



Jan-Paul Brekke and Tordis Borchgrevink
Talking about integration
Discourses, alliances and theories
on labour market integration in Sweden

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Preface

This report is about labour market integration of immigrants in Sweden. It is written by two Norwegian researchers. We can therefore do little but present an outside view of the matter. When we started to unveil the different perspectives that exist on this topic in Sweden, we came across strong emotions among the actors involved. We followed this trace of energy from questions about the labour market to underlying basic questions of integration in today's Sweden.

To help us gain knowledge about the inside of labour market integration, a large number of people lent us their time. Through formal interviews, informal conversations and numerous advice our understanding of the field slowly increased. Without their help we would have been lost in the peculiarities of a neighbouring country.

Oslo, September 2007

Jan-Paul Brekke and Tordis Borchgrevink

Making the labour market work

Integration of immigrants and refugees has been launched as a key challenge for Western European countries in the years to come. At the heart of this process lie access to and participation in the labour market. A well-integrated labour force benefits both the individual and the surrounding society. Key-words here are self-sufficiency, self-esteem and economic growth. When access is denied or participation rates are low, the result is the opposite. Everyone involved suffers. Making the labour market work is therefore high on the agenda of countries with mixed populations.

Sweden is no exception. Here, labour market integration has been and still is high on the national agenda (Finansdepartementet 2007). Ten years of trying to encourage access and participation have however been generally deemed as unsuccessful. Politicians, civil servants, interest groups and media all discuss the persistent differences in labour market participation, wage levels and unemployment between the native Swedish majority and people from abroad that have settled in the country. There was general agreement ten years ago on the gravity of the problem and on the general envisaged by integration policies to secure equal rights, obligations and opportunities in all segments of the population (Prop 1997/98:16). At the same time there was a large number of suggestions as to the causes of the situation and how best to move forward. These different approaches to labour market integration are the topic of this study.

Information obtained from interviews and document studies provides the background against which we seek to describe and analyse the various positions, discussions and sub-discussions that are present in Sweden. We are on the lookout for discrepancies in the use of concepts, how different actors view the situation in the labour market, the underlying causes and likely solutions. We are also interested in how people envisage the ideal labour market. In sum we seek identify *theories* of labour market integration. At the outset we are open as to their number and characteristics.

The aim of the study is to give a description of the major approaches to this phenomenon in Sweden today and recent past. The design and scope of the study do not permit as detailed an examination of every agent involved

and subject discussed during this period. Instead we concentrate our efforts on certain theses, conjectures and connections found in our data. In the discussion we seek to draw the various threads together.

We opted for this method because of our position as outsiders. Indeed, it was as researchers from a Norwegian research institute that we were asked to study the discourses on labour market integration in Sweden. Although Norway and Sweden are alike on many counts, differences appear the moment one scratches the surface. In the field of migration and integration, the situation on the ground, what is talked about and how differ widely. We return to the advantages and disadvantages of the outsider's position below. At this point it is important to note that the lack of familiarity with Swedish society makes our method sensible. By opening up new fields of discussion and understanding, we put the questions back where they belong – in the Swedish public discussion. On the basis of freshly acquired knowledge, new lines of action may appear to be more relevant than before.

Research questions

Our research questions come in two categories. First we have a handful of descriptive questions. What discourses can be identified in Sweden on the topic of labour market integration of immigrants? What goes on in these «conversations» and who are the actors involved? Which concepts are used and which topics are avoided?

Second we have a series of analytical questions we seek to answer. What theories of integration do the discourses express? What do they have in common and what sets them apart?

In addition to these descriptive and analytical research questions, we briefly compare Sweden, Denmark and Norway, as a backdrop to a discussion of the plurality of opinions voiced in the Swedish debate on integration.

Sensitive words and concepts

Studying and writing about migration issues are delicate tasks. It is a field where language and labelling play important parts. Actors on all sides of the debates have strong opinions about the meaning of words like «immigrant», «integration» and «discrimination». Their use and definition are all contested (Carlbom 2003:196)

Studying and writing about the debates and discourses in the field of migration requires us to be even more conscious of our choice of words and how

we use them. Yet, in order to describe and analyse the Swedish discourses in this field, we initially have to lower the level of precision.

«Immigrants»

We use the term «immigrant» (*invandrare*) without qualification in many instances. The various meanings attributed to it will be part of the empirical basis of the report. A few initial comments are needed at this stage.

In government reports and inquiries published after 1997, the word «immigrant» is avoided. It was seen as carrying a stigma and falsely representing a highly diversified group. Other words were tested. Adjectives applied by Norway and Denmark, like «foreign cultural background» (*fremmedkulturell*), or «people with minority background» (*minoritetsbakgrund*), are less palatable in Sweden.

In contemporary government reports, Swedes prefer «foreign born». It is a narrow definition for the group of people who were born outside Sweden both of whose parents are non-Swedish. Other definitions include their children, as in «people with foreign background» or persons with «immigration background» (Samhällsvetenskapliga fakultetsnämnden 2006:1).

It is easy to imagine a definition gradient. At one end we find the strict definition. At the other normal everyday terminology which takes «immigrant» to mean everybody of a visibly foreign origin. Or perhaps even less precise, anybody living in Sweden who doesn't look like a «Westerner». In the same way opinions will vary on when an «immigrant» stop being this and become «Swedish».

In our meetings with the informants, terminology often changed during the interview. From the politically correct words like «foreign born» (*utrikes födda*), interviewees began to say «people of a foreign background» before talking mainly about «those immigrants» (*invandrarna*). This could perhaps be interpreted as hypocrisy or conceptual sloppiness. We interpret it less dramatically as «conceptual fatigue» (*begreppströtthet*). Over the years labels have come and gone. Keeping up to date with the latest in political correctness is hard.

This terminological lack of precision also occurred with informants who clearly took the «immigrant's» side. Against this background we feel comfortable about varying the names we use for those with an immigrant background in this report.

«Integration»

Integration is a word that holds a key position both in the wider social sciences and in studies of migration. Here we can only give a cursory introduc-

tion to the concept. In the first instance it refers to the cohesion (*sammanhållning*) of individuals and groups in society (Favell 1998). In the field of migration studies it has at least two distinct meanings (Brekke 2001:75). First, integration is used to describe the *process* by which an individual or group is fused into a larger unit. Second, the word can indicate the *goal* of the process, as in the expression «a well-integrated society». It is the latter form Swedish integration policy post 1997 has aimed at achieving.

Staying on a national level, we can say the idea of integration is a reciprocal (*ömsesidig*) adaptation (*anpassning*) of the majority and the minority populations in a country. This corresponds with the recent formulation by the EU in its Common Basic Principles on Integration (European Policy Centre 2005, EU Council 2007). The question that has exercised the Nordic states, among others, over the past two decades has been how best to promote and facilitate such mutual adaptation.

In practical politics, the concept came to mean equal rights and obligations for all without an expectation of cultural abandonment (Brochmann 1996:112). As we shall see in this report, «culture» was excluded in the 1997 formulation of Sweden's integration strategy. But in the early nineties, integration was given a common sense gloss. The researchers responsible for this linguistic detection in Sweden referred to it as a functional understanding of integration:

Immigrants must adapt the existing institutions, norms and the majority's culture to the extent necessary in order for the group's members to function in society, while at the same time keeping intact its own ethnic identity (Ålund and Schierup 1991:14)

Looking at this definition sixteen years later, it appears both outdated and highly relevant at the same time. It looks outdated because it uses the words «culture» and «ethnic identity». Yet it may still be up to date as a description of how integration is understood by politicians, civil servants and the public Sweden today.

In official documents, however, the focus has been on similarity, not difference. We will let the discussion of the use of the concept of integration rest.

What about integration in the labour market? What does «integration» mean used in this sense? Does the ideal of a reciprocal or two-way adaptation hold for this area of society? Many would say that it does not.

«Assimilation»

Integration as reciprocal accommodation is often contrasted with accommodation of one party only, i.e., *assimilation*. Again the concept covers both a process and its outcome.

In Sweden, assimilation has negative connotations. In the early and mid 1900s, the Sami and Finnish minorities were forced to conform to the «Swedish» norm. As we will describe later in the report, when some far-right parties re-launched the concept in 2007, many reacted strongly to the idea.

If we look at the theory of assimilation in its application outside the context of politics and history, however, it may prove useful to compare it with integration. In its simplest form assimilation refers to the «unilinear process of immigrant adaptation to the recipient society (Portes and Böröcz 1989, Brochmann 1996). Theories in this area are more sophisticated than this quote may lead us to believe. And newer versions of the theory take into account the necessity of adaptation by the majority while questioning the validity of the monocultural view of society common to earlier versions (Brown and Bean 2006).

If we move back into the political sphere, it seems that assimilation theories have enjoyed resurgence recently following stronger calls for immigrants to make more of an effort to adapt. The obligations increasingly required of immigrants in Denmark and the Netherlands in the past five years can serve as examples here.

There are two reasons why assimilation is more relevant to our discussion in this report than in other integration studies.

The first is that the goals of labour market integration policies are near identical to those of assimilation policies. The Swedish government has worked towards achieving equal employment rates among all segments. Economists use the term «work assimilation» to describe the process by which the immigrant population becomes increasingly like the majority population on a list of indicators (Schöne 2005).

The second reason to mention assimilation is that our informants used it. It is alive in the debate on integration in Sweden today. Interviewees used it sometimes to denote an unwanted state, something to be avoided, and sometimes, as something worth striving for.

«Segregation»

A third key concept in a report on integration is «segregation». Often used as a contrast to homogeneous society, it denotes a separation into groups. The term is used describe both a geographical and social division. Our informants used the term in both versions. For example in the discussions of segregated living in the larger cities or in more general expressions like «Sweden is a segregated society».

Delimitations

Integration in the labour market implicates any number of phenomena. In this report, we will focus on access and participation. We will make use of statistics from Statistics Sweden (SCB) and Swedish Integration Board (Integrationsverket) to give a brief description of current status and recent history. Here we find that while 80 percent of the Swedish born population was employed in 2005, the corresponding number for those born outside Sweden was 64 percent. And over the last ten years, this gap increased from around ten to in excess of 15 percentage points. These numbers seem to be widely accepted by the people and institutions involved in the debate on labour market integration. Using these numbers as a starting point, we open the box of possible explanations and suggestions for improvements of the situation.

Other aspects of labour market integration could have been interesting to include in this study.

Firstly we could have studied what happened after people with immigrant backgrounds gained access. Here we would find discussions on for example equal rights, career development, career prospects and promotion, equal pay, over-qualification, and redundancy for immigrants in the workforce. Some of these topics will be discussed in passing throughout the report. Some researchers hold that while they are important, they may be less crucial for integration than gaining access (Gustafsson, Hammerstedt and Zheng 2004:47). We refrain from comparing the importance of the two sets of phenomenon.

Secondly we could have focused on the *effects* of labour market integration. What are the consequences of a lower participation rate? What does this mean for the individual, for specific groups or for society as a whole? These questions are left unanswered here.

Neither do we go deeply into the statistical analysis of the data produced by other integration studies in Sweden. For example we do not split the group of foreign born into subgroups by region or nation.

Instead of looking for *the true causes* of lower participation rates, we have concentrated on the causes *held* or *claimed* to be valid by various groups and individuals in Sweden.

We also shy away from analysing the broader discussion on integration in any systematic way. Questions relating to national identity, segregated housing and culture are brought in when of relevance to our main topic. Yet in our description of the immigration debate, we do include the whole field of integration. Here we find that topics like religion, control policies and so-called honour related violence are relevant to issues regarding integration in the labour market.

At the same time we are aware of the close links that exist between work and other forms of integration. Some of our informants seemed to identify the one with the other, holding that integration in the labour market will lead to

social and other forms of integration. Other informants did not agree. They stated that the relationship is by no means that simple.

Why discourses and not reality?

One could argue that a study of a discussion of integration in Sweden has only academic interest. Why not seek to get to the truth about why immigrants do not succeed at the same rate as native Swedes, or what needs to be done remedy the situation? To answer this, we need to look at the relationship between discourse and reality.

This is a key question in discourse theory (Mills 1997, Fairclough 1995, Jørgens and Phillips 1999). At a cursory level we can say that the concepts, definitions, language and ideas that are communicated from a dominant position stand in a double relationship with reality. The discourse will be a reflection of reality as the inhabitants of that position see it or wish to see it. At the same time the words used will in a certain way create reality.

In the political realm this is obvious. Perceptions of reality are put into words, they form perceptions of reality and elicit ideas of how to change it. Political measures are interventions aimed at changing the social reality.

The agents described in this study want the power to define the problems, measures and ideals of labour market integration in Sweden. Studying the substance of their arguments and rivalry between them tells us something about how this social field and area of policy works.

According to the Danish researcher Martin Bak Jørgensen, the field of integration and immigration policies is particularly receptive to the battle for definitions and categorizations (2006:268). The questions that are fought over include:

Who are to be integrated, and into what? Who are integrated already and who decides (who are to be integrated)? Why should someone be integrated and how it is to happen (our translation, Jørgensen 2006:269).

By taking one step back, as we do in this study, and portraying the multitude of attempts that have been made to capture this elusive truth, the end result will also be of practical relevance. When the different positions regarding labour market integration are known, it will be easier for decision makers to see how their perceptions and practical policies mesh with those of others. The benefit to everybody with an interest in the field would well be heightened awareness of new areas of reality. We aim to encourage this for example by identifying *taboo topics*, i.e., topics surrounded by sanctions. Bringing these into the open may inspire fruitful discussions.

In this discourse analysis, we place a few actors and groups of actors in categories. How we go about this will be discussed later. Here we want to point out the likelihood of discrepancies between where someone would place themselves and where others in competing discourses would place them. To some extent we show how the voices in the various rooms of conversation view each other.

From a focus on immigrants to integration

1997 marked an important shift in Swedish migration policy. Since the 1970s, the label «immigrants policy» (*invandrarpolitik*) had been used for this policy area. According to later critics this policy saw immigrants as a group requiring special treatment to promote adaptation to Swedish society. By focusing on group attributes and needs, the result was to accentuate difference (*annorlundaskap*) and status as outsiders (*utanförskap*) (Prop 1997/98:16, Riksrevisionen 2005:23). It was said to create a division between «us» and «them». The Integration Board (Integrationsverket) stated that the former national policy had in fact aimed at assimilation – a one-sided adaptation (Riksrevisionen 2005:13).

This policy was replaced by an «integration policy», focusing immigrants as individuals with individual needs. Improving their chances in the various sectors of society should be done through general policy measures. In other words, the measures should not target immigrants specifically, but be designed to help everyone with the same need, regardless of origin.

Public initiatives that targeted immigrants as a *group* should only be tolerated for a limited period after their arrival to Sweden. These «mainstreaming» efforts (ESF 2000) were echoed in other countries and by the EU (Verloo 2004). Three goals were formulated for the new policy: everyone should enjoy the same rights, obligations and opportunities regardless of ethnic and cultural background; Sweden was to be understood as a basically pluralistic society (*mångfald*); and finally, society should be based on mutual respect of differences. The new policy was meant to transcend the division between «us» and «them» by pointing to the fact that all individuals are equal, albeit with varying needs.

Two of the main changes in 1997 were in other words the shift of focus from groups to the individuals, and from measures targeting the immigrant population, to measures targeting the general population. One obvious point here for later discussion is the combination of pluralism or diversity and individualism. Another is the handling of «equality» (*likhet*) and «difference» (*olikhet*).

The change of policy was meant to be a radical break with the past. However, according to several of our sources, little had changed ten years down the road (Riksrevisionen 2005). Others held that the transition to integration had been ignored altogether (SOU 2006:73). We will return to these issues in chapter 4.

Two key events

A study that stretches over ten years, 1997-2007, will necessarily cover several events that influence the situation in the labour market. Two of these need to be mentioned at the outset of this report.

The first is the turmoil surrounding the two major government inquiries on power and integration. These were active from 2001 to 2006. Here the field of research and politics crisscrossed in several respects. Profound differences in perspectives on integration were exposed among academics, commentators and politicians. Positions were personified and tensions high.

In 2001 a political scientist at Uppsala University, Anders Westholm, was asked to head a broad inquiry into integration as it stood in Sweden. Before it was two years old, two members left in protest against the terms and design of the inquiry. They were sociologist Masoud Kamali and historian Paulina de los Reyes. Both had immigrant background and saw themselves as experts on integration. Like Westholm, they worked at Uppsala University. Their reason for stepping down was published in a national newspaper (*Dagens Nyheter* 6. April 2003). Here they accused the Westholm inquiry of failing to fully examine the discriminatory aspects of integration. It was also criticized for not realising that «Swedishness» (*svenskhet*) remained the norm in Swedish institutions, while the «immigrant» was seen as a deviant. The critique also portrayed the inquiry's design as too traditional.

It is not enough to map the differences between groups and to confirm that differences exist. It is necessary to take a theoretical position to, as the [inquiry's] mandate dictates, get a more thorough understanding of why it [the integration situation] looks like it does (*Dagens Nyheter* 6. April 2004).

The theoretical position referred to in the citation was having so-called *structural discrimination* as a starting point.

A response was quickly penned by the well-known political scientist Bo Rohtstein. He stated that the call for a «theoretical position» from Kamali and los Reyes would block the production of new knowledge. If they were allowed to put their ambitions into action, we would

Instead see a production of ideology, combined with the gathering of only such data that one on beforehand knows will confirm the politically correct theses (*Dagens Nyheter* 22. April 2003).

Six months later the then minister of integration, Mona Sahlin, terminated the Westholm inquiry and handed an extended mandate to Kamali and los Reyes to look into the different forms of *structural discrimination*, under Kamali's leadership. Sahlin's change of mind elicited strong reactions from political scientists and other academics across the country (*Dagens Nyheter* Andersson et al. 20. January 2004, Jørgensen 2006, Borg 2006). Sahlin was accused of letting politics get in the way of science (Öberg 2004). She replied that earlier policies had been too focused on the immigrants themselves. She was now convinced that «structural racism» existed in Sweden and that it caused discrimination.

Society has turned a blind eye to this for too long. In the debate we have been trying to pin the explanation for lacking integration on the individuals: «They do not speak sufficiently good Swedish», «They have not validated their education sufficiently», or «they do not know how to apply for a job». Instead we should turn our head the opposite way and say: Have we, the majority society, built structures that keep them out and away? (*som tränger bort och tränger undan*) (*Dagens Nyheter* 31. May 2004).

The Kamali inquiry was completed in 2006 and will be presented in this report. Further complicating the picture was a third, concurrent inquiry. This had roughly the same mandate as the Kamali inquiry and was headed by Paul Lappalainen. We will return to the reactions to these inquiries later.

The second event we need to mention was the change of government that took place in 2006. A new centre-right government came with a strong commitment to integration in the job market. After a long period in opposition the centre right parties took over after years of social democratic rule. In the new coalition, the Liberal Party (*Folkpartiet LP*) played an important role. In contrast to the other coalition parties, the Moderate Party (*Moderaterna*) and Centre Party (*Centern*), LP had highlighted several immigration issues during the campaign. Party members were calling for reforms. Once in power, they introduced reforms to the general labour market. During the spring and summer of 2007, talks of discrimination faded into the background as pragmatic efforts to increase labour market participation were promoted by the new government.

We will return to these key events throughout the report.

A reader's guide

In the next chapter, we will describe the design of the study. Here we include a discussion of the methodology and point to some theoretical influences. In chapter 3 we give a brief outline of the development of labour market participation over the last ten years.

In chapter 4 we present and discuss what we hold to be sub-discourses on labour market integration in Sweden. We start by looking at three separate discourses before tentatively adding a fourth. This method obviously has strengths and weaknesses, which we discuss in chapter 2.

In chapter 5 we use findings from the interview material to venture deeper into the discussion on underlying issues like diversity (*mångfald*), political correctness and the role of «groups». These stem from the analysis of the discourses. Here we also bring in elements from the debates in Denmark and Norway.

In the subsequent chapter 6, we review our findings.

Design, methodology and theoretical input

If we gathered up all statements made in Sweden about labour market integration over the last ten years, the amount and width in content would be enormous. If the relevant backdrop of the broader integration debate was to be included, the volume would be even bigger. The Kamali inquiry alone encompassed more than 4000 pages. Politicians, bureaucrats, non governmental organisations, journalists, researchers, practitioners, interest groups and individuals discuss this topic constantly in a wide range of arenas. Capturing all statements would be impossible. Therefore a strategy was needed when we set out to study the discourses in this field.

