Carl-Ulrik Schierup and Aleksandra Ålund

Beyond Liberal Pluralism
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Abstract

Contemporary intellectual critique, seeing multiculturalism as a threat to liberal core values and social cohesion, tells us more about paradoxes of a contemporary Western ‘liberalism’, which is loosing contact with its founding premises, than about actual multicultural policies. The article sets out to review the Swedish trajectory between a unique liberal multicultural agenda and generous policies of asylum and naturalisation towards an alignment with a currently rising wave of retrogressive identity politics, securitisation of integration policy and the institutionalisation of heavily monitored processes of ‘circular migration’ in the EU. This development is seen as propelled by a political merger of a neo-liberal concern for economic growth and a neo-conservative focus on needs for reinforcing moral duty, family responsibility, cultural homogeneity and community cohesion, but with a rich body of established civil, political, social and cultural rights of citizenship exposed to erosion.

Keywords: Multiculturalism, Liberalism, Core Values, Identity Politics, Migration

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‘...the “united front against terrorism” has permitted an incredible “Western” mobilization around such elastic... themes as “the sharing of common values”’ (Samir Amin in Obsolescent Capitalism, 2003).

In the Euphoria after the fall of the Berlin Wall a victorious liberalism, built on democracy, civic ideals and a market economy, was proclaimed the ‘end of history’. This was also seen as a liberalism increasingly embracing multiculturalism, or a so-called ‘liberal pluralism’ (Kymlicka 2001), with good governance of ‘diversity’ and anti-racism as a hallmark (Bonnett 2006). Good practices of diversity management were proclaimed the essence of a more inclusive social pact as the old class-based corporatist coalitions were seen to loose both power and relevance. Multiculturalism, however defined, became a post Cold War discourse, readily adopted across most of the traditional right-left political spectrum, albeit from different political perspectives (Barry 2001).

A post-wall Western Europe, with the EU pursuing a wider project of integration aiming at including former socialist countries of the east into the dawning new era of universal democracy and market driven economic prosperity, is determined, argues Will Kymlicka (2001), to leave the continent’s gloomy heritage of radical nationalism, racism, xenophobia and genocide behind them. Taught a historical lesson through the bloody costs paid for its dominant nations’ past politics of intolerance and exclusion, the democratic states of the western part of the continent have eventually set out on the path towards greater political maturity by professing a liberal pluralism, he maintains (op.cit.). That is a higher stage of liberalism, as it is spelled out, prospering from the benefits, which the eventual acknowledgement of and respect for ethno-cultural diversity and minority rights have proved to bestow on social cohesion and the wider European integration project. In line with this, what the fledgling democracies of the ‘East’, still fairly newly ‘liberated’ from communist rule, can hopefully learn from a politically mature West is more than how to invest in ‘democracy, prosperity, and personal tolerance’, argues Kymlicka (2001: 84), in his and Magda Opalski’s edited volume, Can Liberal Pluralism be Exported. Western Political Theory and Ethnic Relations in Eastern Europe (Kymlicka and Opalski 2001). Progress demands learning and understanding ‘how to manage, ethno-cultural relations in a peaceful and democratic way’. Otherwise a ‘denigration of the seriousness of ethno-cultural identities’ is likely to cause ‘terrible consequences’ (Kymlicka 2001: 84).
In the context of post-cold war politics of ‘peace-keeping’ and ‘reconstruction’, as in politics for EU’s east- and south-eastward expansion, this message has been moulded into tangible tutorial packages for good governance of ethnic relations. They have been and are included as an essential part of the conditionality that political elites in post-communist Europe have been and still are obliged to face for the benefit of a supposedly better future; from the war torn region of former Yugoslavia to central and eastern European states applying for accession to the European Union. However, in the case of those countries that used to belong to the former Soviet sphere of an ‘actually existing socialism’ (Bahro 1977), but which have already slipped through the eye of the needle and ‘moved westwards’ into the EU club, there are no longer powerful sanctions available to assure ‘good conduct’ (e.g. Eklund 2009). This may be one reason behind uncertainty as to the actual effectiveness of EU directives for combating racism and discrimination in, for example, the Baltic region (Woolfson 2010, forthcoming). In the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Rumania racist harassment against the Roma minority appears only to grow more toxic the more the economic and social crisis takes out the air from inflated expectations of progress and affluence. In imperial protectorates monitored by EU forces and NATO, like Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, ethnic relations remain highly infested. In Ukraine, Georgia and other of the poly-national former Soviet republics, bordering an extended EU to the east, questions of ethno-national identity and coexistence appear as unsolved as ever. Adding to such, still unresolved, ethno-national relations with their roots in nearer or more distant historical political-economic configurations, the growth of new discriminatory, exclusionary and hyper-exploitative migrant labour systems, further adds to the complexity of contemporary problems of race, ethnicity and class; in post-communist Central Europe, the Baltic states as well as in the post-Soviet Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

