, Germany or the United States – very rarely if ever becomes categorized as "invandrare", but the extension of that 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.

Table: 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	675	X			(X)	1-2
(born in Sweden)	(500)	X			(X)	1-2
(born in Finland)	(175)	X			(X)	1-2
Meänkieli *	40-70	X			(X)	-
Roma **	30-65	X	X		X	5-6
Jews **	25	X	(X)	X		4
Sámi **	17	X	(X)		X	-
Immigrants (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	-
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, ** Nationalencyclopedin, *** Hunter (2002). Perceived "cultural distance" is a measure utilized by Mella and Palm (2009:46). *) The number comes from the categories "croatians" and "serbs".

The diversity of national minorities and the indigenous population the Sámis 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: Sámi (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 Sámis - 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 and 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.

This is not the whole picture, however. There is a body of research that 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 and Hertzberg, 2005; Neergaard 2006). Other studies point to the proliferation of exclusionary mechanisms on the labour market, primarily targeting migrants (Behtoui, 2004, 2006). 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 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.

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 and different forms of group formations – religiously, ethnically and "racially" defined – and how they are treated by the ethno-nationalistic defined majority.

The Sámi

The Sámi are Europe's northernmost and the Nordic countries' only indigenous people. Sámi ancestral lands span an area of approximately 388,350 km^2, almost the size of Sweden. The Sámi languages are a part of the Finno-Lappic group of the Uralic language family. Traditionally, the Sámi 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 Sámi population is connected with it, but it remains an important industry among Sámi in Sweden. The estimated (unofficial) number of Sámi living in Sweden is somewhere between 20 000 and 35 000, of which 8 000 has registered for voting in the Sámi parliament.

 In 1751, the border was drawn up by Sweden and Denmark-Norway, dividing Sámi 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 Sámi. Despite the colonization and division of the Sámi area, the Sámi people were able to maintain some independence. When the national border between Sweden and Denmark-Norway was established, the Sámi 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 Sámi group, even in the present. With the practice of reindeer herding, which is central to the Sámi way of life and often regarded as the defining feature of Sami culture, the Sámi 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 Sámi reindeer herds to court, in an effort to keep them from grazing reindeer in private forests (Borchert, 2001). 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 Sámi, 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 Sámi group that was produced during the 19th and early 20th century, and circulated in academia and mainstream media, was informed of the racializing stereotypes that were common back then. Sámi were regularly depicted as inferior "Others", 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 Sámi 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 Sámi children received an education that was said to be adapted to their specific life conditions in the Arctic tundra. Here the Sámi received an inadequate education characterized by stereotypes and insufficient means, which reinforced their alienation from the Swedish state and the rest of society. The Sámi has been exposed to both segregation and assimilation strategies from the state.. With respect to religion (Lutheran Christianity) the general stance from the state could often be characterizes as assimilatory, while segregation strategies often prevailed in areas such as social life, work and education.

For several decades during the 20th century, speaking Sámi languages was not allowed in the elementary school. 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 Sámi 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 Sámi 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 Sámi language is seldom contested in present day Sweden. There is a state funded Sámi school in Sweden today, centrally administrated by Sameskolstyrelsen (SamS, *The Sami Education Board*), although education in the Sámi 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 Sámi. According to the Sámi School Decree all education should be given in Sami and Swedish, and the subject Sámi is obligatory in every grade (SamS, 2011).

It could reasonably be argued that the right to education in Sámi language is officially accepted and recognized. In reverse, the land claims by Sámi are neither publically nor officially accepted and/or recognized in their entirety. 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.   As a guarded conclusion, it could reasonably be said that the conflicts over land-use remains to be a question where Sámi 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 Sámi 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". 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.

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." (SOU 2010:55: 36)

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).

Since they have met far-reaching difficulties in entering the labour market, and also been subject to negative stereotyping and ethnic discrimination, and partly 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, 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 (DO, 2003:18).

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.

Muslims

As in many other European countries, 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. 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).

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 Sweden (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". 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. It could be argued that they manifest a physical and ideological presence in Sweden, and gradually 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, many Muslims finds 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 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 – common in many secular countries – that religion should not be allowed to affect your behaviour outside your very private sphere, in the public life.

The occurrence of this widespread secular mind-set might also explain why so many expressions of Islamic faith have received negative attention during the last decade. 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, and two mosques have been burned down. Moreover, women wearing burqa or niqab report being harassed in public (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 *Islamophobia* 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.

It must be said, though, 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 widespread (but actually declining; cf. Gardell, 2010: 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).   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 per cent 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 economic 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 and Palm 2008, 2009, 2010). The category of Africans or specific African nationalities such as the Somali (Mella and 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 radical difference. Needless to say, this affects those who are forced to represent this alterity. In-depths studies of the identity formations of young people of African descent in Sweden (Sawyer, 2000, 2008) shows that the experience of racial categorization and harassment is a part of their everyday life – although the strategies developed to cope with it differ in a variety of ways. A number of scholars (Mulinari and 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". In tandem with the argument that outlined above, concerning the acceptance and recognition of Roma culture, it might be said 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.

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 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).*

These goals were formulated in the mid-1970s, and it was implicated 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 or ideas 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;, "one salient characteristic of the Swedish welfare state during the 20th century has been a model of general and uniform policies, for all citizens" (Blanck; Tydén, 1995: 64). It is obvious that this political tradition influences contemporary legislation and policy. Still, Sweden introduced a new citizenship law in 2001, and then it became possible to have dual citizenship.

The 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 open up the door for some *ius solis* considerations with the purpose to avoid statelessness even though the ius sanguinis principle is still operating. 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. (Lokrantz Bernitz, 2010).

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 new citizens do not need to express an oath of loyalty to the country (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). The rights that are exclusive for citizens (compared to more or less permanent residents) are also few – for example the right to vote in elections for Parliament, the prohibition against deportation and 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. 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. 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 - were characterized by an endeavor for recognition of minority rights, but it might also be acknowledged as an extrapolation of the Swedish welfare model. The goal 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. 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. Generally, the Swedish legal system has shown 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).

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. It did not take long until the multicultural policy implemented in 1975 was heavily criticized. 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.

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. 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 articulation of multicultural policy was circumscribed by a perceived need to clarify what was inherently Swedish culture, and 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 (Ålund and Schierup, 1991). 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's, when labour migration halted and was replaced by refugee migration. From now on, most migrants came from countries outside Europe.

We witnessed a shift in Swedish multiculturalism policy in 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 integration 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. 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.* We witnessed an increased attention to ethnic discrimination; but the ideal of a multicultural Sweden as well as the recognition of cultural differences was gradually downgraded.

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 multi-ethnic 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).

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.

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.

 Religious customs such as the headscarf has received mixed emotions and the overall stance could probably be describes 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. The current official guideline from the National Agency of Education is that the responsibility to decide if religious clothing should be allowed or not in the classrooms should be assigned to the individual teachers.

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 (2012). 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. Partly counter to the relativistic or 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. 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.

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

it´s 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 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 Sámis - 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.

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 (which was changed in the 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. 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.

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, "honour 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.

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. As mentioned above, the occurrences of burqa and niqab often receive heavy criticism in 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, 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.

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