Design

The possibilities were many. A study digging deep into the debates held in the Parliament (*Riksdagen*) would for example have been interesting to do. Another interesting possibility would be to do a thorough analysis of the debates in the media. Our aim was however to produce an overview over the different discourses and positions on this topic in Sweden. To do so, we needed a broader design.

In order to produce such a map, it was pivotal to capture the variety of voices. The multitude of utterances had to be displayed and made audible. Instead of starting out without preconceptions about the situation, however, we chose to make use of a preliminary set of categories. These were loosely defined and inspired by impressions made by following the debate in the media and academic debate over the last couple of years. Suggestions from the Swedish financier (National Thematic Network on Asylum and Integration, a program financed by the European Social Fund, Equal) of the study were supplemented and refined. The result was a scheme with three and possibly four different discourses. They were given temporary labels; the *liberal discourse*, the *social democratic discourse*, the *structural discrimination discourse* and finally a possible *discourse of assimilation*. The fourth discourse is contested

and will be commented on along with description and analysis of the other three in chapter 4.

One could argue against starting out with a set of categories. Would it not be better to start with a blank sheet? Would that not leave us more open to the impressions and empirical evidence that would turn up in our fieldwork? This touches on a classical discussion within the social sciences (Glaser and Strauss 1967). The advantages with having a set of categories or conjectures which are then sharpened or altered by the empirical data are many. This strategy gives a more efficient track into the empirical field. It provides hints on what to look for. In qualitative studies, like this one, the categories also give leads on who to talk to. The disadvantage with this design can be that one risks that the development and adjusting of categories is not «contaminated by concepts more suited to different areas» (Glaser and Strauss 1967:37).

In our case this danger seems limited. The reason is that the categories stem from the distinct substantive field of discourses on labour market integration in Sweden. In the sense that they qualify as theory, they are local or «substantive» ones. They are not part of a grand theory that has been developed in another field or in another part of the world. The categories will therefore be considered as tools especially suited for this national study. By bringing up this discussion from the field of the theory of science, however, we have pointed to the dangers entailed in bringing preconceived typologies into a fieldwork.

The advantages of such a strategy should not be underestimated. In a study with a limited time frame, like this one, they serve as guides to where to look for information and data. In our case, this meant that we could look within the four discourses for actors and institutions to interview. By doing so, we also secured that at least the four positions were covered. Since we wanted to map the terrain of labour market integration discourses, it was a goal in itself to achieve variation in the voices to listen to. At the same time the four categories were treated as flexible boundaries for the informants. Several of these were chosen solely on the basis of having made statements that we considered important, and chosen independently of the categories. These not yet defined interviewees helped question and refine the characteristics of the scheme. On several occasions informants that we had preliminarily placed in one discourse, turned out to be hard to place or to belong to another category.

Discourses as theories

In our description and analysis of the discourses, we will treat them as if they were scientific theories. A theory in this strong sense would be expected to include statements about several aspects of the field at hand. In our case we will look for elements in the discourses that reveal the actors view on facts, causality, mechanisms and normative or ideological components. This way of looking at discourses is inspired by the use of scientific theory in studies of public policies. In these studies for example national integration policies have been studied as «theories» (Favell 1998, Brekke 2001). The view of policies as theories stretches further back in time (Majone 1979).

Two additional elements could be added to the list included in the theory-package. One could for example look for the ideal situations envisioned by the various positions. What would the situation in Sweden be like if all their wishes for the integration process were fulfilled? In our case the keywords are monoculture versus multiculturalism, or homogeneity versus difference. Our report will include a brief mentioning of this highly complex issue.

The second element we would like to add is the measures that are proposed by the groups of actors. Although several actors may agree on the problems that should be solved, the instruments they suggest to improve the situation vary. These two extra elements transcend the strict framework of a scientific theory.

In addition to the questions raised by the allegory to theory, we will add some characteristics that we will look for in the discourses. These include main arenas of discussion, main topics, key concepts, taboo issues and central actors. The full analytical scheme of the integration discourses (IDs) is shown in table 1.

If we look at the totality of variables displayed in table 1, we have the starting point for our field work. Again, the contents of this scheme will be duly presented and discussed in chapter 4. At the very right hand side of the figure, we find a column labelled «analysis 1». The set up will inspire a cross-discourse analysis of the variables on the left hand side. For example one can compare the causes given for the situation in the Swedish labour market across the four IDs.

Table 1. Discourses of labour market integration in Sweden. A framework for analysis.

	ID1 Assimilation	ID2 Social liberal	ID3 Social democrat	ID4 Structural discrimination	ANALYSIS 1
Definition of problem					
Key Concepts					
Causes					
Measures					
Normative element					
Ideal situations					
Taboo issues					
Actors and arenas					
Peak period					
View on others					
ANALYSIS 2					

The bottom row carries the same label. Here the idea is to analyse the discourses across the listed variables. Are the boundaries of the discourses disputed?

Although this scheme may appear to be strict, it is important to remind the reader that it will be treated as a starting point. Some readers would react immediately to the attempt of capturing the totality of the debate in Sweden in a modestly sized table. What about positions that are not explicitly mentioned, like the neo-liberal (in contrast to the social liberal) or feminist positions? Our answer to this is that this type of analysis necessitates a radical reduction of complexity, and something is lost on the way. What is gained is the possibility to lead a comprehensive debate on the constitution of the integration field in Sweden. Another positive side to this is that the openness for critique stimulates reflection and may lead to a refinement of the understanding of integration discourses in Sweden.

The categories, their labels and contents will be put to the test in chapter 4. Here we will also include the topic of how the discourses are linked to each other and to an over-arching national discourse on this issue.

Methodology

Two main sources of data were used in our fieldwork; interviews and documents. A total of 18 formal interviews were conducted during the spring of 2007. Although the scheme of the four discourses gave some directions on where to look for informants, the actual selection and gaining access to these sources of information was not straight forward.

Our starting point for choosing informants was informal discussions with people that had followed the debates in Sweden over time. To their suggestions we added researchers in the field. These we knew of from their earlier research and publications. In addition we selected a list of institutions and organisations that were expected to have an impact on, or had experienced the consequences of, the labour market policies. Among others, we interviewed managers, experts and employees representing National Labour Market Board (*Arbetsmarknadsstyrelsen, AMS*), LO (*trade union*), Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, (*Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting, SKL*), Swedish Enterprise (*Svenskt Näringsliv, SN*), Ministry for Integration and Gender Equality, Swedish Integration Board (*Integrationsverket*) among others. In some instances we knew of one particular person within the organisation that we contacted directly. In other, we sent our invitation to the top management. In some cases we were then referred to others in the organisation were better informed on the issue.

There were two more methods that helped us detect and select interesting informants. One was through the media. Some actors were contacted directly after having appeared in the media. Finally we asked people during the interviews to name other possible informants that they held to be important. In sum, we were in contact with persons that covered a broad fan of opinions on integration.

The main challenge in the contact with the respondents was gaining access to the politicians with the top positions. Two informants, the current minister of integration Nyamko Sabuni and the leader of the Social Democrat Party-Mona Sahlin, did not find time in their hectic schedules despite several invitations. Mona Sahlin played a central role in the handling of the public investigation on power and integration, as we have seen. In the role as leader of the Social Democratic Party, she was also among the first politicians from major parties to meet representatives of the Swedish Democratic Party (right wing, *Sweden Democrats*) in a debate (*TV4* 18. April 2007). This debate, along with several statements and interviews, compensate for some of the loss from not having conducted a personal interview. Her position on the issue of labour market integration appears to have changed slightly over the years. We will return to this in chapter 4.

Nyamko Sabuni became Minister for Integration and Gender Equality in the autumn of 2007. Belonging to the Liberal Party (*Folkpartiet*), she was part of a group that wished to reform the field of labour market integration. On other issues of integration, she had profiled herself as not shying away from the difficult issues. One example of this was a tough stance on female circumcision (*International Herald Tribune* 13-14 January 2007). Her entrance into national politics made some commentators raise their voices («*Med de nya statsråden ökar rasismen i Sverige*» *Dagens Nyheter* 13. October 2006). For this study, the absence of her voice is remedied by the numerous statements

she has made regarding labour market integration in the media and on her political party's web pages.

Our goal was to have as many different voices represented in the material as possible given the limitations of the project. Although it was not a priority, this meant that we were conscious of the male/female constellation and the number of people with Swedish or immigrant background. These characteristics may or may not be relevant in a study like this one. Some of the female informants pointed to similarities between the participation and discrimination of women and immigrants in the labour market. This parallel was also mentioned by male interviewees, but not developed to the same extent. Although almost half of our informants themselves had immigrant background, this did not mean that they «represented» the interest of immigrants. They occupied all of the four positions in our analytical scheme. Likewise with the respondents with Swedish background. They also spread out across the discourses.

The interviews were held at the workplace of the informants. Some interviews were done using telephone. Although this method has some clear disadvantages, a set timeframe and a thorough interview-guide raised the quality of these interviews. Some informants were contacted several times to fill in or elaborate on the information they had given.

A standard open guide was used during the interviews. This gave the meetings a flexibility that was needed in order to use the same guide for all informants despite varying fields of expertise. We also expanded the guide after some interviews were made in order to include questions that proved to be interesting.

The second main source of data consisted of a range of documents. In addition to Swedish green papers (*SOU'er - statliga offentliga utredningar*, *DS'er - departementsserier*), research literature and a range of material from the media was used. In the media, two national newspapers, *Dagens Nyheter* and *Svenska Dagbladet*, were used as sources. Access to material in other newspapers and radio/tv was secured by using among others the link *immi.se*. Finally we used the programs of the political parties as they were presented on their home pages.

Notes on neutrality

When the organisations European Social Fund and the NTG Asylum and Integration decided to hire researchers from outside Sweden, this was an attempt to avoid favouring any particular view on labour market integration. Instead, they wanted to include these, perhaps specifically Swedish views, as objects in the study.

Whether the ambition of neutrality actually paid off, is difficult to say. In a strict sense, there is no fully neutral position from which social phenomenon can be viewed. The debate on labour market integration has a long history also in Norway. Colleagues of us have been involved both in research and the national debate on these issues. Brekke even wrote a debate article together with Grete Brochmann in 2005 commenting on the before mentioned turmoil surrounding the public investigation on power and integration.

After this description of the design and methodology, it is time to turn to the empirical reality of the Swedish labour market.

Swedish labour market integration

Among our informants, there was a consensus around the main indicators of integration in the labour market. In this chapter we will present and discuss briefly some of the main traits in the development of the integration. The numbers we use are gathered from the Statistics Sweden (*SCB*) and the Swedish Integration Board (*Integrationsverket*). It is a matter of discussion which numbers should be presented and what variables should be stressed. We have chosen to focus on the issues of access and participation rates. These last set of indicators include employment and unemployment rates.

Sweden has a long history of immigration. Labour market considerations have played no small part in determining the regulation of arrivals over the past 60 years. Until the early 1970s, immigrants looking for jobs were welcomed and even actively recruited as part of the official policy (Finansdepartementet DS 2007:4). And people came. During this period, immigration to Sweden peaked at around 75 000 (SCB 2006). In addition to the neighbouring Nordic countries, Italy, Germany, Balkan, Turkey and Greece supplied workers for the Swedish booming industry.

In the early 1970s this all changed. Restrictions on labour immigration were imposed and the migrants were replaced by asylum seekers and refugees. Together with the following family unification, these groups dominated the arrival-statistics for the next 35 years. New countries of origin were introduced stemming from Latin America, Asia and Africa. The highest numbers of arrivals were registered at the end of 1980s and following the Balkan war in the first half of the 1990s. Contrary to the neighbouring countries, Sweden has in addition had an increasing number of persons seeking asylum coming since the year 2000 (Brekke 2004).

Twelve percent of the people living in Sweden in 2005 were born outside the country (Finansdepartementet, DS 2007:4:14). Of these, sixty percent came from European countries. As a consequence of the transition to arrivals of asylum seekers and refugees, the size of the population with non-European backgrounds doubled from 1980 to 2005 (Finansdepartementet, DS 2007:4:14).

Some researchers and other sources have highlighted this change in composition in the immigrant population as one explanation of the differences in labour market indicators (Ekberg och Ohlsson 2000, Ekberg 2004, Schøne 2005:36, OECD 2004). We will comment on this and the other possible causes later in this report. Let us first look at two ways of measuring the integration in the labour market.

Labour market participation

Over the past 20 years, the situation in the Swedish labour market has changed from good, to bad and recently back to good again. The economic recession in the 1990s hit both Swedish born and immigrants hard. Unemployment rates rose sharply. They peaked at 9 and 15 percent respectively in 1993 (Integrationsverket 2006). In other words, the immigrant group was hit much harder by the difficult times. Let us have a closer look at the labour participation rates.

The standard labour market statistics in Sweden divides the labour force into those born in the country (*inrikes födda*) and those born in other countries (*utrikes födda*). In more specified accounts of the situation in the labour market, the foreign born population is expanded to also include children of immigrants, the so-called second generation (Ekberg 1997, Integrationsverket 2006, DS 2007:4:24). These concepts and the mere focus on this expanded group are parts of the dispute over the integration issue in Sweden.

The Integration Board has had to face criticism for its use of the two broad categories of «foreign born» and «Swedish born». In 2006, the typology was on the one hand said to hide the problematic situation on the labour market by including among other groups 400 000 Nordic citizens (*Dagens Nyheter*, 19. April 2006). These contribute to making the average participation rate higher among the foreign born. By showing a too positive picture, this was said to make it more difficult for the opposition to criticise the ruling Social Democrat government at the time («*Integrationsverket skönmålar verkligheten*» *Dagens Nyheter* 19. April 2006).

Critics say it is a scandal that the statistics are not more detailed the report «Integration 2005» by for example exposing the reality for immigrated Iraqis. And that is that seven out of ten do not have a job. And that the same situation goes for Somalis (DN, 19. April 2006).

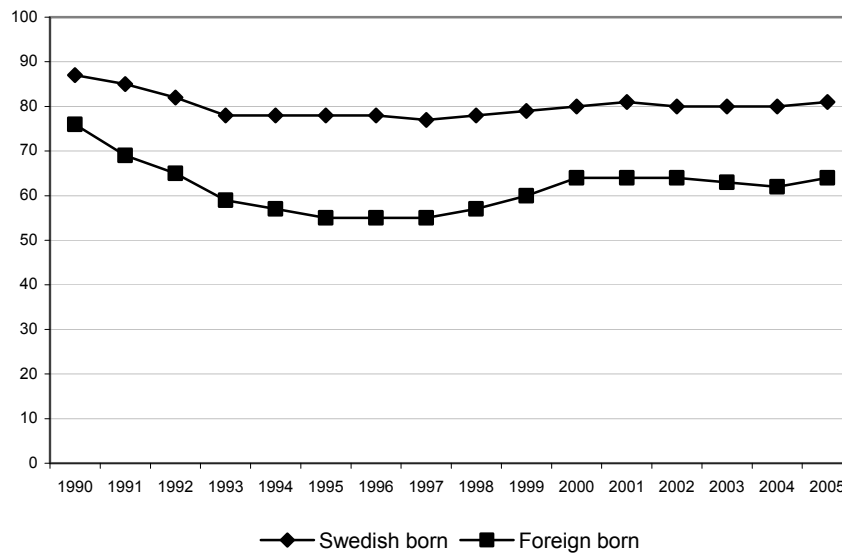
On the other hand the typology has been criticised for hiding differences between nationalities from integration sceptics on the political extreme right (Interview Swedish Democrats).

It is easy to find critical aspects of the practice to divide the population into born inside or outside the country, or to use broad regions of origin as labels. In the Norwegian discussion on this issue, it has been stated that by referring for example to people of «Asian» background blurs the picture. By doing so, one includes countries with much lower participation rate than the Norwegians with workers from Sri Lanka, who are known to have a higher employment rate than the native population.

One should however be aware of the arguments put forward in favour of using the all inclusive label of «foreign born», like avoiding stigmatising specific countries. We will return to the discussion on labels in chapter 5.

In figure 1 below, we find the labour market participation for Swedish born and immigrants over the last 15 years. Here the recession in the 1990s is clearly displayed.

Figure 1. Labour market participation 1990-2005, Swedish and foreign born. 20-64 years (source SCB, Integrationsverket 2006)



In earlier times, up until the 1970s, the participation rate for foreign born was higher than the Swedish born. This is believed to be due to the arrangement where job vacancy was a prerequisite for immigration (Finansdepartementet DS 2007:4:19).

From a level of around 80 percent participation at the end of the 1980s, the rate dropped radically during the 1990s, and then not quite regaining the previous level during the first few years after 2000.

The main finding in figure 1 is variations in the difference between the two groups. At the end of the 1980s, it was 10 percent or less. This increased to 23 percent in 1996, when 78 percent of the native born and only 55 percent of the immigrants were working. At the end of this time interval, the difference had shrunk to 15 percent. While the Swedish born had passed the 80 percent line, the number for the immigrants did not pass the 65 percent mark.

A factor in the debate over labour market integration in Sweden has been the effect of residence time (*vistelsestid*). Two comments have to be made regarding the relationship between the length of stay in Sweden and the chances of having work.

One is that the effect is strong and positive. As time passes, the immigrants close in on the majority population in labour market participation. But even for those with 20 or more years of residency, the difference remains. As a group, they do not seem to fully catch up. In fact the +20 group saw a decline in participation when recent numbers were compared to those from the end of the 1980s (Integrationsverket 2006).

The second comment is on the development over the last 20 years. During this period it was clear that the immigrants with short residence time were more vulnerable to fluctuations in the overall labour market. The recession in the mid 1990s hit this group particularly hard. This made the authors of the report «Integration 2005» conclude that «although the foreign born population is more sensitive to fluctuations in the labour market, this pertains only to those with a few years stay in Sweden. Those that had lived for 20 years or more in Sweden were not affected (Integrationsverket 2006:34).

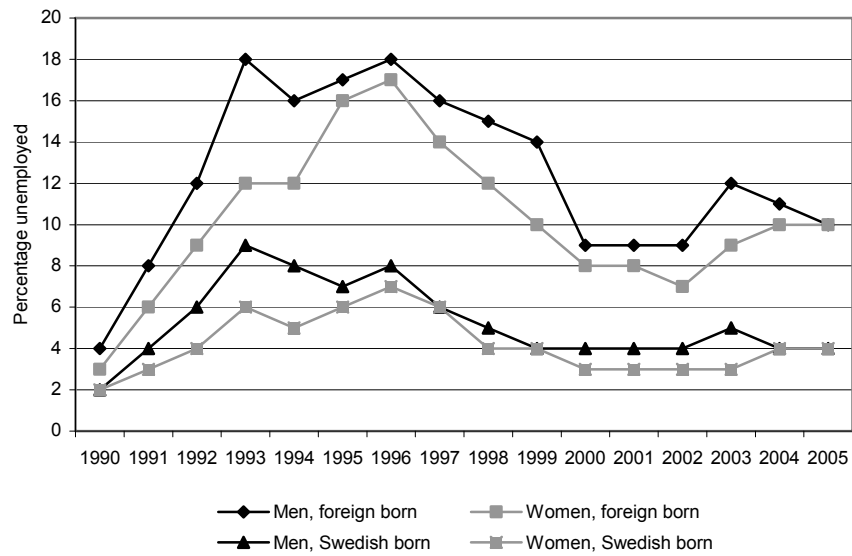
Another factor that was mentioned by many of our informants was the decrease in traditional industry jobs during the 1990s. Jobs that required low skilled competence disappeared during the recession. When the economy began bouncing back after the year 2000, many of these jobs were not re-established. The argument goes that immigrants were particularly exposed in this sector of the labour market. They were therefore hit harder by the down-sizing of the industry during the 1990s. If we look at the figures supplied by the Statistics Sweden, the over representation within the industrial sector is confirmed. At the end of the 1980s about 45 percent of men with immigrant backgrounds worked in the industrial sector. In 2004 this number was down to 25 percent. This reduction of 20 percent were not matched by the Swedish

born men (down from 30 to 25 percent) (Integrationsverket 2006:34). We will return to this argument in the following chapter.