All of this is indeed worrying, and the need for good governance of ethnic relations in Europe remains as pertinent as ever. But a second look at the merchandise marketed by a European ‘West’ - still imagining itself as the apex of history and the ‘free world’ - should be justified, and remembering the evangelist Mathew’s famous aphorism on the fallacy of hypocrisy as pertinent as ever: ‘Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?’ (Mathew 7:3)

An affirmative reception of ethno-cultural diversity remains indeed part and parcel of the *credo*, official policy and parlance of the European Commission in its capacity of setting standards for good governance across the EU, and well beyond. One of the more recent manifestations is found on the webpage, *Together in Diversity* (2008), designed by the Directory General for Education and Culture in order to promote the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (2008). Here Europe’s great cultural diversity is represented as a unique advantage. ‘The enlargement of the European Union, deregulation of employment laws and globalisation’, it states, has ‘increased the multicultural character of many countries, adding to the number of languages, religions, ethnic and cultural backgrounds found on the continent. As a result’, this manifesto for current EU policies of diversity goes on, ‘intercultural dialogue has an increasingly important role to play in fostering European identity and citizenship’. Migration is praised for enrichment of the continent's culture and ‘the intercultural dialogue between the host country society and different migrant communities from other Member States...
or outside the EU’ is seen to have ‘a key role to play in strengthening citizenship values and participation for solidarity and cohesion’ in European societies.

However, given this grand scenario of diversity in unity, we may wonder what are the meaning and prominence of the worried polemics and debates over social cohesion, core values, etc., which have been put forward in different policy documents and processed in both academic and wider public fora, in particular since the beginning of 2000s. Webs of complex and contradictory signals are here circulated in different visions of ‘unity’ and of the interconnection of ‘unity’ and ‘diversity’. A range of academic interventions, official policy documents, political speeches and media reports bring forward – more or less openly – that multiculturalism and ‘diversity’ can become or is indeed a serious threat to our cultural Unity, social cohesion, core values, equality, etc. Influential intellectual discourses, serving as powerful sources of legitimacy for a reformulation of political programmes for the ‘integration’ of immigrants and their descendants across Europe, cover a range of particular philosophical, political-ideological and scientific positions. Among the most influential we can register the emphatic neo-communitarian appeal of Amatai Etzioni (2001) and his ‘Communitarian Network’ to ‘free societies’ to take their historically common values seriously. They should stand up firmly for the primacy of ‘unity in diversity’ and the worries of ‘many millions of people’ who ‘sense that they are threatened by massive immigration and by the growing minorities within their borders’. Another intervention is that of the British publicist, David Goodhart (2004), warning – in the vein of a leftist-nationalist welfare-state-gone nostalgia - against ‘too much diversity’ in an imagined formerly integral Britain, based on common solidarities, whose historical victories of are now threatened by strangers; an intervention subsequently discussed widely by some of the most prominent scholars on citizenship, multiculturalism and international migration (Banting and Kymlicka 2004; Glazer 2004; Parekh 2004). Both of these influential interventions within an expanding international intellectual and political debate on immigration, multiculturalism and the postulated core values of ‘free societies’ find powerful allies within the ranks of liberal feminists - with Susan Moller Okin’s (1999) ‘Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women’ as an emblematic landmark - worried about imported patriarchal cultures, supposedly foreign to fundamental western values of gender equality.

The way in which ‘culture’ and ‘difference’ are here conceptualised appears to prove that the critique we directed towards prevalent academic discourses on migration and ethnicity in our book Paradoxes of Multiculturalism (Ålund and Schierup 1991), published two decades ago, may be as pertinent as ever. We argued then, that without a complex understanding of history and processes of change of capitalism, patriarchy and racism in the social construction of ethnicity - structurally grounded ethnic/racial inequalities tend to be reduced to cultural stereotypes, to ‘blame the victim’ theories and, at the utmost, rationalized as individual misfortune. We demonstrated how ‘culture’ had become conceptualized as self-contained, homogeneous and static in dominant intellectual discourse. Stereotypes produced by intellectuals and subsequently circulated and sanctioned in media and political discourse, had become the basis of popular commonsense and institutional practice, integrated in technocratic techniques rationalizing and organizing ethnic divisions of labour and a racialised society. Following a critical note by John Rex (1985; referring to the work of, among other,
Smith 1965), we warned that, when ethnic stereotypes are rationalized by science and turned into institutional instruments, structuring political and economic inequality, there is an ever present danger that ‘multiculturalism’ will come to coalesce with the idea of the ‘plural society’, historically associated with ‘a tight-knit communal morality within groups and a world of total exploitation between groups’ in colonial situations, with the past South African apartheid system as the ultimate example of a modern ‘plural society’.