Unemployment

When we turn to the unemployment numbers, the same overall picture of difference between Swedish born and foreign born remain. So does the indications of the recession in the mid-nineties. In figure 2 we find both these phenomenon along with the effects of gender.

Figure 2. Unemployment among Swedish born and foreign born, aged 16-64. 1990-2005 (Source: Statistics Sweden)



As we mentioned earlier, the recession affected the whole labour market. The foreign born were however harder hit. In figure 1 we see that there was a larger increase in unemployment among men than women in both categories.

In this report we will not analyse these statistics any further. We could have continued by breaking them down on age groups, level of education, regions of origin, refugee or immigrant background, periods of arrival, or according to different sectors of the labour market.

We could also have compared them to the neighbouring countries or the EU average. One difficulty in doing so, however, is making the numbers comparable. Different countries have handled the labelling question differently and it would lead us too far adrift to enter onto a comparative sidetrack. The actors of the field disagreed on how Sweden's integration efforts in the labour market rated in comparison to the surrounding world (*Dagens Nyheter* 19. April 2006).

However, the basic numbers on participation and unemployment was by and large something all of our informants agreed on. There was a difference between immigrants or «foreign born» and natives or «Swedish born». The disagreement lay elsewhere. One such point of dispute was what caused and causes the differences between the majority population and those with immigrant background. Let us now move on to the discourses.

Discourses on integration

The sad thing is that nothing has changed since the early 1990s. Immigration and integration ministers have come and gone, the words have been changed, the rhetoric, but one has continued to do the same thing

(Folkpartiet Liberalerna (The Liberal Party) 2005:8).

Our informants agreed on the description of the general situation in the labour market, all stressing the uneven access and unemployment rates among majority and minority workers. We also met a broad acceptance of the primary goals for the integration policy laid down in 1997 – securing the same rights, obligations and opportunities for all. Most of them also agreed on the secondary goal of creating a community based on diversity (Prop 1997/98:16).

They disagreed when it came to what caused the differences, which measures should be implemented and what ideal society would be like for minorities and the majority.

In chapter 2 we discussed the construction of the four discourse universe we are going to use in our analysis. Which variables or dimensions we should use in order to spread the discourses out, will be discussed. So will the number of discourses and the border between them.

What is clear from the outset is that there is disagreement on several issues. This is easiest to detect when the more extreme positions are described. Let us start with the discourse and position that had its strongest period from 2004 and onwards. Some informants held it to already have outplayed its role at the end of 2006. Others claimed it changed the way people think about integration and still had a strong position in 2007.

The discourse of structural discrimination

The main theses of this discourse could perhaps be formulated this way: Deeply rooted racial prejudice among the Swedish majority has been en-

graved in institutional norms. Widespread discrimination produces and reproduces inequality between the foreign and Swedish born population. It is present at all levels of society. The integration policy of the last decade has in fact been an assimilation policy. And it has failed.

In our interviews, no one had a neutral description of this discourse and the two underlying inquiries. The one from Paul Lappalainen published in 2005, but in particular the broader inquiry headed by Masoud Kamali stirred up emotions among the informants. These reactions were mostly related to the discourse's view on what causes the inequality. Before we take a closer look at this view and other characteristics of the perspective, a few comments have to be made regarding the second inquiry on power and integration. The final report from this study was published in August 2006.

The green paper (SOU) was called «The Black book of integration» (*Integrationens svarta bok*)(SOU 2006:79). The title gave a clear signal about how the authors perceived the state of the Swedish integration policy. The Kamali lead study engaged a number of research projects. During the two years the inquiry lasted, thirteen publications handled the questions of discrimination and power from different angles. Many of the central arenas in society were scrutinized in search for signs of what was called «structural discrimination». The aim being to detect, describe and analyse this phenomenon in the courts, in the media, in health care, in the labour market, or within education among other places (SOU 2006:79:89-243).

Initiated in April 2004, the aim of the inquiry was similar to that of the ongoing Lappalainen study. It set out to:

Identify structural discrimination in Sweden on the bases of ethnic background or religious affiliation; to analyse the mechanisms behind this type of discrimination, its consequences in terms of power and influence among people with immigrant background as well as its bearing on the aims of Swedish integration policy» (SOU 2006:79:9).

Based on a number of individual studies the report is able to confirm a pervasive presence of discrimination in the Swedish society. In addition to individual's actions, this takes on the form structural/institutional discrimination which on an every-day base separates people into categories of unequal value (SOU 2006:79:11).

The division of the population into two categories, «Swedes» and «immigrants» is traced back to a 1975 Resolution in Parliament (Riksdagen). Other sources for the partition are found in lack of focus on equal opportunities and equal outcomes. Instead the focus had been too much on securing equal rights for the immigrant population, according to the report (SOU 2006:79:11).

The authors see a link between the rights of immigrants to preserve their own culture (multiculturalism) on the one hand, and negative ascription of

cultural difference on the other. This seems to mean: By encouraging difference, the state will loose how the difference is interpreted and used by the public. Pointing to a colonial mentality, the report states that people tend to draw a non existing link between culture with biology (SOU 2006:79:12). This notion of essential differences between groups contaminates the individuals. They can not escape their group, so to speak (SOU 2006:79:244).

Another point made in the Black Book is that Swedes puts the cultural label on actions of «the other». This hides the fact that the phenomenon is present also in the native population. One example is violence against women. This is, according to the report mistakenly presented in terms of an «honour-code» when practiced by people with immigrant background, despite the presence of the same type of violence among the Swedish population (SOU 2006:79:243). In sum one could say that the report holds the focus on cultural difference to work against the goal of creating equality.

This perspective is the same in the labour-market. It is seen as segregated. The segregation is due to discrimination and marginalisation (SOU 2006:79:73). In the cases where people of immigrant background are not excluded from participation, the actual work experience seems to be characterised by weak or temporary contracts, lack of job-security, prejudice, racism at the work-place, exclusion from the labour market, confinement to unqualified work and low pay, notions of incompetence, as well as neglect, stigmatisation and depreciation.

The problem is not an «ethnified» labour-market but an ethnically divided society. An integration policy confining its efforts to combat marginalisation (*utanförskap*) by boosting the «employability» of the persons in question does not help (SOU 2006:79:174). Since discrimination is not confined to the labour-market, a policy focusing on unemployment only will not succeed (SOU 2006:79:188).

One of the other reports from the inquiry was solely devoted to the situation in the labour market. In «The (in)visible walls of working life» (*Arbetslivets (o)synliga murar*) (SOU 2006:59) the editor states that the focus on those without access to the labour market entails the risk of overlooking *the fact that most people with immigrant background are already self-supported through participation in the labour market.* (SOU 2006.79:11).

If we stop for a second, we can see that we are faced with two separate concerns in these reports. One relates to the very access to the labour market for people with immigrant background, i.e. those kept at the outside. The other concerns the treatment of the same «category» when they are on the inside, i.e. those who are in fact employed. But accepting the fact that the majority of the discriminated category are actually participating as part of the (more or less) ordinary work force, some questions turn up. One is whether an all encompassing theory of discrimination based on a post-colonial mentality can explain both phenomena; exclusion from as well as inclusion into the la-

bour-market? Another more general question is why a society permeated by prejudice would spend a vast amount of money investigating its own failure to integrate people with immigrant background?

We will reveal a few more comments on the Kamali inquiry later on. At this point, however, we can mention one possible problem that is well known for anyone with an experience from scholarly work aiming at rectifying injustice: the danger of explaining too much. Is it possible to capture the empirical complexity of this field aided by one diagnosis alone? Critics would argue that it is not (Samhällsvetenskapliga fakultetsnämnden, Univ. Stockholm 2006).

From a similar perspective as Kamali, the smaller scaled Lappalainen inquiry was looking into the same topics. Their mandate was also to look for signs of «structural discrimination» in different areas of the Swedish society. This project published a report called «The blue and yellow glass house» (*Det blågula glashuset*) (SOU 2005:56).

The perhaps peculiar fact that these two inquiries ran parallel to each other appears to have a political explanation. According to several of our informants Lappalainen came to the assignment as a member of the Green Party of Sweden (*Miljöpartiet*). This political party is told to have made a deal with the dominant Social Democratic Party in exchange for their support after the 2002 election. As part of this deal, the Government was to initiate a study on structural discrimination. The assignment went to Lappalainen who was working at the Integration Board (Integrationsverket) at the time.

Several of the secretaries that were recruited to the inquiry came from Lappalainen's section at the Integration Board. Some of these later moved on to work on the Kamali project. Seen as a group, the section for «strategic efforts» (*avdelningen för strategiska insatser*), appears to have been one important fountainhead of the structural discrimination discourse. If we add the Institute for Ethnic Studies at the University of Uppsala, where Kamali and los Reyes were residing at the time of the inquiry, many of the central actors in the discourse are covered. At the Integration Board, this discourse's view on what causes and maintains the unbalanced in labour market participation dominated during 2002-2004. Their model of explanation will be presented below.

If we move back to the broader Kamali inquiry, this was surrounded by more controversy. It was launched following the fierce conflict involving the responsible Minister Mona Sahlin and prominent representatives of the Swedish academia, as we have seen. By a political decision, the already operative Westholm inquiry was closed down. This elicited heavy protests as we saw in chapter 1. The Social democrat Mona Sahlin, appeared to hand the topic of integration over from traditional Swedish academics to a group of social scientists with an agenda that was more critical of the Swedish majority society.

Definition of the problem

The integration policy has, according to the committee, counteracted its own goals. Instead of resulting in increased integration, the policy since 1997 had deepened the segregation in the Swedish society (SOU 2006:79:23).

The integration policy had been based on a construction of an «us» in contrast to «them». In one of the first green papers that were published from the inquiry this point was reflected in the title «Beyond us and them» (SOU 2005:41). The thought was that an already integrated majority of «Swedes» constitutes an «us» that is contrasted to «them». This last group consists of «immigrants» that need to be integrated into «our» society. What is needed, they state, is a «shift in focus from the challenges in «integrating» the «others», to structural discrimination and to the institutional level in the Swedish society (SOU 2006:79:10). Their aim was to comment on the situation in all the mentioned sectors of society. Despite this, they saw integration in the labour market as essential in securing equality.

Key concepts

So what does the concept of structural discrimination mean? According to the study, it refers to those «rules, norms, routines, accepted attitudes and behaviour in institutions and other structures of society that constitute hindrances for in practice securing equal rights and opportunities regardless of ethnic or religious affiliation» (SOU 2006:79:9). They continue by pointing out that such discrimination can be «visible or hidden and can happen with or without intention».

With such a broad definition, structural or institutional discrimination covers all types of discrimination that is normally referred to in studies of labour market integration, such as «preference based» or «statistical discrimination». In addition, however, structural discrimination is characterised by what could be labelled a «totalising pretension». By this we mean that the concept sets out to cover all parts and all actors of society. The authors of the study point out, however, that the phenomenon shall not be understood as an arrangement where the individual is predestined to «discriminate or to be victim of discrimination». They continue with stating that: Individual action and institutional regulations may «make a difference and hinder the effects of structural inequality» (SOU 2006:79:47).

Some of our informants that were sceptical of the Kamali position found the concept of structural discrimination difficult to grasp. In order to increase the precision, the authors of the public study said discrimination could be divided into structural, institutional and individual discrimination.

On the structural level people are divided into distinct categories with an attached ranking, according to the authors. What is said to be at work here are

the «power structures» and «ideology production» in society (SOU 2006:79:47). Remaining quite abstract at this level, some hints are given as to what the authors aim at. Structural relations spur discrimination they claim, and they mention «the division of labour, the formulation of policies, the organisation of the welfare system and citizenship status», as examples (SOU 2006:79:48).

At the institutional level, discrimination appears within specific organisations or public offices. In the public study, the authors mention schools and work places as examples where this type of discrimination occurs (SOU 2006:79:48). The institutions may create a space in which discrimination and discriminatory behaviour may be played out. Discrimination at this level is not fuelled by individual intentions. At the same time, the authors state that «the action of individuals often influences the occurrence of discrimination» (SOU 2006:79:48).

It is at the individual level that discrimination is easiest to detect, according to the report. It refers to the «individuals' attitudes, intentions, actions and values that lead to certain people being discriminated» (SOU 2006:79:48). It is however important for the authors to note that these intentions and actions never can be seen in isolation from the institutional setting where they occur.

The relationship between the three levels of structural discrimination is not fixed, according to the authors of the report. A common denominator on all levels is, however, the perception that people are inherently different (*inneboende olika*). One way to sum up the relationship could be that ideological conceptions of difference influence institutional environments within which discrimination is exercised by individuals. By using «structural discrimination» as an expression that is set to cover all three levels, one could raise the question whether the Kamali-inquiry thereby loses precision. One could also ask: what distinguishes this concept from «discrimination»?

Other key concepts in this discourse include «othering» (*andrefiering*) and «racialisation» (*rasifiering*). Othering is a concept that has been developed within feminist and post-colonial research. It denotes a process where an individual or group is «constructed as different and inferior to an imagined 'we'» (SOU 2006:79:45). The result from this process is a division into us and them. Racialisation is the element of racism in the division into superior and inferior groups in society. Under this cap come «ideologies, perceptions and actions that have as a premise that difference between people can be attributed to their visible traits or national origin» (SOU 2006:79:46). Here we find it important to note that nationality is included by the authors as an illegitimate characteristic for judgement of others.

The parallel inquiry by Lappalainen stated that «culture» has taken the place of «race» as the tool that people use to distinguishing between groups (SOU 2005:56:42). From this follows the concept of «cultural related racism».

Stereotyped perceptions of differences in culture play a part in the ranking of majority and minorities. In the Lappalainen inquiry racism was seen as culturally based and as hardly distinguishable from structural discrimination.

Causes

Within the Kamali discourse, we find a list of causes that correspond to what we have described so far. A bi-polar arrangement is amplified by discrimination that is present at all levels of society. From the reports produced by the public inquiry, one can get the impression that structural discrimination is the *only* cause of the unbalanced participation rate in the labour market. A closer look, however, reveals that several other reasons are mentioned.

Among these we find the effects of the tough times in the Swedish labour market during the 1990s. These hit workers with immigrant background particularly hard, as we saw in chapter 3. One reason for this was that a lot of jobs were lost in traditional processing industry, where this part of the population was more exposed than Swedish born workers. After the recession, the new jobs that were available made it hard to compete for low qualified industrial workers that had been outside the workforce for some years. This was part of a broader «structural change in the labour market» (*strukturovandling*). Several of our informants saw this argument as important element in the explanation of the lower participation rates for the immigrant population. The Kamali inquiry instead point to the secondary effects of the recession in the 1990s. These left many immigrants in a precarious situation in the labour market, according to the report (SOU 2006:79:171). As employment among this group improved at the end of that decade, many were still exposed to unstable forms of employment.

In our interview with Kamali, he was confronted with the list of possible causes for the unbalance in the labour market. These included among other; trends in the labour market; the structural change; language skills; validation of education; the introduction regime; the former strategy of spreading of newly arrived asylum seekers across the country (*hela Sverige strategin*). He answered: «All these causes contribute to the picture». He went on to say that despite this, the fundamental problem is discrimination. Another voice from the same position went a bit further and opened for a possible effect of the immigrants' background:

I do not deny that the individual's historical background plays a role, the why and how they came to Sweden or if one comes from South America or Balkan. People carry their luggage, there is no denying that (Informant March 2007).

The interviewee went on to stress that despite the possible role of a person's origin, the focus should be on the receiving country.

But the question is how they are met and received, and after a few years – how much there is still left of this luggage. When the authorities all the time focuses on the cultural traditions in their home country, then one forgets what the persons are doing to adapt to life here, as well as what the society does to adapt to the new situation (Informant March 2007).

At a deeper level, what is said to be a wide spread discrimination in Sweden is explained by pointing to Western European and national history. The continents colonial history is said to have been pivotal in the division into two groups: A superior Europe and inferior «others» (SOU 2006:79:53). According to the authors, this division still remains a mental scheme for Europeans and Swedes alike. In combination with a history of racism, the European colonial past is still present and constitutes the background for the discriminatory practice in Sweden today.

Our informants belonging to the other discourses were sceptical of relevance and solidity of using these historical elements as explanations of the current state in the labour market.

Measures

The authors of the «Black book» point to a series of radical measures that are needed in order to counter the problem of structural discrimination. On the institutional level, the Swedish Integration Board and the National Institute for Working Life (*Arbetslivsinstitutet*) were suggested shut. Instead an Introduction Board (*introduktionsverk*) was to be initiated. This should be responsible for the introduction period that was to be followed by general measures for all citizens. In addition an «institution for equal opportunity and equal outcome», was suggested (SOU 2006:79:25). Other measures included initiatives resembling affirmative action in higher education and in the hiring to public positions.

Ironically, the centre-right government that was elected in 2006 quickly decided to close down both the Swedish Integration Board and the National Institute for Working Life. They did so, however, without referring to the Kamali inquiry and allegedly with a different motivation.

Despite this, the profound measures suggested by the inquiry were met with scepticism from other discourses (Svenskt Näringsliv 2007, Samhällsvetenskapliga fakultetsnämnden 2006). Some informants held that the suggested measures resembled a radical form of government interventionism or «social engineering» (*social ingenörskonst*) that brought back memories from the 1970s.

One way of seeing the inquiry, is to see it as presenting a line that starts with the historical causes for the current situation (colonialism and othering), followed by the immediate causes (racialisation and discrimination), the sup-

plying a description of the current situation (structural discrimination) and finishing off with a list of measures. From this angle, one could state that the other discourses would disagree with the historical causes and the list of measures that was provided by Kamali. The middle part of the line – the immediate causes and the description of discrimination as being a central piece of the puzzle was easier to accept for most informants.

On an analytical level, one could note that this discourse has a complex relation to the concept of equal treatment. The ideal situation is where all groups could be treated equally. This is the long term goal of this position and the wanted outcome of the suggested measures. There are two exceptions to the equal treatment norm in this discourse: The first is for the newly arrived immigrants. In order to secure a fair starting point, these people have to be offered special treatment and programs. This is how it is supposed to be under the current integration regime.

The second exception is that today's «equal treatment» of majority and minority in reality is an unbalanced treatment. This is because uneven starting points create a persistent unbalance, according to this perspective. Until even starting points are secured, equality has to be enforced through special treatment of the weaker group.

Normative elements

The normative core of the position of structural discrimination appears to be in line with the 1997 proposition on integration: securing equal rights, obligations and opportunities for all. In addition there could be added the stressing of the perhaps even more basic element of equal worth of all people. Further, the inquiry wishes to secure equal outcome for people with similar starting points.

After having reviewed the various contributions from the position of structural discrimination, two more normative elements have to be added. One is the intensity in the efforts to counter the arguments that point to the relevance of qualities and competence of foreign born labourers as part of the explanation for lack of labour market integration. This is seen as illegitimate, as blaming the victim. In normative terms; the «blame» for unbalance in labour market integration should not be pinned on the migrants themselves. This normative element may appear to come in addition to the analytical position; characteristics of the foreign born population do not influence the participation rate in the labour market.

Instead, the reverse is held to be the case: the difficulties in the labour market are due to the structures, institutions and individual behaviour of the Swedish born population. Although not part of such a simplified scheme of blaming one or the other, this position seeks to counter what they see as a

tendency throughout the past 15 years to put the blame on those coming from other countries.

An example that was used here was the Committee for Refugees and Immigrants that published a report in 1995 (SOU 1995:76). This cross Party committee related the lack of employment among immigrants with dependence on welfare and lack of language and other formal skills (SOU 2006:79, page 63). This is not where the cause for the unbalance is to be found according to the Kamali inquiry, and it is neither where one *should* look for an explanation.

Ideal situation

What would be the optimal outcome of the integration or introduction policy seen from this perspective? Apart from the obvious based on the previous description – that the situation would include equal rights, obligations, opportunities and outcomes for all – it is unclear what the absence of discrimination would render. Individuals with equal opportunities would stand the same chances in the labour market. Groups based on heritage, former nationality would be relevant only in cases where it is chosen by the individual. It would be up to her or him to define group belonging. The individual is seen as the sole actor that can determine when difference is relevant.

A movement beyond «us» and «them» seeks to arrive at a new «us». How diversity should be treated and handled within the new «us» is not quite clear under this umbrella. At a group level, similarity should be dominant and difference ignored.

Taboo topics

In the first chapter of this report we mentioned the importance of *silent* topics in discourses. What is not talked about? Are there any themes that are not allowed to discuss? In this discourse some concepts are placed in the corner of the debate or actively opposed, examples are «culture», «individual preferences» and «negative group characteristics». In addition one could perhaps add a premise that is not discussed: Immigrants want to stay in Sweden and they wish to integrate. Some people may want to move on to a third country that they find more attractive than Sweden, or they may chose to maintain strong relations with the country where they were born.

Actors and arenas

Some of the central actors that participate and front this view of integration in the labour market have already been mentioned. In the group of people con-

tributing to the public inquiry we find researchers from the National Institute for Working Life (*Arbetslivsinstitutet*), from the University of Uppsala and from the department of Ethnic Studies at Linköping University among others.

There are two main forums for the discourse of structural discrimination. One was the public reports, the green papers, which were produced by Lappalainen and the Kamali inquiries. The other was newspapers. The paper *Dagens Nyheter* was the main forum for several of the debates on discrimination. This was for example where dispute between Westholm and Kamali was played out.

Parts of this discourse may be traced to the reports from the Integration Board during 2002-2004 period where several of the authors of later public reports were employed (Integrationsverket 2004).

In the political sphere, the Green Party of Sweden (*Miljöpartiet*) fronted the idea of structural discrimination (see mp.se). The concept was also used by the current leader of the Social Democratic Party, Mona Sahlin. She mentored the Kamali inquiry and continued to use the expression in later media debates (SVT 19. April 2007). To what extent the rest of her party supported her view on discrimination is unclear.

Peak period

Here we have pinned the discourse of structural discrimination to a working group within the Integration Board from 2002 to 2004 and several research groups since that time. The Kamali inquiry was finished in August 2006. After that it was sent out for comments. During the spring of 2007 the comments had been gathered, but there was little initiative within the Ministry of Integration and Equality to push the process forward. The reason for this was the change of government after the 2006 election. The question is whether the perspective of structural discrimination has reached its peak of importance. Some of our informants held this view. Although its future is uncertain, the position's clear view of the problems in the labour market and what causes them, may secure it a continued life.

View on others

The promoters of the structural discrimination perspective saw themselves as playing an important role in the debate on labour market integration. Their view on their own role was that they:

Changed the direction and the fabric of the debate on integration! The focus was on the immigrants. We changed that to a focus on the system! (Kamali interview, March 2007).

The informants belonging to this discourse mentioned three other positions they distanced themselves from; the economists, those that worked hands on with integration measures and those they called the *multikulti-group*. The two latter were seen in continuation. The multikulti group was seen as being on a loosing track in 2007. They were judged to have lost their former influence. The practitioners were half jokingly called the *integration mafia*. The economists, most of who would belong within the *social liberal* discourse according to our categories, were seen as too preoccupied with cost-benefit analyses. In addition their view on the topic of integration was held to be based on a fundamental difference between «us» and «them».

The social liberal discourse

The second discourse has a strong position both in the current political landscape and in the academia. The centre-right government that came to power in 2006 could be said to be a key player in putting this discourse and its solutions into practice. But this angle to the challenges of integration is not new. The central elements can be traced back to the 1980s and 1990s. The language is to a large extent inspired by the area of economics. Here we find carrots and sticks, incentives, traps, preferences, self support and a heavy focus on the individual. At the same time the debaters belonging to this side do not shy away from accepting the existence of discrimination and structural malfunctions. The basic economic view on labour market integration groups the active elements into three: the suppliers of labour, those that demand labour and labour market characteristics.

The Swedish Liberal Party (*Folkpartiet*) and a handful of representatives within this party were central in the formulation and promotion of the centre-right's version of the liberal discourse on labour market integration. In 2005 the party agreed on an integration program that was to shape the policy once they became part of the government the year after. The dominant party in the government, the Moderate Party (*Moderaterna*), followed the Liberal Party's policy main principles of making work attractive for the individual.

This position is critical of the integration policy that had been promoted and attempted implemented by the Social Democratic party since 1997. It shares this element with the other discourses. Discrimination is said to play an important role in creating and maintaining the unbalance in the Swedish labour market. We will get back to the extent to which the liberal discourse resembles *social democratic* and the *structural discrimination* positions.

Of course there is variation within this discourse. Actors from different parts of society are put together as representing one view. Here we focus on finding similarities between actors that may not feel they share the same opin-

ions or perspectives on the issue of labour market integration. Researchers and academics may feel that they do not belong to the same spirit that is promoted by the political parties mentioned under this cap. Likewise some may feel uncomfortable to find themselves in the same category as for example Swedish Business (*Svenskt Näringsliv*), a voice that clearly represents one version of the liberal discourse. Let us look at some of what we hold to be shared elements within this perspective on integration.

Definition of the problem

The condemnation of the Swedish integration policy is repeated by several of the actors within this discourse. The exemption is Svensk Näringsliv. We will return to their special take on this below. For the political parties belonging to the 2006 government, the message was clear: The integration policy had failed. In his inauguration speech Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt stated that:

Swedish integration policy has failed. Way too many people find themselves on the outside of society and the labour market. The courses in Swedish for newly arrived immigrants show poor results and many people do not participate in the program. Social and economic differences increase (Regeringsförklaringen 6. October 2006, regeringen.se).

The Swedish Liberal Party agreed on this diagnosis and held that Sweden «is a segregated country» where the gap between Swedes and immigrants has deepened over the past ten years (folkpartiet.se). These differences lead to personal tragedies for those involved, but they are also part of a gigantic waste of resources, according to the party's diagnosis.

In the party's program from 2005, the situation in the Malmö suburb Rosengård is used as an example of the segregated society. Violence and destructive behaviour is related to the social and economic situation of the inhabitants. This is again connected to a situation where employment is low and educational careers are cut short (Folkpartiet 2005 – *Bryt Utanförskapet*).

In a report from the Ministry of Finance it is stated that there are three reasons why lower participation rates for the foreign born population should be cause for worry (Ds 2007:4, page 7). It is a misuse of resources, feeling excluded may lead to social problems and an aging population need a full work force. Seen from a purely economic point of view the problem is easy to define: Low participation results in lower tax incomes for the state and higher costs.

Key concepts

Several of the key concepts from the economic realm have already been mentioned. One of the central politicians on integration from the Liberal Party, Mauricio Rojas, had a background from economic history. This has probably helped fortify the language of economics within the discourse, focussing on *individual freedom, empowerment* and the deregulation of the labour market.

Work is the number one concept in the programs from the 2006 government and in the interviews with informants that could comfortably be placed under the umbrella of this discourse. Employment is seen as the key element for securing integration for the individual as well as for society as a whole.

Excessive care (överomhändertagande) is used as a label for the past twenty years of integration policy dominated by the Social Democratic Party (Folkpartiet 2005:9). The thought being that measures designed at to work at the group level had lead to passivity and drained individual initiative. *Empowerment (egenmakt)* is the opposite, according to the Liberal Party. Here the focus is shifted from the faults and problems to the individual's potential and self determination.

The outside position (utanförskap) denotes the segregated society. This stands in a complex relationship to the formulation and understanding of «us» and «them» that is used in the discourse on structural discrimination. In the formulation of the party program from 2005, the Liberal Party highlights the similarities with the rival discourse:

A radical shift in perspectives is needed in order to come to grasps with the problems of segregation and exclusion (*utanförskapet*). First and foremost we need to stop looking down on our fellow men. The focus on weaknesses and problems has to be substituted by a perspective that stresses the possibilities and strength of those groups that are excluded from living a worthy and creative life today (Folkpartiet 2005:9).

Causes

The social liberal position opens for a range of causes for the unbalanced labour market. The before mentioned report from the Ministry of Finance presents a list of possible explanations. These include characteristics of the immigrants, types of behaviour in the application phase, network, changes and trends in the labour market situation, discrimination and the effects of national policy initiatives (Ds 2007:4). A review of research done in Sweden let the authors conclude that several of the proposed explanations do not seem to hold water. These included application behaviour and job motivation. Here the authors were unable to find any differences between foreign and Swedish born residents.

When the effects of gender, age, education, work experience and years in Sweden were taken into account, a large part of the difference still remained unexplained. Among the factors that could not be deemed irrelevant were «language and Sweden specific knowledge», «access to informal networks», «higher threshold for employment» (*högre krav til anställbarhet*), and discrimination. The report states that empirical evidence points to the existence of discrimination in the Swedish labour market. The question that should be asked is how big an influence this unfair treatment according to background has on the participation rates (Ds 2007:4:143).

The inquiry from the Ministry of Finance included remarks on two separate political measures that also received criticism from actors belonging to other discourses. These were the transfer of the responsibility of refugee reception from the Swedish National Labour Market Board (*Arbetsmarknadsstyrelsen*) to the Board of Immigration (*Invandrarverket*) in 1987 and the «Across Sweden strategy» (*Hela Sverige strategin*) starting in 1985. These initiatives were held to continue to have effect. The first was stated to have drawn attention away from the importance of early employment. The second sent newly arrived to areas of Sweden where employment was hard to find.

The «Across Sweden strategy» was not good for the integration. Look at areas like Gävle and what happened there. Lack of jobs had resulted in people moving out. This left a lot of vacant apartments. These were then filled with newly arrived refugees. There were no jobs to be found for these people. This was what we called the «empty apartment policy!» (Civil servant).

This supposedly failed national strategy had a long term effect. Although it was dropped in the mid 1990s, the policy continued to contribute to unemployment according to our informants.

Many have continued to live in the areas where there is little work to be found. The reason is that in order to be able to move into the cities, where the cost of living is higher, they need to have relatives or contacts that already live there. The alternative is to find work locally and earn enough money to be able to move (Informant Confederation of Swedish Enterprise (*Svensk Näringsliv*)).

Measures

The list of measures suggested by the actors connected to the liberal discourse is long. Talking about the wider topic of integration, Prime Minister Reinfeldt stated in his inauguration speech that:

The best road to integration is through work and language skills. Therefore the integration has to be improved in the labour market and the language training

bettered. Discrimination has to be counteracted and validation of education made smoother (regeringen.se).

As we have seen, this discourse is dominated by economic terms. When concrete measures are discussed this jargon still sets the tone. In line with the stance on restricting special care to newly arrived immigrants, most measures were universal for all workers, many of them pertaining to a slight deregulation of the labour market. By making it easier for employers to hire (and fire) people, by giving tax reductions on home-related services (*hushållsnära tjänster*), and by attaching obligations to contribute for the people receiving public funds along with other measures, work was to become more attractive and the threshold to employment lower (Folkpartiet.se August 2005:4).

In its program against exclusion, the Liberal Party presents a list of 25 measures. Of these, five are directed towards fighting discrimination. One suggestion here is that all applications for public positions shall be de-identified. Through this measure, the people processing the application will not have access to the origin and nationality of the applicants.

The basis in the line from the 2006 government and the Liberal Party was to remove the obstacles for employment of all outside the labour market, including those with an immigrant background. Reinfeldt put it this way:

The point of reference in the integration policy of the government will be to tear down obstacles and open possibilities. Persons that have immigrated shall be respected as individuals and not as a homogenous collective. Except from the first period in Sweden, there is no need for a special policy for immigrants, instead we need a policy that releases the inner powers of and break away from the situation of exclusion that has gained a foothold here in Sweden (regeringen.se 2006:s7).

Again we see the insistence on a short introduction period followed by a mainstreamed responsibility structure. The focus on individuals means that this discourse refrains from programs of affirmative action. This they hold would lead to a society based on group rights and group conflicts.

One of the concrete measures implemented by the centre-right government was the introduction of «fresh-start jobs» (*nystartsjobb*). Under this program the newly arrived immigrants get their introduction to the labour market at the same time as their staying permit. These jobs were normal or trainee positions (*praktikplatser*) that were combined with active coaching and language training. This program was also open to people that arrived as part of family reunification (*anhöriginvandrare*) (Sveriges Radio 11.06.2007).

Another concrete initiative was to guarantee a validation of work experience of the newly arrived. The government set a strict time frame for itself. The

authorities were obligated to process such a validation within three months after the applicant had received a residence permit (Integrations- och Jämställdhetsdepartementet 2007:1).

Normative elements

The main normative element in the liberal discourse is that all persons shall be treated as individuals. Their social and economic environment shall to as large extent as possible facilitate free choices made by empowered individuals, each with equal worth.

The position shares the attention to discrimination with other discourses. In the People Party's program from 2005 they emphasize the fight against discrimination.

Discrimination no doubt exists in Sweden today. It is widespread and hits with strong force against persons with immigrant background. What we see today is no less than a systematic exclusion and negative selection of persons who's name, origin or looks diverge from the norm of the majority (Folkpartiet.se 2005:18).

Here we see the proximity of the liberal position on discrimination to that of the structural discrimination discourse. Again the Liberal Party:

Discrimination exists not only in the attitudes of individuals. It also exists in those systems that make it difficult for certain groups to succeed in the labour market and other markets.

They mention the most well known example of what some hold to be structural discrimination; the law on the protection of employment (*lagen om anställningsskydd*). In the difficult times of the 1990s, these rules contributed to the loss of jobs for immigrants. Here the first in – first out principle meant that they were the first to go when the times got tough (Callemans 2003:4). The liberal position comments directly on the concept of «structural discrimination» but finds that:

So far we have not had sufficient empirical evidence to be able to close in on these structural aspects, in particular on the role of the labour court (*arbetsrätten*) in this discriminatory process (Folkpartiet.se 2005:28).

Seen from this (and all other) political stance, discrimination is immoral and has negative consequences for all involved parties. From the economists' perspective, discrimination is a cost that hinders the optimal use of resources in the society.

On the topic of diversity of cultures and traditions, the Liberal Party finds that «not all cultural plurality is good» (Folkpartiet.se 2005:30). This is done

with reference to practices where the individual's rights are violated in cases of forced marriages and honour related violence.

When a normative conflict arises between democratically founded laws and cultural, religious or traditional ways of behaviour, the laws have to be respected – by all. Culture or religion must never be allowed to excuse or fortify oppressive traditions (Folkpartiet.se 2005:30).

Ideal situation

The ideal situation for the actors placed in the social liberal category is one where all treated as individuals and meet the same challenges and opportunities. In addition the norm of self sufficiency (*självförsörjning*) has a strong standing in the political sphere.

As we have seen, some of the voices within this discourse are sceptical of diversity (*mångfald*) or multiculturalism. The focus should be on rights of the individual and not on group rights. In line with this one of our informants stated that the goal should be a society with plurality on an individual level.

Taboo topics

Many different problems and possible causes are on the table. No one is left untouched. Possible dysfunctions related to the competence of immigrants, the behaviour of employers, the function of laws and regulations, failed labour market policies and more are all put into the open.

Topics that are not discussed openly are few. Two suggestions could be racism as fountainhead for discrimination, and the positive sides of focussing on the group level.

Actors and arenas

We have already mentioned the importance of the politician Rojas and his colleagues in the Liberal Party. Since the centre-right government came to power in 2006, their thorough work on the issue of integration has dominated the policy of the coalition. With Sabuni at the wheel in the Ministry of Integration, this Party controls the development of this topic in the current Swedish debate. The principles here seem to coincide with the strong focus on promoting work as integration's prime mover.

The Moderate Party (*Moderaterna*) is the largest player in the coalition government and agrees on the whip and carrot policy. Being employed should pay off and the alternatives – a range of state support arrangements – were being reduced through the government's first year in office.

If we turn to the academic research community that may fall under the social liberal cap, it is obvious that this study does not have capacity to do a thorough analysis. We can for example not study how a sample of national economists would distribute themselves across the categories of discourses presented in this report. That the economic way of thinking plays a central role within this discourse is beyond doubt. Traditionally, however, the Nordic national economists have been integral in the development of the social democratic welfare states. Locating the national economists themselves in today's discursive landscape, would require a separate study. In such a project, two distinctions would probably be useful.

The first would be to distinguish between the economists' academic role from that of their role as public figures and political activists. Next one would have to look for differences in their belief in *regulation* or *deregulation* of the labour market. Here their academic work may show that regulation is inefficient from a resource allocation point of view, e.g. protection of those already employed. At the same time their political stance may still make them promote a heavy regulation and social distribution, but then they would do so outside of their role as academics. It may of course also be the other way around. Their academic work may show that more regulation is needed while their political stance may promote a more liberal policy.

Most economists in the Nordic countries working with these issues could be expected to place themselves either in the social liberal discourse, promoting deregulation, or in the traditional social democratic camp, to a larger extent wooing for regulation.

The list of national economists (*nationalekonomer*) working on labour market integration is long. Such a list would for example include Eskil Wadensjö, Dan Olof Rooth and Jan Ekberg. Some of the economists have moved from a general interest in the labour market to specialising in integration issues. Others have worked consistently with this topic.

The economist's model of how human behaviour is different from that of the other social scientist researchers in the field. These have softer academic backgrounds and arrive at the discussion with integration as their speciality. To simplify one could say that the economists bring knowledge of the *labour market* while ethnologists, sociologists bring knowledge of *integration*. They meet at the topic of *integration in the labour market*.

A hypothesis could be that while one would be able to find economists supporting both the social democratic and the social liberal take on labour market integration, sociologists, political scientists, anthropologists and ethnologists would be more dominant in the social democratic discourse and the discourse of structural discrimination.

One organisation belonging under the social liberal umbrella deserves special attention: The Confederation of Swedish Enterprise (*Svensk Näringsliv*). This organisation stands out with a diverging basic interpretation of the situa-

tion in the labour market. Their slightly positive diagnosis was spelt out in a 2007 publication (Reziani 2007). Here the author presents a picture of a labour market where the integration of foreign born is moving in the right direction. Participation is not terribly low, all things taken into consideration. With time, individual adaptation and integration will improve the statistics. Within the group of well established immigrants, the difference in participation is minimal.

According to the Confederation report, all the talk about unemployment among the foreign born population has been used as a smoke screen to avoid talking about the real problem – the overall unemployment figures. This has happened despite the fact that the participation rates and the number of people with immigrant background that were without jobs could for the most part be explained by looking at composition of the group, their competence and the failure of the past fifteen years of labour market policies (Reziani 2007). The report does not deny the existence of discrimination. It states, however, that the focus on this element has been out of proportion over the past five years in Sweden (Reziani 2007).

Interestingly, we shall see in the description of the *social democratic discourse* that representatives of the labour unions also point to the exaggerated negativism in the public debate on integration.

Peak period

The economic view on labour market integration has a long history in Sweden. Some informants belonging to other positions would connect this view to the «immigrant policy» (*invandrarpolitiken*) which preceded the integration policy that was introduced in 1997.

Others would state that the position kept its strength through the period dominated by multiculturalism and structural discrimination after the year 2000. What is clear is that the position and the accompanying measure are being put to the test by the current government. In the labour market politics, the economic and liberal jargon is dominating. The current integration minister Sabuni's insistence on the necessity of finding the right «match» between employers and employed is one example of this. Groups are *out* and individuals are *in*.

View on others

The main reference for the social liberal position is the failure of the social democratic integration policy. In the fresh spirit of, at that time, an opposition party, the Liberal Party characterised the failure in these spiteful words:

One reason for the problem of exclusion (*utanförskap*) has been the Swedish social policy that was formerly called *immigrants policy* and now has been re-named *integration policy*. This policy has been marked by excessive care under which the newly arrived have been transformed into powerless clients and have lost control over many of the core choices in their lives (2005:18).

Again we see the heavy handed critique of the policy that has been dominant in this area over the past fifteen years. The failed transfer to an integration policy beyond «us» and «them» is also visible.

An industry of misery has basically been built on a systematic division of the people into «real» and «not real» Swedes (*riktiga och icke-riktiga svenskar*), something which is nothing but an institutionalised segregation (2005:18).

In other words: this position holds that the integration policy both before and after 1997 resulted in segregation and not integration. The shift from *immigrant* to *integration policy* was in name only.

The social democratic discourse

The actors within the third discourse are the ones that have dominated the field of labour market integration over the past 30 years. From the formulation of the immigrant policy in the 1970s, this has been the position backed by a broad political and bureaucratic consensus. It is important to note that the label used for this discourse does not mean that the Social Democratic Party has been the only actor holding this view on labour market integration. Despite using this familiar label, we wish to draw attention to a view of society that goes beyond party politics.