We do agree with Giuseppe Sciortino (2003: 267) that it is important to see multicultural claims as a ‘meaning making device and not as a descriptive label for empirical reality’. Yet this is a fallacy of reification committed by much of the recent critique on multiculturalism and contemporary national or hyper-national identity claims directed from intellectuals and politicians in the name of ‘liberalism’ or ‘free societies’. Not least on this background, their worries about ‘multiculturalism’ or ‘too much diversity’ appear not seldom to tell us more about a truly paradoxical relation between still manifest ‘liberal’ persuasions, on the one hand, and actually existing contemporary illiberal practices and the erosion of citizenship, on the other hand, than they tell us about actual multicultural policies or the lived multicultural multitude in contemporary ‘Western’ societies. The ‘liberalism’ that we see so passionately marketed today, in Sweden and across Europe, and which is increasingly packaged with a persuasive anxiety over an imagined ‘multiculturalism’, seems to be ridden by paradoxes in serious need of being discussed.

We shall further discuss some of the most influential contemporary intellectual discourses elsewhere (Ålund and Schierup 2010 [in progress]). In the present essay we shall venture more directly into the less virtual, but indeed convoluted, reality of a contemporary Europe, which we fear that these intellectual enterprises, unwittingly, underpin: an incipient European ‘plural society’ marked by a xenophobic cultural branding of ‘the Other’, the erosion of citizenship, urban revolts among disadvantaged youth, an ongoing nationalist-populist alignment, and processes of ‘apartheisation’ produced or reinforced through contemporary exclusivist policies of international migration and ‘integration’. We set out reviewing the Swedish experience. The country’s trajectory between the set up of a far-sighted and multifaceted liberal, manifestly ‘multicultural’, agenda by the mid 1970s and today’s growing alignment with retrogressive illiberal policies across the continent, is as indicative as any in exposing the adverse direction in which European ‘integration’ may currently be heading. We dwell in particular on the neo-liberal cum neo-conservative political agenda leading up to, and the political recasting ensuing from, social unrest and youth rebellions in multi-ethnic neighbourhoods of Swedish cities. In conclusion we return to the paradoxical enigma of a contemporary ‘actually existing liberalism’. We maintain a sceptic perspective on the goods that the ‘First Europe’ of the ‘West’ has for long endeavoured to export to, or to force upon, the ‘Second Europe’ of the ‘East’. It is a product that so-called ‘Free Societies’, mobilised in a ‘united front against terrorism’ through their much promulgated ‘sharing of common values’, continue to market as a programme for Fixing Failed States (Ghani and Lockhart 2008) across the world. It feeds, in the process, a permanent state of global war (Hardt and Negri 2004) of which the securitisation of trans-national migration has become a central dimension. It includes strategies of counterinsurgency and microscopic warfare in the multi-ethnic
cities of the ‘West’ as integral elements of contemporary politics and policies for so-called ‘integration’.

Paradoxes of multiculturalism

A model Multiculturalism?

In Paradoxes of Multiculturalism (Ålund and Schierup 1991) we took our point of departure in a critical scrutiny of disjunctions between theory and practice as reflected in the development of Swedish society since the great Swedish reform of the country’s policies on immigration, migrant integration and ethnic relations passed by parliament in 1975 under the slogan of equality, freedom of choice, and partnership; a slogan boldly parphrasing the French revolution’s égalité, liberté, fraternité. The reform was principled on a promising merger of a powerful and equitable institutional welfare system, a liberal universalist conception of citizenship with social citizenship as centrepiece, and an inclusive multicultural conception of the nation. In combination with a, in those days unique, reform of the Swedish electoral system in 1976 it guaranteed, in terms of ‘denizenship’ (Hammar 1985), a principled access to almost all rights of civil, political and social citizenship even for immigrated non-citizens (e.g. Öberg 1994). A generous asylum policy and permissive rules for family unification were backed by guarantees for fast naturalisation based on criteria of residence, without restrictions in terms of language texts, oaths of allegiance, income criteria, etc. The specific labour-capital compact, on which the Swedish welfare state rested, effectively blocked the use of migration as a vehicle for wage depreciation at the same time as it was conceived to serve as a guarantee for access to equal rights and a bulwark against discrimination and racial harassment.