The broader social democratic tradition and the development of the welfare state are the foundation of this discourse. It is a stance that over the past thirty years (and longer) has had a strong belief in the necessity of state *intervention* and *regulation*. Social interventions and attempts of what could be called *social engineering* dominated the immigrant labour market policies and later on the question of integration in Sweden. As we have seen, many debaters pointed to the past governments' lack of success in achieving integration. Now we move to the position that made this policy. Although some see the criticism as exaggerated, most voices within the discourse have no problem identifying weak spots in both the pre 1997 and the post 1997 integration regimes.

The policy before 1997 had three goals: Equality, freedom of choice and cooperation. What for example *freedom of choice* meant in this context has later been debated (Gür 1996:287). The immigrant policy was later seen as

promoting assimilation, dividing the society into an «us» and a «them» and pointing to «them» as a group that was different (Riksrevisionen 2005:5:13).

As we saw in chapter 3, the integration policy that replaced the immigrant policy focussed on equal rights, obligations and opportunities for all. This was to be realized in a society marked by diversity and tolerance (Prop. 1997/1998). The goals of the new policy were formulated at the individual level.

As we mentioned earlier, a bearing principle was that each sector of the government should be responsible for securing integration within their policy area. After a short introductory period, each ministry should handle immigrant related issues. Integration should thereby be *mainstreamed* into the governments' general efforts. The goal of mainstreaming had broad political backing. And the formulation of the policy looked promising to many of the involved. Perhaps the integration efforts would have succeeded if only the subsequent governments had followed through and implemented the new principles? The new policy sought to bridge the gap between «us» and «them» and to eliminate discrimination. This would most surely have suited those belonging to the structural discrimination position. And the focus on the needs of the *individual* would have helped please the social liberals. But, as the introductory quotation to this chapter indicated, many hold that little changed after 1997.

The committee that authored the proposition in 1997 had to work around several of the difficult debates surrounding labour market integration.

The committee wants to make clear that immigrants in no way can be regarded as constituting a homogenous category in society. Despite this, it is possible to identify certain problems and needs that immigrants have in common (Prop. 1997:20/ Riksrevisionen 2005:22).

This citation points to the dilemma: How to reach people with similar needs without defining them as a group and thereby risking attaching a stigma? What if «they» do not stop having group needs? As we have seen, the solution that was suggested in the 1997 proposition was reserving the special treatment for the newly arrived. In this first period the immigrants were to be treated as a group needing special measures. After a few years they were to be treated as individuals with individual needs.

In 2005, this goal of a «mainstreamed» policy was evaluated by the Riksrevisionen. Nine major public authorities were asked to report whether their treatment of people with immigrant background had changed after the reforms in 1997. They found that little had changed. The authorities still formulated their policies towards «immigrants» as a group and not towards individual needs. In addition the authorities expressed scepticism towards the unclear formulations of the integration policy. With abstract goals and unclear

intentions, they said the integration policy was difficult to implement within their sectors of responsibility (Riksrevisionen 2005:66). The conclusion in that report was not uplifting for the governing Social Democratic Party.

The lack of knowledge and guidance on the meaning of the integration policy leads to a practice where the authorities just carry on doing what they did before under the immigrant policy. The integration policy therefore ends up being a change of policy in name only (Riksrevisionen 2005:66).

This was not how the Social Democrats wanted it to end up. Eight years after the change of policy was supposed to have happened, the branches of the authorities (e.g. the National Board of Health and Welfare (*Socialstyrelsen*), the Swedish National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*), the Swedish Social Insurance Agency (*Riksförsäkringsverket*)) had not reformed their way of thinking and acting. But let's try to get a bit closer to seeing what the topic of labour market integration looks like from this perspective.

Definition of the problem

Lower labour market participation rates are seen as the main problem from this perspective. But our informants representing the traditional social democratic and social engineering institutions quickly moved on to more subtle and systematic challenges at the margins of the labour market.

The main problem with the integration policy is that there is not one main problem, but many [...] We don't take the individual as our starting point and look for what they bring with them. They all bring something. Let the employer decide which competence is needed! (Civil servant, labour market authorities).

A smooth transition from arrival to first job was seen as quintessential by our informants sorting under this discourse. This demanded that the system that met the newly arrived was looking for individual competence. One should see them as potential workers and not as immigrants. One informant held that a shift in attitudes was necessary in all parts of society including on the local level – among those that met the immigrants face to face.

When I make local visits, and the officials present their work, they say: We have received this and that number of Iraqis, this many Afghans etc. I tell them: Why to you tell me these figures? Why do you tell me their ethnicity? Why don't you instead tell me their profession? They don't tell me their competence! The main problem is that simple ... and that complicated. (Civil servant, Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (*SKL*)).

According to the Integration Board one important problem in 2005 was the quality of the introduction programme (*introduktionsprogram*) (Integrationsverket 2006:13). The combination of contact with a working place and language courses did not function as intended although some improvements were seen over the past year.

Key Concepts

Labour market programs (*arbetsmarknadsåtgärder*) were central to the social democratic labour market policy and the integration policy during 1997-2006.

Diversity (*mångfald*) was seen as a natural starting point for the government from 1997 and onwards. Stating that Sweden already is marked by the plurality of national backgrounds, it is said that this should form the basis of the integration policy (Prop 1997/98:23). It denotes not only ethnic diversity, but also cultural, lingual and religious plurality in the document that lay the foundation for the integration policy. A different take on the concept is seeing plurality not only as a description of status quo, but as a goal or ideal state. How plurality should be achieved is however not clear (1997/98:18).

Integration itself is an elusive concept that functions as the backbone of the last ten years of Swedish policy in this field. It is used to describe a reciprocal adaptation between groups, minority and majority or an individual's relationship to society. In this discourse it is used as a description of the approximation as well as of the result of such a process.

In their presentation of the integration policy, the Social Democratic Party performs an advanced avoidance manoeuvre in order to not use the term *immigrant* (Socialdemokraterna.se 01.09.2006). This is done by using other labels like *foreign born* or *persons that come to Sweden*. In this effort a new label is used. Those that formerly were called *immigrants*, reappears as *those who have immigrated* (*invandrade*). This is seemingly a palatable term, although it is close to the original. Perhaps the reason is that it indicates the past tense – they have integrated. One of the criticisms of the original term was that one got locked to the present tense of immigration. Being an immigrant indicated no point of closure – one just kept immigrating.

Causes

So what had caused the problem according to the adherents of this discourse? We have already mentioned the persistent attitudes of people on the ground seeing ethnicity and not competence. One informant said these people confirm the bi-polar division of the integration field in Sweden. An «us» or a «we» who is already integrated are set to help a not-integrated «them». This divi-

sion is commented in the 1997 proposition in much the same way representatives of the other discourses did ten years later.

Another important cause of the unbalance in the labour market is the insufficient introduction and language courses during the first few years after arrival (Emilsson 2007).

When the qualification during this first period fails, when this first attempt fails, then the system is forced to compensate. Because they are meant to move from introduction to employment, but when this fails, then they have to continue qualifying (Civil servant, Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKL)).

Discrimination is mentioned both in the documents and by our informants. The concept of structural discrimination did however not get high ratings by the latter group. This was the case despite the continued use of the concept by Mona Sahlin from 2004 and onwards.

Excessive care (*överomhändertagande*) and the risk of draining the individual's strength and active development were also mentioned. The rights of the individual were paired up with the corresponding obligations.

The «refugee huggers» (*flyktinkramarna*) were representatives for the excessive care. They have no respect for the individual! You have to have demands. You have to be able to say «you shall integrate!» and not say: «we shall integrate you» (Civil servant, Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKL)).

One cause for the unbalance was not discussed in the open was the constitution of the immigrant groups coming to Sweden. The change from mainly labour migrants to refugees and family reunifications was seen as an important cause.

Sweden receives a lot of asylum seekers and refugees and that is a large part of the explanation for the challenges with labour market integration. It is not legit to talk about it, but everyone knows that this group needs more time to establish themselves in all countries. It is more difficult for them than for immigrant workers (Civil servant, Integration Board).

Measures

Several promoted the return of the responsibility of the first period to the Labour Market Board (AMS). It was suggested that this would secure an early first contact and transmit a clearer signal for everyone involved; labour is the key to integration.

The current system of leaving the introduction to the municipalities has created variation in the procedures and standards from one area to the next.

The two first years after arrival, one has ended at the office for social welfare (*Socialkontoret*) in the municipalities and not at the Labour Market Board (AMS). They have not had the same focus on work and have not had the same quality. They have received second class service (Civil servant, Integration Board).

The importance of the initial contact with the labour market and the qualification or introduction programs were stressed by the informants. The Social Democratic Party also found this period to be crucial and in the fall 2006 suggested a series of measures as part of their election campaign. One of the initiatives had already been put to the test: In some municipalities, the Labour Market Board had shared the responsibility for the introduction with the local authorities. These tests had not yet been evaluated (Socialdemokraterna.se 01.09.2006).

Other suggestions included improving the language training (*sfi*), an expansion of special introductory employment programs (*prova på platser*). Other measures resembled the whip and carrot mentality of the rival social liberals. One of these was to make the payment of compensation for introduction program dependent on actual participation (*introduktionsersättning*). Finally a range of initiatives were suggested that included support for those that wanted to set up businesses as well as measures against discrimination.

Normative elements

The normative backdrop of this position is related to the social democratic traditional norms. These include equal rights and minimum economic and social distance between those at the top and those at the bottom of society.

One of the representatives of the largest labour union (LO) held that they agreed with Sabuni and the 2006 centre-right government on the main principles of their integration policy. The goals were the same. What set them apart were their suggestions for how to get there (*vägen dit*). The centre-right government's policy included a slight deregulation of the labour market in order to ease the entrance for those outside the workforce. The social democratic position had problems with accepting measures that would weaken the protection of workers rights. The reduction in the work related unemployment allowance (*arbetslöshetskassan*) was one such example. Their spokesperson on the issues of integration put it this way in a newspaper article:

The intellectual core of the Right lead government's labor market policy was to increase the wage differences. And that leads us to the obvious: If you make

life sufficiently bad for the unemployed, the result is fewer in that category (Östros and Astadillo, DN debatt 24.06.2007).

Ideal situation

Seen from this perspective the ideal situation is one where integration marks a two-way process – one of reciprocity. Instead of being two different entities, people of Swedish and foreign backgrounds form a third entity – the new Sweden.

Some critics stated that the reality had been different since 1997. The process has been one sided, one of assimilation.

A society based on diversity rises the question what this concept means. If it is used as a normative ideal, one is reminded of the apparent contradiction between seeking to encourage difference and equality at the same time.

Taboo topics

Culture and cultural differences are not politically correct to talk about. Some informants stated that this still was a topic backstage – in the backstage of the trade, as one put it, for example among the big organizations of the labour market.

Groups are another problematic topic for the social democratic debaters. While not having a strong ideological basis for pointing to the individual, talking about integration and groups in the same sentence make people in this discourse hear the ice crack under their feet.

Actors and arenas

The main actor in this discourse over the past ten years has been the Social Democratic Party and the governments they have been heading. In support roles we have found the labour unions. In the research field, some informants place CEIFO and the Stockholm University within this realm because of their understanding of integration and plurality. Whether this is correct, lies beyond our study to answer.

Public documents like green and white papers have been central forums for the presentation of this position. Likewise have the media and the press.

This has been the dominating view of how integration should be achieved. The new integration policy from 1997 gathered close to a cross party consensus. It was only later that the critical comments came regarding the failure of the crucial introduction and the lack of real change from the previous immigrant policy.

Peak period

The immigrant policy from the mid 1970s gathered a broad consensus among both political parties and the population. The criticism came at the mid 1990s forcing the change to the integration policy in 1997. If it is possible to talk of a peak period for the integration policy, it has to be a short phase after it was launched. Soon it was attacked from several sides as we have seen.

View on others

From this point of view, we saw that the suggestions from the current government were hard to swallow, although they agreed on the goals. At the same time, the position of structural discrimination was rendered too extreme.

Now it is trendy to hold that discrimination is the only relevant explanation of labour market integration. But that is way too one-sided. It is like a pendulum that has swung back too far. From blaming the immigrants in the 1980s and 1990s, it has moved to far in the direction of discrimination today (Informant public organization).

It is difficult to get a grip on the social democratic view of parts of the other discourses. For example on how they see those that been critical of practices and opinions of the foreign born population.

Their opinion on the extreme right party – the Sweden Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna*) – was easier to follow. Moving away from a non-confrontation policy, Mona Sahlin met the leader of this much debated but marginal party on public television (SVT 19. April 2007). This helped push the Sweden Democrats into the limelight of public discussion on integration. Over the next few pages, we will discuss the possibility of a fourth discourse or position on the issue of integration.

More than three positions?

In chapter 2 we started a discussion on whether there is another strong position in the Swedish debate on labour market integration, that of *assimilation*. Here we will argue that this position can be included in the analysis, although it is not a position with a strong open backing. We will also discuss a second position that includes voices which have pointed to challenges within immigrant communities. This we have tentatively labelled a «critical humanist position». Although these two sets of actors stand far apart politically, they have similar opinions on a handful issues.

In Norway this phenomenon is well known. In public debates on issues like genital mutilation, the use of hijab or forced marriages, the right wing

Progress Party (*Fremskrittspartiet*) is seated next to feminists and left wing defenders of individual human rights. Using similar arguments, the parties of this «unholy alliance» have completely opposite positions on most other issues. Their arguments also stem from different ideological and normative foundations.

Including these two sets of critical voices may elicit reactions. There are two reasons for this. The first reason is that by giving the far-right parties a place in the report, some would argue that this would thereby legitimize their position. The second is discussing the critical humanist position in the under the same heading as the far-right parties.

The first critical point is easier to fend off than the second. In a study of the discourses on integration in Sweden, it is necessary to include the far right parties. They, and lately particularly the Sweden Democrats, have come to represent what the other positions do not wish to be associated with. They *are* what the more or less politically correct parties and other actors *are not*. As a negative point of reference they are important in this study although they are not represented in Parliament or can show high ratings on a national level. Lately they have also produced a program of immigration policy and their leader has been given access to the national media.

The second critical point is harder to defend. On a few issues those critical of the situation within immigrant communities coincide with others that are explicitly critical – i.e. the far right. At the same time, Minister of integration Sabuni and others in the social liberal camp have also raised their voice on issues of honour related violence and forced genital mutilation. The difficulty of placing the critical voices within the rigid frame of analysis suggests that their position inside or outside the scheme will wait until the end of the chapter.

A point has to be made here. The problems we face when being asked to map and categorize the discourses on integration in this study, tell us something about the constitution of the Swedish debate. The assimilation position is supposedly weak and those critical of immigrant communities are marginalized.

Our solution to these challenges is to first give a short account of the view of the Swedish Democrat Party. Thereafter we present the critical position in a few lines before we discuss where it should be placed.

The Sweden Democrats

This political party has roots on the far right in Swedish politics and has been associated with nationalism. Immigration policy is central to their profile. As of 2007 they seek to take on a role as a legit contender on the national political scene. In the local elections in 2002 the Party won 49 seats. Four years later the number was 282 (Widfeldt 2007). In other words, they saw a sharp increase in representation. The Progress Party in Norway and the Danish People's Party in Denmark are regarded as models, and the contact with the latter

is recurrent. During 2006 and 2007 the Party was gradually and unwillingly seen by the other political parties as an actor they had to relate to.

The only organisations that have spoken openly about assimilation have been the Sweden Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna*) and other extreme right parties (Skånepartiet). For the former assimilation has not figured as a description of the what has actually been the (unintended) policy over the past ten years, like it did in the other discourses. Here assimilation in a strong sense is seen as the goal to pursue. It is the ideal state. Before we get to that, let us look at their definition of the problem in labour market integration.

The main problem is that we have received too many immigrants too quickly and from too far away. In the same period we have created way too few jobs. Those that come in many cases have poor or incomplete education. Together this creates unemployment and those that come, end up in weak positions in the labour market (Representative Sweden Democrats, March 2007).

The Party's key concept is assimilation which is seen as a one sided process in contrast to integration. Another is identity – Swedish identity. Again the representative:

We don't use the term integration because this indicates a mix of two entities. That both parties shall adapt. We disagree with that. The Swedes shall not give up their way of living just because some people have immigrated. But we are for assimilation – for a one sided adaptation from them.

We have already seen that the Party holds as causes for the problem of low participation rates and unemployment. Do they blame the immigrants themselves? Setting out on our fieldwork, we believed the Party did blame «them». So did Mona Sahlin, leader of the Social Democrats in her TV debate with the Party's leader (SVT 19. April 2007). Instead he blamed her and her Party's policy over the past fifteen years. In our contact with the Party we have not gotten a clear answer to this question. The politicians are pointed to as the guilty ones, to the extent it is meaningful to use these terms. On a question about possible cultural differences in the labour market, we got close:

Yes, sometimes cultural differences may have an effect in the labour market. For example one will find fewer women working from certain countries because their husbands do not want them to work (Representative Sweden Democrats March 2007).

Radical measures are suggested to achieve assimilation. The policy is to be styled after the assimilation policy that was dominant before 1975. This means dropping all support for immigrant organizations and increasing the focus on «Swedish» traditions, values and history (Sweden Democrats – Handlingsprogram 07.03.2007:6).

Normative elements would include the importance of «saving the Swedish identity and way of life». The ideal state is said to be a situation where immigrants have adapted to the Swedish way of life and do not stand out. As our informant from the party said; «Isn't this exactly what one calls integration in the labour market? Doesn't well integrated really mean assimilated?»

There are not many taboo topics seen from this perspective. The representatives from the Sweden Democrats have their full share of blaming the other positions for being politically correct and not dear to talk openly about difficulties in the field of integration. What they avoid talking about is race and other issues connected to what many claim to be dubious nationalist roots. Unlike other positions, they do not shy away from talking about religion. Here they point to the core position of the church in the Swedish society.

If a peak period for this position was to be identified, many in Sweden would say that the peak probably has not come yet. Several politicians have predicted that unless something is done, and the challenge met head on, this party will enter Parliament after the next election. Many associate the Sweden Democrats with a party called «New Democracy» (Ny Demokrati). This party had its peak period on the early nineties riding a wave of a critical immigrant agenda.

The Party's view on discrimination and the Kamali inquiry did not stand particularly far apart from some of the other voices in the field:

I believe strongly that discrimination exists. It is despicable. But I still mean that the phenomenon is not as widespread as the last inquiry states. The concept of structural discrimination is unclear (*flummigt*). They write a lot about how discrimination is experienced and not about how widespread it really is (Representative Sweden Democrats, March 2007).

A critical humanist position

Some voices have been raised in Sweden that point to dysfunctions within immigrant communities (among these we find Carlbom 2003, Demirbag-Steen 2006 and Rasool Awla 2006). Although these people have been critical to tendencies of isolation, self chosen exclusion, religious practices, segregation and high rates of unemployment, they have done so with a different motivation than the far right parties.

It is as if they say that «look at these problems – only by exposing them to all can we start changing them». The motivation in other words seems to be «to the best of the immigrant population». At the next stage handling these challenges properly will benefit all people living in Sweden. For example it could help to avoid reactions like Islamic extremism.

For the far right party, the main consideration appears to be the best interest of Sweden and the native Swedes. Not exposing or talking about the challenges within the immigrant communities may increase the segregation and threaten the cohesion of the society, according to that position.

If we return to one of the humanist critical voices, one of these sees the unemployment in places like the Rosengård suburb to Malmö as a major problem. Here 60 to 80 percent live without work, depending on which numbers one uses, according to our informants. This unemployment threatens the cohesion of the families. The causes of this are complex but do not solely point to the public and local policies. The attitude and traditions of certain immigrant groups also play a part. The so called Swedish political correctness on this issue is something we will return to in the next chapter.

In Sweden one cannot say openly that immigrants may have responsibility for a lack of integration. One cannot say that they are themselves partly to blame for their exclusion (*att utestängningen er deres eget fel*). I mean it is no secret that many Muslims want to work, but do not want to be integrated (Informant March 2007).

Chapter summary

To sum up this chapter, we would like to reintroduce the scheme from chapter 2. Here four discourses were listed according to a series of characteristics – definitions of the problem, causes, etc. A problem here is that the fourth position – that of assimilation or immigrant critical points of view – had still not been affirmed a place in the highly simplified table.

Our solution to this is to include the Sweden Democrat version of this dual position in the table, given the premises described above. We will then comment on where to place the critical stance at the very end. For now the scheme is set like table 2.

Table 2. Discourses of labour market integration in Sweden. A framework for analysis.

	ID1 Assimilation	ID2 Social Liberal	ID3 Social Dem.	ID4 Structural Discrimination	Comments
Definition of problem	Poor migration management, segregation	Failed integration policy, segregated Sweden, unemployment, exclusion	Low participation, unemployment, introduction, validation	Structural discrimination, exclusion, segregation	Integration policy not implemented, segregation
Key Concepts	Assimilation, National identity	Empowerment, deregulation, individual choice, work, excessive care	Diversity, integration	Structural discrimination, othering, racialisation	ID1 positive view of majority, ID4 negative. Content of diversity is unclear
Causes	Excessive immigration, Poor labour policies	Labour market, policy, plus characteristics on both «supply» and «demand» side	«Us» and «them», introduction, language courses, settlement policies	«Us and «them», integration policy has been assimilation in disguise	Variation in width of causes, some see all factors, others focus. All critical of earlier policies
Measures	Radical measures, «Swedification» of immigrants	Lower threshold for entry, general measures, «mainstreaming»	Improved first contact, employment programmes	Institutional change, a version of affirmative action, focus on introduction	All want equality and not difference, but not for the same reasons
Normative elements	One sided adaptation. Supremacy of native way of life	See all persons as individuals, not all diversity is good.	Equal rights, minimal difference	Equal opportunities, equal outcomes, equal worth of all. Not blaming the victim.	Who should change? Majority or minorities? Continuum
Ideal situations	No difference between former separate entities, continuation of past monoculture	All individuals same opportunities, self sufficiency	Two way integration, unclear on content of diversity	Group identity should only be relevant when chosen by the individual	All for equality, but with varying accompanying difference
Taboo issues	Race, racism, advantages of immigration	Racism, advantages with focus on the group level, a tighter asylum policy	Cultural differences, groups, a tighter asylum policy	Groups, negative group characteristics, individual preferences	Afraid of talking about groups or not? What does one lose by not doing so?
Actors and arenas	Sweden Democrats, lately in media	Current centre-right government, national economists, Confederation of Swedish Enterprise (SN)	Social Democratic Party, Ceifo, traditional social engineers, national economists, labour unions	Green Party of Sweden (Mp) Lappalainen, Kamali, De los Reyes, ALI, Integration Board (2002-2004).	The two middle-positions agree on diagnosis and goals – disagrees on means
Peak period	1989-1991, 2006 -	Possibly 1975 – 1997, 2006-	1975-1999	2002-2006	Strong trends, pendulum movements?
View on others	They are politically correct, they fear being honest, structural discrimination too one-sided	Integration policy resulted in segregation, Structural discrimination too one-sided	Goals of soc.lib are ok. Their means are not. Ambivalent reg. struc. discr. Disagree on hist. causes + measures	They do not see the extent of discrimination, only «us» and «them» or «cost – benefit».	All talk softly about foreign born, but tough about the other positions
ANALYSIS 2	Reborn?	Current star	Regrouping	Peaked in 2006?	

In table 2 we have used the column to the right for key words comments. We will let these serve as appetizers for the discussion in the next chapter and in the final conclusions. In the following we will dig deeper into some of the underlying issues of the Swedish debate on integration and the labour market.

One comment has to be made right away, however. It is on the difference between the *assimilation* and *structural discrimination* discourses in table 2. They both see segregation or a divided society as the major challenge, but they point their fingers in opposite directions. The adherents of assimilation point to the immigrant population and say: «You have to change». The other outer position points to the majority population and say: «You have to change». If we hold on to the illustration, we could estimate how the two parties would continue their sentences. According to the *assimilation* discourse, it would be something like: «You have to change... and become like us». The structural discrimination discourse is harder to guess, but an attempt could be made: «You have to change... so that a new and equal «we» can evolve».

We promised also to comment on the positioning of the *critical humanist discourse*. The discussions led by Minister Sabuni of the current government and her Party colleague Rojas indicate that there may be room for this position within the social liberal category. However, once religion and religious based practices are discussed and criticised, there would perhaps no longer be room within this discourse either. The question of placement of the *critical humanist discourse* remains unsolved.

As we have noted earlier, the need to cramp an important position into a rigid scheme may indicate that the categories are wrong. In a sense, though, these kinds of typologies always involve a drastic reduction of complexity. From our point of view the upside to forcing the reality into table 2 has stimulated the analysis and brought about new questions.

Looking for characteristics that separate those participating in the debate on labour market integration may obstruct an analysis of the broader discourse on this topic. In the next chapter we will focus on a list of themes that have surfaced during our contact with the field in Sweden.

Beyond «us» and «them»

Questions about integration on the labour market invariably leads into questions about the kind of society newcomers shall be integrated into as well as the actual and presumed impact of immigration upon existing policies, procedures and national self-image. Although the scope of this study is restricted to immigrants' participation on the Swedish labour market, both oral and written data touches upon the same range of problems that we find the international debate on «multiculturalism». Under this heading the scholarly debate covers every thinkable aspects of the relationship between majorities and minorities (from indigenous peoples to new immigrants) in democratic, liberal states. Just to mention a few common features in the general debate in Western world since WWII:

As outlined in the international conventions on Human Rights, the basic principle is the right to be different without losing any right as citizen. This induces firstly, a firm stand against discrimination and racism. Europe's experience with Nazism is always present in this debate, whether explicit or not. Secondly, there are pervasive efforts to define the common denominator in «multicultural» or «diverse societies» (e.g. Joppke & Lukes (eds.) 1999; Kymlicka & Norman (eds.), 2000). Clearly, for democracy to work, the citizens must participate, and also develop some measure of «constitutional patriotism» (Habermas 1994). A third topic of common concern is the gender issue, the human rights of minority women and worries about undemocratic minorities (e.g. Moller and Okin, 1997; Eisenberg & Spinner-Halev, 2005). Accordingly, the basic challenge is to balance the rights of minorities in terms of protection from a dominant majority against the rights of majorities to define the premises for inclusion, procedures and standards of conduct. (e.g. Borchgrevink and Brochman, 2003). And at the practical/political level, questions about how best to promote inclusion – by ignoring difference or by designing specific measures to overcome them – is a recurrent issue.

It can come as no surprise that concerns of this nature form the backdrop in the Swedish debate neither can the impression that they are not easily harmonized: Dilemmas abound in this field of scientific enquiry and politics, and the theoretical and political complexity of this debate seems endless. Still,

what it all boils down to are issues of everybody's concern; questions about inclusion, fairness and the future of society. Another feature in the Swedish debate is also recognisable; participating in this debate, whether as a scholar, a civil servant, a politician or a concerned citizen, is risky business. The debate is tense, often noisy and sometimes unpleasant. For instance, it is difficult to prevent even a relatively modest observation from being interpreted as a normative statement, whether morally correct or suspect. But while this characteristic tangle of fundamental principles, politics and ethics is present as a sounding board in these discussions wherever they take place, each country finds its own tone.

The topic in this chapter is an account of our impressions of the Swedish way of navigating in these waters. The effort entails a change of focus, from comparing the various discourses to attending to certain similarities in the over-all approach to integration. From this perspective a different demarcation line is brought into focus; between a set of propositions which constitutes quite a firm consensus on the one hand, and on the other hand, a set of ideas that are deemed irrelevant, unnecessary and/or inappropriate to bring to the fore.

What we find is that in contemporary Sweden, the current approach is to emphasise equal rights and opportunities and to dismiss the impact of any kind of variation from the ordinary (as seen from a majority point of view) as immaterial to the integration project. The main tendency in the general effort to reach beyond «us» and «them» is to diminish barriers to inclusion by under-communicating difference. Some few voices, however, persists in drawing attention to «improper» themes. And while they may do so for completely different reasons and with widely different aims in sight, they are helpful in pointing out some of the elements which structure the discourse and give to the Swedish debate its unique flavour, at least in a Scandinavian context.

Notions of Diversity

The Swedish language has two words for expressing sociological diversity: *mångkultur* and *mångfald*. *Multiculture* and *diversity* seems to be as close as we can get to an English version. Naturally, we wanted to know whether the concepts have different meanings, and we did make some efforts to trace the distinction between them in terms of usage: to understand whether they refer to different empirical phenomena or to different vision of an ideal future; whether they are applied descriptively or normatively. Asking for guidance, one respondent commented that

Due to a perpetual fight over definitions, multiculturalism was exchanged for diversity. But this is a loose concept. It may mean anything.

The suggestion is that the two concepts carry approximately the same meaning and are used interchangeably. And yet, we are stuck with the impression that the difference is not trivial and that if we are not paying attention we will be missing out on something important to the over-all debate. For instance, it seems to us that by choosing one or the other the speaker leaves a comprehensive message about her/his position within the grand integration scheme; that each concept signifies a different but full fledged diagnosis of the situation. Perhaps *multiculturalism* and *diversity* denote two incompatible sets of politically and normatively potent ideas about who «they» are, who «we» are and who «I» am, all in one fell swoop. In that case, if the two concepts are actually perceived as mutually exclusive it may explain a second impression; in this particular debate, words are chosen with extreme caution.

Another challenge to the effort of understanding the Swedish debate is this: On the one hand, 2006 was designated as the year of multiculturalism (*mångkulturåret*) in Sweden. On the other hand, the experience from the present study, conducted in the early months of 2007, is that most of our respondents firmly evaded questions about *culture*. But if «culture» is such a non-starter, why does Sweden celebrate multiculturalism? It could be that there is a vision embedded in this seeming self-contradiction - something in the vein of a «multiculturalism without culture»? (Phillips 2007).

It seems like a paradox, but to resolve it one should be better versed in this «perpetual fight over definitions» in Sweden than we are. What we do comprehend, however, is that two different notions of «culture» are applied here; one is welcome, the other more like an embarrassment. And in this case we are approaching one of the bitter quarrels underlying the academic debate, the application of the concept of culture. However, in the comfortable version above culture is appreciated in terms of artistic images and performances; in plural, as in «multiculture», the concept applies to aesthetic and culinary diversity. And by celebrating diversity in costumes, foods and artistic expression multiculturalism is turned into something colourful, entertaining, pretty and tasty. In this sense multiculturalism enriches the domestic scene, and the concept is non-controversial.

But then there is the second definition, by which the same word – culture – designates a (more or less) stable, never-changing life world, internally coherent and with distinct boundaries: Beliefs and practices are merged into a coherent whole with an inherent and unique rationality. This is a life-world which must be understood and respected according to its own premises and which is worthy of preservation for its own sake and for the sake of the well being of its members.

Tangent upon the classical anthropological usage, this concept of culture has become controversial within most academic disciplines, including social anthropology itself. There is a vast debate here which we cannot enter. But it

is fair to mention a few of several weighty arguments against using the concept in this sense:

Firstly, since human life forms are changeable, due to porous boundaries and internal contradictions, the concept is empirically invalid. Secondly, in the case that the concept of culture *is* empirically justifiable, the very usage, particularly in terms respect and protection, will bar its members from other ways of living. And, surely, if a given culture is incompatible with principles of equality and democracy, it does indeed present a challenge to «multicultural» society in the contemporary sense. The French philosopher Alain Finkielkraut, who detests the idea of cultural relativism, has a name for this respect for culture, which he calls a «greedy mother»: This leaving members of a given culture to its own devices is a «generous betrayal» of the rights of the individual (Finkielkraut, 1994). Adam Kuper's objection is even stronger. Himself an anthropologist, his proposition is that the concept of culture paves the way to Apartheid, i.e. political racism. (Kuper, 1999). To him, the concept is the ultimate trick to separate «them» from «us» and make «them» appear less humane, less valuable.

In a certain sense, this is an extreme point of view. A sober, scientific position would be that the whole issue is an empirical question, and that explaining a certain «culture» is not a normative activity. But anthropologists for instance, working in diverse societies know very well that a mere description of a way of life deviating from the ordinary may trigger abuse and be used for political purposes. But what is also well known is the fact that there are cases where a detailed understanding of a way of life is a means to bring about changes that are necessary in terms of inclusion

We cannot solve this problem; rather, we live in the middle of it. (Borchgrevink, 2003). But we believe that the ambiguous meaning of «culture» is an underpinning in the Swedish debate, whether explicitly stated, or not. The very concept entails a fear of doing harm.

If the notion of culture suggests racism, if not by intent so by consequence, it makes good sense to replace any expression associated with culture. We take the following statement to be representative of the effort to overcome the pitfall:

Today people regret that they did not put equal rights before multiculturalism since what we want are rights, not a re-enforcement of «us» and «them». In the sense of experience, skills and competence the notion of diversity (*mångfald*) is OK. That way everyone is included, even the natives.

But still, the dilemma seems to remain. One respondent summarises:

It is something problematic about the entire field. The aims are diffuse – actually they are a bit schizophrenic: On the one hand one wants to provide everyone with the same rights and opportunities; on the other hand diversity also entails this group-thinking. But still, one should not approach people with measures according to their group affiliation.

Perhaps schizophrenia *is* the name of the game.

Groups

Since Charles Taylor's seminal article «The Politics of Recognitions» (Taylor 1994) the notion of «groups» have been a turning point in the international debate on multiculturalism. The questions are for instance, whether cultural «roots», identities and religious affiliation is a private matter or should be publicly recognised in terms of «group rights»; to what extent recognition must entail the right to self-determination, and if so, how to estimate the cost, both to individuals and to the larger society in the cases where a given group acts according to norms that are incompatible with majority standards of equal rights.

In the present debate, however, «group-thinking» is considered as the basic obstacle to integration: The means to get beyond «us» and «them» is equality; equal rights, -duties and -opportunities for everyone on an *individual* bases. Talk about groups, for instance in terms ethnicity, may even be misleading.

Exemplifying the irrelevance of ethnicity, nationality and religion a respondent with an Asian background remarked that he has more in common with people from middle-class Latin America than citizens with a national background similar to his own. In his view, the significant dimension is socio-economic class, particularly that of the parents. This is what decides whether the next generation is expected to acquire a university degree, or to work in the pizzeria.

As shown in a recent publication from the Ministry of Finance, Swedish statistics on immigrants' place of origin are based on broad regional criteria, as in the case of countries outside Europe: Asia, Africa, North and South America, i.e. no national designations (*Arbetsutbud och sysselsättning bland personer med utländsk bakgrund. Ds 2007:4*) One respondent explains the reasoning behind the classification scheme:

This approach is considered to guarantee maximum objectivity. One wants to avoid explanations in terms of culture, hence the less detailed the more objective. And also, the less detail the less risk of inspiring stigmatization. Statistics

based on county of origin may appear, but countries are never grouped according to religion. There is a brand of research, however, which emphasises this perspective, but it is marginal, and it is not welcome at the national level.

But the group-phenomenon won't lie down:

At the municipal level there is an ongoing concern with religious and cultural explanations. For instance, there is a perpetual worry about immigrant's ignorance about norms of Swedish working life, about how to accommodate and assimilate this or that group of people into the job market. Furthermore, local bureaucrats, emphasise that for religious reasons certain people will not perform certain tasks or work with certain categories of people, and that people from country X is good at this or that kind of job while people from country Y will not touch it. They point to problems with gender equality, and that certain groups are less motivated for employment than others. But this is the kind of stuff that is preferably kept out of the political debate at the national level.

Another respondent is quite discouraged by the attitude among local bureaucrats. We venture to repeat an earlier statement:

When I visit the municipalities and they present their work, what they say is: look, we have received so many Iraqis, this or that number of Afghans, this many from...etc. etc. And I say: Why do you give me these figures? Why this emphasis on ethnicity? Why not education, training, craft, profession, work experience? This concern with ethnicity must be some sort of delayed reflex. They don't focus on qualifications, and that is the simple as well as the problematic truth about the whole issue.

The blame, however, belongs elsewhere:

Looking at the allocation letters, dispatches and memoranda (*regleringsbrev*) sent to those responsible for integration – schools, AMS, Integrationsverket etc. – it is easy to see that the aims are too lofty. They need to be reformulated and brought down-to-earth, made concrete. One must know what the obstacles are, and what is not.

Evidently, there is a discrepancy between the kind of information this civil servant at the national level wants – and what he receives at the local level. Rather, what the locals tell him is something he explicitly does not want to hear about. We do not know how it comes about that stating the number of Iraqis received appears to bar data on skills, education and work experience among the newcomers, but we are left with the impression that a certain

backwardness is suspected at this administrative level, an inertia of sorts which is considered an obstacle to integration in its own right. And there are several respondents pointing to the same discrepancy, for instance:

Current rhetoric accepts no «groups». But seemingly, this imperative has no consequences. «Groups» remain, e.g. in government documents/administrative publications.

This statement leaves the impression of a more general bureaucratic inertia; not just the locals but the entire range of civil servants is missing out on the political message. However, the respondent also finds that there are cases where the concept «group» is appropriate. Another one respondent states:

In Sweden it is difficult to discuss matters such as religion and culture; hence, this schism between local bureaucracy and national politics. When it comes to explaining obstacles to integration in terms of culture, the latter keeps quiet.

Undoubtedly, «groups» is a matter of great concern in this debate. But the picture emerging from the interviews is unclear, and it is difficult to pinpoint exactly what it is that trouble the respondents. Two problems are mentioned: There is too much talk about groups – and there is too little. As seen from the former perspective, locals disturb and confuse the task of integration by focusing on the collective background of newcomers. From the latter, the group-like character of these people are ignored when they should be attended to. And comparing what we are told about the positions taken up by the national and the local level respectively, a pattern takes shape where the representatives of the former «keeps quiet» about issues pressing on the minds of the latter. Moreover, if it is the case that the national/political aims are «too lofty» and that integration suffers from lack of precise recommendations – why this vehement refusal to listen to empirical details when they are presented from the level where integration is going to take place?

However, since we do not know the nature of the kind of specifications considered missing from the top, nor the concrete cases where information about «groups» are believed to be relevant, we need to be cautious.. In order not to take interpretations too far, we must keep in mind that there are two protagonists on this scene, there is «us» and there is «them». The request for specification may refer to problems created by the majority, for instance in terms of employers' reluctance to accept applicants with a foreign background. But obstacles to integration may also refer to lack of knowledge about those who arrive.

It appears that there are at least two ways of looking at «group-thinking». On the one hand, this phenomenon connotes a tendency in the majority to let pre-conceived ideas about foreigners stand in the way of integration. Hence, to avoid group-thinking is to promote integration. On the other hand «group-thinking» is not restricted to a more or less prejudiced majority. Even newcomers, the very object of integration policy, may think about themselves in these terms and act accordingly. And this phenomenon may represent an obstacle to integration in its own right. In that case a contradiction seems to surface: to make integration work it is necessary to think in terms of «groups» but it is impossible to say so.

Playing different tunes?

Our data are insufficient to say what causes this apparent schism between the national and the local level or to assess its impact on the integration effort. But the impression is of a rift in communication, and a certain friction, between the national and the municipal level and/or between politics and administration. Somehow we get the impression of two separate and parallel discourses taking place, suggesting that along the way from policy-making to implementation - and back, something occurs that disturbs communication. We were not quite prepared for this and have not focused on the recipient side of instructions from the top-level, nor have we attended to the interface itself between these two discourses, if that is what it amounts to. Accordingly, here is a dimension which is crucial to the achievement of the national goals and which merits considerable attention, but which in this presentation must be restricted to some tentative comments and questions.

At the outset, one is led to wonder what it is that maintains this (objectionable) focus on groups in the face of explicit refusal at higher levels to acknowledge such phenomena. One suggestion is that separate spheres of experience will produce different agendas: At the national level the effort is to outline what *ought to be* and to legislate in order to make that vision feasible. At the local level the task is to deal with what *is* and to secure language training, accommodation and job opportunities to a vast variety of persons with different family situations, educational backgrounds and traumatic experiences, as the case may be. And it is not hard to imagine how practical worries about how to make the implementation of national policy a success may turn anyone in this position into a keen observant of every possible reason for *failure*. Hence, there could be two different sources to an obsession with (improper) details at the municipal level.

On the one hand, it is not all that hard to imagine how responsibility for the practical outcome of the national integration policy may weigh so heavily at the municipal level that a resort to the most striking and ready-made classification schemes may appear tempting; a time-saving device, perhaps, or as a

self-protecting measure: People from this or that country, ethnicity, culture or religion is known to be difficult to include, and don't blame us.

On the other hand, from this position, observations may be forthcoming which are empirically detailed to the extent of being too close for national comfort, so to speak – while at the same time crucial to the integration process. The ability to deal with obstacles to integration on the labour market may in some cases require knowledge about culturally related preferences and duties, such as distinctive patterns of family- and household organisation, religiously prescribed division of labour between the sexes, as well as perceptions of work, in the Protestant sense. In our experience issues of this nature can have a bearing on the task of promoting inclusion even into the seemingly neutral and pragmatic sphere of wage labour. This being the case, by rejecting everything that smacks of «group-thinking» policy makers may bar their own access to empirically based information about obstacles to equal rights and opportunities.

When group matters

One way of describing the task delegated to the local level could be something like this: deconstruct the group-like background of newcomers; perceive them as individuals and re-assign them to another set of groups according to their abilities as self-sustaining entities in the Swedish context: the educated and the non-educated, the professionals and illiterates, grown-ups, elderly, children. The assignment to one or more of the latter groups is non-controversial in the Swedish context and, to venture a trivial observation, the notion of «group» is unavoidable. Likewise, the kind of «group» one has in mind when dismissing «group-thinking» appears self-evident, the content is easily recognizable all over Scandinavia: Collectives based on ethnicity, culture, religion, i.e. characteristics of coherent differences from the native population pertaining to immigrants from non-Nordic countries after WW II. The feature which seems unique to the Swedish debate is the persistent and repeated emphasis on how even the mentioning of diversity in terms of groups will re-enforce the divide between «us» and «them», and consequently undermine the kind of society Sweden is, or wants to be.

Thus, while the elements in this over-reaching discourse are easily recognizable from the outside, the emerging configuration is still difficult to come to grips with. For instance, we have noted a most influential politician declaring herself in favour of cultural diversity while at the same time being strictly censorious of group-thinking. To learn how to reconcile these positions, we had hoped to make an interview. Not successful, however, all we can offer is

the suggestion that the apparent self-contradiction illustrates a whole tangle of dilemmas. And that the dilemmas are not made in Sweden.

The following comments are restricted to two kinds of groups, both touched upon in the interviews, although reluctantly in both cases.

Firstly, there are groups the membership of which is innate and/or self-ascribed; belonging contributes to the shaping of a «collective identity» that one cherish and either one is not interested in replacing it for some other «identity», or leaving the group appears impossible for some reason. Whether boundary management and the internal dynamics of such a collective are relevant to integration is an empirical question. Religion is one pertinent example. But also, there are groups which exist primarily in the eyes of non-members. The case in point is citizens with a dark complexion. And while black is beautiful, the advantages in terms of inclusion are few indeed.

Religion

This topic did not turn up by itself. We had to ask. The situation, according to one respondent, is this:

Religion has never been an important issue in the Swedish debate. Every now and then some items turn up, such as physical education in the public school system, and whether requests for exception should be granted. And there have been some isolated extremists objecting to the building of mosques. But the topic soon abates, it amounts to nothing.

There is one exception to this rather firm disinterest in religion. The respondent is concerned with a pattern emerging from the impact of religious dogma on gender relations, and he points to a link between employment and family solidarity which should not be ignored.

As in the case of mainstream Islam, he explains, conditions on the labour market are filtered through a system of belief upholding inviolable dogma as to the sexual division of labour: Men are the bread-winners, and an earning woman is only acceptable if there is no husband and no male family member to maintain her and the children. Accordingly, unemployment among Muslim men and religious leaders in particular, is detrimental to male self-esteem in their capacity as the theologically appointed head of households. Whether the wife is the sole breadwinner, or she is the recipient of welfare benefits on behalf of herself and the children, she is in control of family-funds. This constellation plays havoc with the power relations within the family, and is not beneficial to any of its members (however the change may be celebrated by native feminists) In his experience:

The families are falling apart.

Furthermore, and for similar reasons, women are held isolated at home, to the extent that they «hardly know that they are in Sweden». In order to reach those women with suggestions of participation, there seem to be no way around religion. In such cases religion matters, and will not go away even if ever so politely ignored. Notably, the challenge to navigate in these waters belongs with bureaucracy at the local level.

But then it is also the fact that Islam is practiced in a multitude of ways, and the number of non-practicing or secular Muslims is anyone's guess. By approaching the latter in terms of «Muslims» one runs the risk of committing the reverse error of anticipating obstacles to integration where there are none. Consequently, sometimes highly relevant, sometimes immaterial, religion is an ambiguous category, and the actual impact of faith is a matter not so much of assumption as of knowledge.

At this point an interesting question crops up: Why has religion become such a crucial part of the integration debate in Denmark and Norway while the issue is almost non-existent in the public debate in Sweden? One suggestion is that religion is in fact more important to immigrants specific to the former countries, including the strength of trans-national ties to denominations in the country of (parental) origin. A second possibility is that the difference refers to the relative position of Christianity in the make-up of national identities in Denmark and Norway as compared to Sweden where this aspect of the national tradition is subdued or absent. Or perhaps the difference is due to the way in which participants in the respective public debates are sanctioned for bringing up the issue in the first place?

Colour

Even more ambiguous is the categorising of people according to the colour of their skin. On the one hand, citizens with a darker shade than the majority does not correspond to any specific ethnic or religious background or affiliation, and the notion of race in its presumed biological *cum* cultural sense is declared null and void. The sensible approach to the issue, which is also the official Swedish approach, is to consider colour irrelevant to the appraisal of an individual. Moreover, as one respondent commented:

It is not permitted to talk about «visible minorities» in Sweden.

But when we posed the question whether some citizens meet with greater obstacles on the labour market than others, a serious concern did in fact emerge: A pattern exists showing that increasing distance from Europe corresponds to an increasing risk of unemployment. And farthest away is Africa. In plain language; the darker the skin, the greater the likelihood of marginalisation.

This being the case, complexion may be crucial to a person's life-chances, «black» equals poverty. And poverty is real enough.

A ban on talking about people in terms of skin colour means a ban on judging people by such criteria, and defying the prohibition spells prejudice. Everybody knows that, not only in Sweden. Still, colour seems to matter. Dark complexion designates a «group», probably with a flexible boundary, which is not a group in any other sense than in the eyes of a beholder of native extraction. The group has no official name, yet «membership» may imply a difficult time in Sweden.

We are not in a position to judge the extent of discrimination based on colour, but in terms of access to the labour market the interviews make it clear that colour is indeed an issue. But whether the making of this category statistically visible would remedy the situation, is till an open-ended question. Silence may still be a preferable approach, in the sense of not adding to stigmatisation.

Among our respondents there are several who at first sight will not be thought of as someone descending from a little red cottage in Värmland. And speaking from positions which would hardly have been accessible if Sweden had been pervaded by racism, they firmly refuse «group-thinking». At the same time, they share an acute awareness as to the prevalence of negative discrimination on the labour market, pointing out how, whether based on skin colour and/or an unusual name this is illegal – and yet it is very difficult to prove in court. A current theme among top bureaucrats in several influential organisations is precisely this concern with the fact that legal complaints of this nature are so few and that convictions are extremely rare. But then, this phenomenon may also serve to prove that discrimination is as good as non-existent. This view appears to have been prevalent among employers, and recently, it is the position taken up by the *Sweden Democrats*.

A basic problem with the concept of «group» seems to be uncertainty about how to distinguish between contexts. Under what circumstances is the notion helpful to the promotion of integration, and when is it irrelevant or outright misleading? This uncertainty may stem from some political irresolution about whether diversity is an aim in itself or if it is just a step on the road to social order which for all practical purposes is a homogeneous society. In the latter case there is not much difference between integration policy and assimilation. It is not for us to say, but it seems clear that raising issues of some group-like character is never considered normatively neutral, never innocent. On the one hand, one cannot help being impressed with the over-all approach in this debate, this sober and sensible emphasis on work experience, skills and education. On the other hand, this firm refusal to think and act in terms of groups, as if a stigma or something impure remains a puzzle.

To return to this seeming discrepancy between political *versus* administrative- or central *versus* local perceptions, there are two final points worth considering.

Firstly, there is this impression that the overreaching integration debate is composed of two rather different «discourses». Simply put: On the one hand, the insistence that successful integration depends on ignoring particular characteristics – on the other hand, the conviction that success may depend on paying attention to precisely such aspects. The discrepancy may be due to the parties' talking at cross-purpose; to some misunderstanding of each other's concerns, or else to a profound disagreement on how to get the job done. To what extent the encounter between the positions is also infused with mutual suspicion and devaluation of each other's competence and morality, is another question which must stay open-ended.

The second point is obvious. Taken together, the two discourses are intimately united; crisscrossing levels and organisations and involving an (to us) unknown number of personnel they are mutually, some would say *structurally*, interdependent. Combined they represent the key to success or failure. Let us say, and not only for the sake of argument, that both sets of concerns are legitimate. In that case the question is; what is it that obstructs the pathway between them? Or, if there is a missing link of sorts, is it organisational or ideological?

For what is worth, having been involved in the Norwegian debate on related issues for years, we recognize a distinctive configuration: The debate is constructed as a *zero-sum*; if one side is right, the other must be wrong. Moreover, whatever it is that makes it so difficult to acknowledge the merit of both perspectives, the fissure between them suggests a gap into which all kinds of native discontent may be poured.

Still, there are important differences between the national debates; the difference is recognizable as a difference in emphasis and also as a most striking difference in tone. One respondent contrasts the situation in Sweden to that in Denmark and Norway and states that the kind of division into countries and cultures common to the neighbouring countries would be «difficult to defend» in Sweden; in fact it would be considered «unacceptable». And from several respondents we get the impression of a profound discomfort at the aggressive attention directed at minority cultures, from the extreme political right in Denmark and Norway.

Relatively speaking the *Sweden Democrats* is a modest phenomenon as compared to the influence and size of the Danish People's Party and the Norwegian Progressive Party respectively. This amazing fact has inspired much questioning among Scandinavian academics. But what this study has brought to mind is that even though the assertion (being it «structuralist» or «post-modernist») that the empirical world is a linguistic invention is a bit hard to stomach, it is still the case that language matters. Perhaps the Swedish ap-

proach will prove that by avoiding the mentioning of systematic differences among the established and the newcomers as well as among the newcomers themselves, one manages to keep the lid on popular frustration and prejudice? And subsequently both will disappear from sheer lack of oxygen? But even then the question remains; how to deal with difference that is not the product of native ignorance and prejudice – and which bars the individual's access to the Swedish mainstream?

A delicate balance

During quite a number of years, a very similar reluctance - some called it a *taboo* – existed in Norway upon mentioning culture, religion or country of origin in connection with any kind of problems pointing to immigrants or their offspring. One instance was professionals working with or within public child care institutions who observed that certain countries of origin occurred more frequently as family background for young people in trouble. But this knowledge was not put on record. The reason given: Criticism of immigrants and/or minority conduct was registered as a sign of racism, at least indirectly by inspiring racism in the already prejudiced majority. The argument in favour of lifting this *taboo*, however, was that it made it almost impossible to develop adequate measures to help the families and to remedy the cause of trouble. But then again, the reverse side of that particular coin was brought up at a recent seminar at the Institute of social research: A social worker complained that in her type of job, one talked about nothing but culture, at the cost of perceiving the individual person. Obviously, whichever approach one chooses, the dilemma is still there.

However, if one accepts as a fact that different sets of habits and norms are not always easy to combine and furthermore, that some «differences» are mutually exclusive - the ultimate challenge comes to the fore when a certain set of norms are unsustainable from an ethical or legal point of view. The bottom line is the question – and range – of tolerance (or relativism if one prefers), and the whole series of concomitant issues, for instance: Is intervention in minority norms and conduct ethnocentric (or «eurocentric»), or is it the very restriction of universal rights to the majority which is ethnocentric?

A recent illustration to this rather painful confusion was presented by Swedish television relating a case of a young black boy's struggle to make Swedish authorities pay attention to the fact that he was severely and persistently beaten by his father. Since physical chastisement of children is illegal in Sweden, the question was why, in the face of the boy's evident misery, steps were not taken to protect the boy from his violent parent? Was it the case that the authorities in charge did not believe his story? Or were they prepared to

accept that since chastisement (*aga*) is normal in the parent's country of origin, they had no right to intervene? The most penetrating answer given in the program pointed to bureaucrats' fear of being called racist as the cause of this untenable situation: In order to protect their own hide they sacrificed the boy's rights under Swedish law.

To prevent the notion that the problem rested with one troubled and deviant father, the program included a protest demonstration attended by the father's compatriots on behalf of his/their rights as minorities to discipline their children according to tradition and in the way they saw as beneficial to the coming generation. (*SVT 2. Dokument innifrån: Det svenska sveket. 13/5 and 17/5 2007*).

It is difficult to see how the dilemmas emerging from this kind of tension can be solved to everybody's satisfaction. It is also difficult to see how one can overcome this kind of diversity, which is not a fantasy borne in the minds of intolerant Swedes, without paying some attention to culture, in this case in terms of notions of justice as well as property rights in one's own children. The question is, how does it come about that intervention on behalf of this boy evoked a fear of being called a racist?

The struggle for decency

In 2003 Aje Carlbom directed severe criticism towards the multiculturalist ideology which in his opinion characterised the Swedish debate, suggesting that multiculturalism is a system of political belief where the core value of which is that cultural difference enriches society. When one distances oneself from the values of this ideology, this is regarded as the evil act of a morally dubious actor and objections to this hegemonic perspective on cultural diversity entails the risk of being classified as racist.

To be described as a racist in contemporary Sweden often means that an individual may lose both his/her job and reputation.

Carlbon draws attention to an unintended consequence of this approach to integration:

The multiculturalist claim is that we should not reinforce the boundary between «us» and «them». But this is precisely what multiculturalism seems to do. It causes people to concentrate on difference rather than similarities among citizens (Carlbon 2003:61).

As seen from this point of view the receipt of a decent Swede seems to be something like this: Stay focused on difference and deny its impact. And Carlbom's message seems clear: Multiculturalism is a pitfall.

Carlbom's analysis represents a challenge to our own effort to come to grips with the debate, since during the years from 2003 to 2007 «multiculturalism» seems to have disappeared from the vocabulary, and the concept is explicitly criticised in several of the interviews. Taking Carlbom's observations at face value, his perspective points back to the initial questions in this chapter: What does the replacement of «multiculturalism» with «diversity» amount to? Does the conceptual change indicate a more profound change in the approach to cultural differences?

The focus in the present study is *discourse* – what people say – not what kind of notions people entertain in their innermost mind, and we cannot be sure. But adding to this replacement of concepts there is also the presentation of the integration project in terms of moving «beyond us and them». And this may indicate a break with this presumed sanctifying of cultural difference as something beneficial as per definition. However, the deeper understanding of what this struggle with words actually means must be left to the participants themselves. And what we cannot know is to what extent the fear of being called a racist still structures the debate. On the other hand, there are some indications that criticism of cultural- or religious practices is still understood as a racist attack on «them». On the other hand, we have noted that there are participants in the public debate who object to racism being defined in those terms. Further on we will substantiate the observation.

In a recent publication which compares the Swedish and the Danish integration debate we find a perception of the Swedish debate very similar to Carlbom's from 2003, the anthology *Bortom stereotypierna? Invandrare och integration i Danmark och Sverige* (Beyond the stereotypes? Immigrants and integration in Denmark and Sweden.) from 2006. In his essay «Divergence or convergence?», Ulf Hedetoft analyses the strikingly different approaches to the present topic in the two countries. He takes as his point of departure the breakdown of the previously intimate link between nation and state: The link is no longer self-evident and social cohesion has turned into a precarious issue. In every European national state a similar pressure is felt from the globally explosive link between ethnic pluralism, immigration, security interests and religious fundamentalism. From this common ground the schism has emerged between the Danish and the Swedish configuration.

We must leave out Hedetoft's critical comments on the Danish integration policy and -debate, which, according to him takes place within the context of a collective self-image of a (threatened) national homogeneity – and focus on his presentation of the Swedish model. We make a note, however, that he perceives Sweden as a typical instance of *multiculturalism*. And in a text dated 2006 this must come as a surprise to the Swedish reader, considering the long

standing efforts to get rid of that concept as a political term. It is not for us to say why he applies this term instead of *diversity*. Perhaps he has not captured the change in vocabulary, or he may think the conceptual change immaterial to what actually takes place. But the question in the present context is whether his analysis contributes to the understanding of the Swedish debate or not. In any case, the perspective from a neighbour is always interesting. A brief summary of his points:

Basically, multiculturalism is an ideological reformulation of the homogeneous European model of nationalism, in the context of the pressure which this model of identity construction have experienced during the last decades from increasing migration, cultural pluralism and increasing demands for political recognition from old and new minorities. A multicultural strategy – which must be kept separate from a multiculturally composed population in the sociological sense - is a political answer to the new challenges to the nation state. It is an attempt at internalising global threats to the national perception of the very forces of cohesion; to moderate the conditions for citizenship rights as well as the mode of its practices. In this way a multicultural strategy hopes to take the sting out of cultural diversity. The outcome, however, is a paradox: On the one hand, an explicitly announced integration strategy, on the other hand an attempt at depoliticising cultural diversity and boundary-conscious dichotomies. This creates a strained relationship between the idylized image of multiculturalism and its internal contradictions. And from this, he believes, stems the peculiarities of the Swedish debate, where an

«...atmosphere has developed characterised by a pent-up and often unexpressed tension between the elite and the citizens; between ideals and reality, between discourse and conduct». (Hedetoft 2006:399).

An example is the former Prime Minister Göran Persson's reaction to a survey showing the presence of animosity among natives towards citizens of a different belief or culture. The disappointing result was interpreted as a confirmation of the necessity and merit of multiculturalism – and not as an incentive to contemplate its contradictions, dubious functionality and normative evasions. To Hedetoft, it is hardly possible to take the «sting out of cultural diversity» by recommending more of the same.

But Hedetoft observes changes in the Swedish public debate in terms of more receptiveness to disagreement. (op.cit: 400). In passing we should note that the observation is confirmed by the contributors to the book itself. And also, to the extent that we have been able to follow the public debate, along with this tendency to polarise and to create hostile images of the opposition, we also find a distinct willingness to confront difficult empirical issues. Some examples:

In his book *Svenska tabun* (Swedish Taboos) Karl-Olov Arntsberg's asserts that the notions of «prejudice» and «racism» are effective obstacles to a free a critical search for knowledge. (Arntsberg 2007:194). He draws attention to Mauricio Rojas fate after having commented upon some Norwegian statistics on crime showing that a disproportionate number of immigrants from certain groups were involved. (Notably, the police did not want to publish the figures, in fear of being branded as racists). Rojas wrote that this crime rate could not be explained merely in terms of socioeconomic factors. His suggestion was that to explain this pattern, in addition to effects of discrimination and marginalisation, one should perhaps also take sociocultural inheritance into considerations. In the following debate Rojas was called racist and was accused of participating in the exercise of symbolic violence against immigrants. And then, Arntsberg writes, Rojas received «...the final kiss of death from the Swedish Democrat's chairman Jimmie Åkesson, wishing Rojas welcome as a party member. (op.cit:203-207).

The scenario is well known outside Sweden. This is precisely what has happened time and again at this uncomfortable interface between scholarship, politics and morality in Norway: At the outset – being it a critical approach to asocial conduct among people with immigrant background or to oppressive aspects of religious and/or cultural groups - the attempt triggers the accusation of racism from self-declared anti-racists. Invariably, the next step is a suffocating embrace from the nationalistic right wing. The effect is paralysing. And for a while it has barred the development of «special measures» aiming at incorporating categories of marginalised immigrants into the framework of equal rights, -duties and opportunities. What is the source of this verbal hostility? And why does it work? We have no answer, but we have made a note of a certain comment in the Government Proposition *Sweden, the future and multiculturalism/pluralism – from immigration politics to integration politics* (1997/98:6):

Referring to the final report from the 1990*s* Immigration Committee the Government draws attention to the presence of different and often contradicting definition of multiculturalism and multiculturalism (mångkultur och mångkulturell) and writes:

In Sweden these concepts frequently connotes something desirable, i.e. they are applied normatively. Several scientists choose to abstain from a normative usage and apply multiculturalism in a descriptive sense, to account for how a given society is composed in terms of its population. From such a description it does not follow how the state and society should relate to pluralism or which measures to implement – only that decisions are required and that invariably cultural diversity/multiculturalism must influence politics and practical measures» (op.cit:18).

Something must have happened to tip the balance of this concerned yet seemingly relaxed and empirically open-minded approach to the field. But whatever it was, some re-adjustment appears to be under way.

In an interview in *Dagens Nyheter* Minister of equality, Nyamko Sabuni, was asked what she intended to do about the oppressing violence stemming from notions of honour. She replied that regarding equality, honour-related violence is one of the most acute problems (*Dagens Nyheter* 8. March 2007). And in commemoration of the deaths of the two young women Pela and Fadime (e.g. Borchgrevink 2004, Swanberg 2002, Wikan 2003) in 1999 and 2002 respectively, an article in the same newspaper announced that «Loud cries about racism shall not prevent us from taking the side of young people exposed to conflicts about honour». The authors are prepared for the dual task of:

muting the extremists who exploit the situation: On the one hand those maintaining that the problem hardly exists and that we, who are involved on behalf of the young victims, are racists, i.e. the victims of cultural phobia. On the other hand, those saying that this is what you get if Sweden continues to receive immigrants.

They point out that:

...each time we who are working in the social services commit the error of mistaking honour related issues for ordinary teenager conflicts, we betray teenagers which may imply a threat to their lives.

The article concludes:

If the government will see to it that equality before the law is enforced and applied to the major problems in contemporary society, we in Stockholm will do our utmost to make sure that more children and young people will get the opportunity to enjoy the best that a life in Sweden can offer. (Ulf Kristersson & Kickis Åhré Algamo, *Dagens Nyheter*, 21.6 2007)

Pointing to the poor conditions for a free and critical debate, the merit of this text, as we understand it is twofold: The authors refuse to restrict universal rights to the majority, while the art of combining cultural pluralism and equality before the law is acknowledged as a trying empirical challenge.

In this debate, the ultimate confusion seems to occur when the extreme nationalist rights actually do have a point, being it human rights violation within religious or cultural groups, or suggestions to the effect that if integration into the labour market fails, it may strain the well-fare state beyond its financial capacity. One respondent:

You can't just say «open the border» or «close the border». It is not that easy. Poverty and unfairness makes unbounded generosity impossible, and we must acknowledge that what we have here is a welfare system which will collapse if we don't accept its limits [...] If we cannot discuss these things without paying attention to all kinds of difficulties with immigration and integration - not only those blaming the majority - without being branded as a racist, the Swedish Democrats will monopolise the difficult questions – and they will provide the easy solutions [...] Carlbom is right when he confronts this uncritically positive view on multiculturalism in the public debate in Sweden. Admittedly, however, my first reaction to his position was: How can he say such things!

Just for the record: Back in 1995 Dominique Schnapper said exactly the same about the French integration debate: If scholars evade the hard core issues, Le Pen will make the most of them.

Concluding remarks

Hedetoft concludes his discussion of the Swedish-Danish schism by pointing out that there is indeed a thematic convergence between the two in that both countries increasingly define the labour market as the crucial site of integration. And so is the case in Norway, we might add. But firstly, as the present study suggests, it is impossible to estimate the full impact of cultural diversity, conflicts and prejudice on participation in the labour market. Presumably no one will know till cultural and religious practices are understood on their own premises, and racially based discrimination is exposed in full. Secondly, it is difficult to say whether facing troublesome characteristics pertaining to minority habits and beliefs head on in the public debate – or playing them down - is more fruitful in terms of the ultimate aim: Inclusion. It seems that both approaches come at a price. However, the different national approaches to the objective should not hide the fact that every reasonably benevolent majority, government and civil and administrative sector is bent on making integration work while struggling with the same dilemmas.

One problem in this debate, and probably to the entire effort, is the tendency to get stuck with one-factor explanations: the cause of the problem is *either* the minorities/newcomers, *or* the majorities; either those incredibly different, obstinate and incompetent «them» - or the discriminating, ethnocentric and self-complacent «us». If one are looking for obstacles to the integration process, both are probably good candidates. But also, this inclination to look for trouble seems to hide the fact that things are moving fairly well; surprisingly well, in fact, all the pitfalls and mistakes taken into consideration. The present Swedish way of expressing the aims of integration policy in terms of moving *beyond us and them* is attractive. The question is how to get there.

Discussions and findings

In the previous chapters we presented four or five typical ways to frame and discuss labour market integration in Sweden. We also dived into the deeper waters of the core questions of integration like diversity (*mångfald*) and equal treatment (*likabehandling*).

There is a range of interesting topics that lie just outside this report. Perhaps the most important of these is the practical consequences of discourses that have dominated during certain periods. Another central theme is how the discourses influence each other. In Norway it has been claimed that the strict immigration policy of the far right Progress Party (*Fremskrittspartiet*) has gradually been adopted by the other parties. Certain discursive elements have travelled from the right to the centre and further across the political spectrum. It would be interesting to look for similar patterns in Sweden. But these and other topics lie outside the current study and will have to wait.

In this chapter we wish to present a list of selected findings. First, however, we would like to open a few puzzles we are left with after our analysis. Our intention here is to stimulate reflection and further debate, not to give definite answers.

What comes next?

The establishing of the Integration Board in 1997 signalled the start-up of integration policy in Sweden. In 2007 the same institution was closed down. The question is whether this marks the end of Swedish integration policy. If so, what comes next?

A few hints have been given in this report. The policy of the current centre-right government includes a focus on work and facilitating entrance into the labour market by enacting general measures and deregulating the market. Cutting the time between a person's arrival in Sweden and getting a paid job is another goal. This perpetuates some of the ambitions of the traditional integration policy.

If we can imagine a continuum beginning with assimilation policies and ending in multiculturalism, the interesting question is in which direction the policy will move over the next few years. An accent on assimilation will encourage similarity and unilateral adaptation. An accent on multiculturalism will encourage and preserve difference and multilateral adaptation. Some would say that assimilation in new forms is seeing a renaissance (Brown and Bean 2006).

If we focus solely on labour market integration, the continuum may seem irrelevant. As stated earlier, the issue is formulated as one of assimilation into the labour market. In practice, many of our informers held integration to be synonymous to assimilation in this particular area. Outsiders should be helped to become insiders, and once inside, enjoy equal pay as quickly as possible. That is the goal of the labour market policy. Yet we would hold that integration is still relevant. There has been and will be a need for flexibility by the majority and the government as well. Keywords here include validation of qualifications, securing fair hiring policies and introduction schemes.

If we trace at the changing concerns of the national discourse on immigration in Sweden over the past forty years, one way of sorting them would be chronologically:

1. Assimilation policy,	- 1975
2. Immigrant policy (<i>invandrarpolitik</i>),	1975 - 1997
3. Integration policy,	1997 - 2006
4. Anti-discrimination policy	2004 - 2006
5. New policy?	2006 -

At the end of the period of integration policy, the focus on discrimination increased. The focus of the original integration policy was to create a new «we» out of the majority and minority populations. In 2004 the emphasis changed to identifying dysfunctions within the native born population and the established institutions.

There is another way to read the chronological list of the five policies. The four main discourses presented in this report seem to fit the listed chronological phases. The advocates of assimilation would want to see at least parts of policy of the pre-1975 period resurrected. Immigration policy sought practical solutions by helping immigrants find work, and encouraging employers to hire them. This dual focus can perhaps be associated with the liberal discourse described in this report. Integration policy was also inherent to the social democratic discourse. Finally, the anti-discrimination initiatives were associated with the discrimination discourse.

In a way, then, the different solutions that have been tried out over the years in Sweden are still represented in the public debate. There is, of course, not an exact fit between the phases and the current integration discourses. Nor is it difficult to find faults with such a comparison. One is that the social democratic movements with its associates were the dominant political force during all the four first periods.

Gravitation towards fundamental issues

This study is about integration into the Swedish labour market. Throughout the report we have had to refer to the broader topic of «integration». National policies and debates on other aspects of integration such as culture, housing, social and educational concerns have been treated as background issues. It has not been an easy task to isolate labour per se.

One reason for this may be that the different issues are so intertwined. Labour market participation is closely linked to other types of participation. Integration in the labour market may be dependent on the success of other policies. But the opposite may also be true; work may be necessary for other forms of participation.

Another reason for the difficulty of isolating the labour market discourses is that they are parts of broader debates. The same actors, civil servants, academics, journalists and politicians, speak to the several issues connected to integration.

A third reason is that the field of integration is like a magnet. By this we mean that the issues gravitate towards the deeper dilemmas and challenges that mark the co-existence or co-fusion of natives and immigrants. The backdrop of other integration areas quickly becomes relevant when the labour market is discussed. Behind this issue there are more fundamental dichotomies like diversity vs. similarity, integration vs. assimilation, equal treatment vs. special treatment, group focus vs. individual focus. The same centripetal forces were felt during the initial presentation of this report to the general public and in our interviews. In the previous chapter we responded to this by discussing some of the underlying core issues of the field of integration.

Discussions on integration touch on moral questions. Debates in this field are linked to topics like respect, equal worth and decency (Hagelund 2003).

The dual role of the welfare state

What is the historical and ideological background for the Swedish version of integration policy? Over the past forty years, Sweden has had to handle the

challenges and possibilities that immigration represents. This it has had in common with most European countries. But the reality, attitudes and policies that were formed in Sweden in face of the challenge were peculiar to Sweden. There is any number of places to look for reasons why the discourses and practical policies came out like they did.

One could look at economic, cultural and historical factors, the role of Swedish mentality or a range of other characteristics that must be expected to influence the outcome. One example could be to have a closer look at the formation of the «welfare state». Here one could find parts of the background when one tries to understand current discussions on equality and tolerance for difference.

Back in the early 1960s, neither immigration nor integration were central issues in the public debate in Sweden. The Sami, Finnish and other minorities were expected to merge with what was perceived to be a homogeneous majority population. This assimilation process, which was actively promoted by the national authorities, has later been heavily criticized.

At the time, the dominating political project was the construction of an extensive welfare state. Equality was the guiding principle in this process. There was a strong belief in government intervention as a means of making a better society. With ideologists and social engineers like Alva and Gunnar Myrdal, the state could penetrate even the private sphere if it was seen to benefit all. The latter has been quoted as saying, «Bad habits must be reshaped» (*Dårliga vanor måste vridas rätt*) (Brochmann 2007:5). This expressed the dual role of government in the Scandinavian welfare states. While helping marginalised groups to achieve the same chances in life as the more fortunate, the state also transmitted norms of adaptive behaviour.

Although this mechanism may have been seriously weakened over the past thirty years, one could ask whether it still remains as a mental category. It could maybe be described as an unspoken contract between the citizens and the state, the content of which seems to be «We will help you but then you have to adapt to the form of life we recommend».

Commenting on government characteristics in Sweden and Norway, the Norwegian historian Francis Sejersted labelled this a «paternalistic dilemma». He held this dual role of government policy to be inherent to the Scandinavian welfare model (2005, Brochmann 2007:5).

One set of inhabitants and citizens has been spared this pressure to conform to government expectations in Sweden, according to sociologist Grete Brochmann (2007:5). The economic and later forced migrants that settled in Sweden were not apparently expected to adhere to this implicit message to behave in a particular way from the government. It could be speculated whether they were exposed to the same hard demands to conform as the «original» population. A system based on unspoken social democratic norms may have been paralyzed by the experience of meeting with people from

slightly or very different nation-states. As individualism and new liberalism weakened the force of social engineering in Sweden, freedom of choice (real or not) became the slogan of the integration or immigration policy of the 1990s.

Discrimination – prevalence or experience?

Another topic that puzzled us in this study was the discussion on discrimination. Two fundamentally different ways of attacking the problem were revealed.

The first looked to establish the *extent* (*utbredningen*) of discrimination in Sweden. The thought being that only by pinning down the scale of the problem and differentiating its component parts can society hope to change it. We would find advocates of this type of solution taking part in assimilation and social liberal discourses, and, partly, the social democrat discourse. They do not deny the existence of discrimination or that reports of discrimination may be true. Those focussing on the extent of discrimination in our material were ready to admit to the uncertainty surrounding size of the problem, but at the same time indicated that those belonging to the structural discrimination camp may be exaggerating. A question remains, however. Can the experience of being discriminated against be widespread without much discrimination actually occurring? If not, then what is the relationship between prevalence and subjective perceptions?

The second way to view discrimination is to focus on the *experience* (*upplevelse*) of the phenomenon. The prevalence of subjective perceptions of discrimination would seem to be equalled to factual occurrences, i.e. if a person felt discriminated against, then discrimination had occurred. Some of our informants held that the distinction between prevalence and experience of discrimination was blurred in the reports from the Kamali Commission. Others saw the change in focus from statistics with limited power to detect discrimination to real experiences as a vast improvement.

From a neutral point of view one could ask: If the subjective *experience* of discrimination is widespread, what are the consequences for the process of integration?

Findings

The list of findings from a study like this is long. Here we will bring only a few to the renewed attention of the reader.

Four (five) discourses on labour market integration

In this report we have divided the debates on labour market integration in Sweden according to problem definition, causes and solutions suggested. We identified four prominent discourses, and a fifth less prominent. We labelled them the *assimilation discourse*, the *liberal discourse*, the *social democratic discourse*, and finally the *structural discrimination discourse*. The fifth we called the *critical humanist discourse*. The participants in this discourse were few in number and exposed to massive criticism.

Disagreement on causes

Admitting a lack of integration in the labour market, our informants disagreed on what caused the problems. The list of factors affecting labour participation was extensive. But there was strong disagreement on the importance of certain characteristics of the majority and minority populations, of former labour market and immigration politics, of broader labour market trends and of the quality of the introduction scheme.

The integration policy has not been implemented

All actors in the field agreed on the goals and intentions of the integration policy from 1997. All, that is, except the far right parties. There was also broad agreement that the integration policy had not been implemented. It was still common in 2007 to state that Sweden was marked by at division into «us» and «them». Few questioned this diagnosis or its insistence on difference.

Some of our labour market informants protested against the negative diagnosis and urged us to ask whether, despite all the problems and given the challenges, integration in the labour market was really that bad.

A field dominated by political correctness?

All of our informants agreed that the integration debate in Sweden was coloured by a need for political correctness. As part of this, they blamed those belonging to other positions for withholding and shying away from information. Advocates of structural discrimination blamed the others for not wanting to see the deeply engraved structural discrimination and racism that permeate Sweden. From the far right parties' side, the other discourse participants appeared to refuse to contemplate information about problems stemming from the foreign born and immigrant populations.

The old or new Sweden?

The assimilation discourse is most explicitly represented by the far right Sweden Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna*). They want the immigrants to live like Swedes. One could say they want the «old Sweden» back. Advocates of other views welcome the «new Sweden» where immigrants are integrated with the majority population and form a new «we».

Ambivalence towards groups

On the surface, «group-thinking» (*grupptänkandet*) is considered an obstacle to integration in Sweden today. Backstage and on the local level, however, «group-thinking» is considered necessary to secure labour market integration.

Some informants pointed out that this schism was played out between central and local government, and between politics and public administration. The centrally recommended focus on individual skills and capabilities of newcomers was contrasted to the use of group characteristics based on empirical knowledge about their background, world view and habits

Two contrary positions on the importance of groups seem to exist simultaneously in the field of Swedish integration policy: 1. For integration policy to succeed it is essential that group characteristics such as culture, ethnicity and religion are muted or ignored. 2. For integration policy to succeed it is vital to pay attention to culture, religion and other group characteristics.

A confusing relationship between means and ends

Are politics of «diversity» and «multiculturalism» means to integration or ends in themselves?

Historical «solutions» remain active

The report identifies four historical attempts to secure labour market integration of immigrants in Sweden. These seem to fit nicely with the four current discourses that are described and analysed in our study. This means that solutions put to the test in earlier times remain in force. These are «assimilation» (pre 1975); «immigration policy» (1975-1997); «integration policy» (1997-2006); and «anti-discrimination policy» (2004-2006). Whether it is correct to identify contemporary discourses with the historical policies is unclear. At this cursory level it is tempting to make the association. More thorough investigation will however have to be made before the historical lines of the current positions can be established.

Debate – soft on the outside, hard on the inside

The academic/political language is gentle towards outsiders and sometimes merciless among insiders. While protecting conduct of minorities from criticism, the majority/colleagues are attacked in a vile language.

Critical voices may therefore have been kept down in fear of risking accusations of racism. Sections of newcomers such as women, youth and children may thereby have been excluded in terms of equal rights, duties and opportunities. An advantage of limited public critique may be that stigma is avoided.

Bi-polarity

The debate on labour market integration appears to be bi-polar. One effect of this is that a part of the game is to avoid being labelled a racist. If racist or politically correct are the only possible positions, there is little middle ground, for, for example, a *critical humanist position*.

Trends in the public debate

Trends in the debate on integration and the labour market come and go. After a period with the attributes of immigrants in the spotlight, accusing the majority of being deeply «racialised» (*rasialiserad*) was in fashion until recently.

Latest movements in the debate on integration

The direction of the debate may be changing. The hegemonic majority-blaming school of thought may be losing ground. Over the past ten years, the tremendous challenges of integration have not been discussed in terms of opposing dichotomies in Sweden. It has rather been an inflamed debate about Right and Wrong. There has been an evasion of and a reluctance to express hesitation and doubt in the face of the challenges troubling every country committed to human rights.

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<p><i>Forfatter/Author</i> Jan-Paul Brekke and Tordis Borchgrevink</p>
<p>I denne studien ser vi på hvordan man diskuterer integrasjon av innvandrere på arbeidsmarkedet i Sverige. Til grunn ligger diagnosen at de som er født utenfor Sverige i mindre deltar grad på arbeidsmarkedet enn de som er født i landet. Dette er man enige om. Men hvorfor er det slik? Og hva bør gjøres?</p> <p>I rapporten presenteres fire ulike diskurser på temaet integrasjon på arbeidsmarkedet. Vi har gitt dem betegnelsene <i>den sosialliberale diskursen</i>, <i>den sosialdemokratiske diskursen</i>, <i>diskursen om strukturell diskriminering</i> og til sist <i>assimileringsdiskursen</i>. I tillegg blir en femte posisjon diskutert, nemlig <i>den kritisk humanistiske</i>.</p> <p>Til disse posisjonene hører bestemte oppfatninger om årsakene til ulikhetene, hvilke tiltak som bør gjøres, men også hva som vil være den ideelle situasjonen for samkjøringen av majoritet og minoritet. Videre ser vi på hvilke begreper som er sentrale og hvilke temaer man søker å unngå i de ulike leirene.</p> <p>Vår analyse peker også på den underliggende bredere debatten om integrasjon i Sverige. Her støter vi på omstridte begreper som mangfold, politisk korrekthet og diskriminering.</p>
<p><i>Emneord</i> Diskurs, Sverige, arbeidsmarked, innvandrere, politikk, mangfold, diskriminering</p> <p><i>Indeksord (svensk)</i> Diskurs, Sverige, arbetsmarknad, invandrare, politik, mångfald, diskriminering</p>
<p><i>Tittel/Title</i> Talking about integration Discourses, alliances and theories on labour market integration in Sweden</p>
<p>In Sweden those born outside the country participate less in the labour market than the majority population. Why is this so? What can be done to better the situation? In this report we take a closer look at how labour market integration is discussed in Sweden. Opinions are strongly divided on the issue of integration.</p> <p>Four discourses on labour market integration are identified. We label them the <i>social liberal discourse</i>, the <i>social democratic discourse</i>, the <i>structural discrimination discourse</i> and finally a possible <i>discourse of assimilation</i>. The fourth discourse was contested. A fifth is discussed briefly – <i>the critical humanist position</i>.</p> <p>Our analysis also points to the broader debate on integration, where blurry concepts like discrimination, political correctness and diversity (<i>mångfald</i>) surface time and again.</p>
<p><i>Index terms</i> Discourse, Sweden, migration, labour market, immigrants, policy, diversity, multiculturalism, discrimination</p>