The Swedish reforms of the mid 1970s were strongly influenced by intellectually and politically prominent ideas of multiculturalism in the wider international context of the time, and not least Canadian politics and policies of multiculturalism. A generally reformist and experimental political surge in Sweden of the 1970s, intersecting with specific regional and local ethnic and ethno-national relations and politics were a fruitful soil for the launching of a new model. The largest, most well organised, most politically voiced and influential migrant minority ethno-national group in Sweden at the time, were the migrants from neighbouring Finland, and the reform was influenced by claims that Finnish migrants in Sweden ought to enjoy the same minority rights as those exercised by the Swedish ethnic minority in Finland. In line with this, ‘Freedom of choice’ was backed by a range of special measures concerning, among other, access to language training of children in vernaculars of the countries of origin, support to migrant communities for access to and use of media and press and support for the organisation of migrant communities premised on corporate criteria of ethno-national background.

In terms of cultural rights of citizenship (Taylor 1992), ‘multiculturalism’ (Rex 1985; Castles 1994) or ‘liberal pluralism’ (e.g. Kymlicka and Opalski 2001) the decade following the reforms of the mid 1970s appeared indeed to be a golden age, breaking with a policy of assimilationism of earlier years. The Swedish model appeared to be among the most well conceived and balanced attempts to merge a liberal-universalist framework of citizenship with particular identity claims. The specific articulation of the
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reform’s premising principles of equality, freedom of choice, and partnership, promised a synergetic combination of equal access to rights of citizenship on formal legal terms, with preconditions for realising the exercise of a substantial citizenship through forms of civil society involvement respecting and drawing upon the unique identities and the cultural and social resources of migrants and migrant and ethnic minority communities.¹

Multiculturalism, culturalism or ‘new racism’?
Yet the Swedish model of multiculturalism - or more specifically a principled model’s specific implementation as processed through particular institutional practices and organisational strategies - was loaded with imminent tensions (Ålund and Schierup 1991).

In Paradoxes of Multiculturalism we expose, in line with this contention, dilemmas of the political programme formalised in the mid 1970s. We discuss contradictions between political rhetoric and the reality of an actually existing multiculturalism, through corporatist practices transformed into a bureaucratically managed ‘tower of Bable’ (Schierup 1991a): a hierarchically nested conglomeration of ethno-nationally defined social collectivities; monitored and depoliticised through the powerful vehicle of a generous, but highly conditioned, system of public support to ‘migrant organisations’; and inserted into a discriminatory ethnic division of labour (Schierup 1991a; see also Schierup and Paulson 1994). Egalitarian policies of the corporatist welfare compact, in combination with foresighted laws and politics on migration and migrants and new ethnic minorities’ principled access to social, political and civil rights, certainly assured a relative social security and a ‘subordinated social inclusion’ (Mulinari and Neergaard 2004). But general welfare policies and an elaborate system of collective agreements between the social partners were in themselves neither an efficient, nor a sufficient, guarantee against discrimination, disadvantage or social and political marginalisation (Schierup 2006b).

Hence each of the bold political slogan’s three promises was confronted with a potential negation embedded in the pragmatic political understandings and institutional practices of an institutionalised actually existing multiculturalism:

- equality versus institutional discrimination and an unequal ethnic division of labour;
- partnership versus monitoring and co-opting processes of a depoliticising paternalism;
- freedom of choice versus a stereotyping bureaucratic prescription of ‘cultural belonging’.

We described tendencies towards the perversion of a model, which initially appeared balanced between universalism and particularism, in terms of an essentialising and stereotyping culturalism, explaining and seeking cures to all social problems in terms of ‘culture’, implemented through divisive and discriminatory organisational and institutional practices, singling out migrants and ethnic minorities as ‘problems’ based on criteria of ethnic origin, culture or religion. This became more and more articulated in pace with growing disjunctions in the ‘Swedish model’ of the welfare state in general and from the mid 1980s, in particular, mounting difficulties experienced in incorporating a growing population refugees from Asia and Africa into an increasingly

¹ Along similar lines as the model of multiculturalism suggested by Castles (1994)
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exclusivist Swedish labour market (Schierup 1991b; Schierup, Hansen and Castles 2006, ch. 8). Violent proto-Nazi grassroots movements mushroomed, excelling in attacking and burning up refugee camps. An extremist populist party, New Democracy, stepped into the political scene, in 1991 winning seats in parliament on the basis of its tough-against-immigration-and-immigrants rhetoric. Several important mainstream political actors and civil servants struck a similar note approaching Sweden to the kind of situation that Britain experienced in the 1980s in the wake of Thatcherism, characterized by Mark Duffield (1984) in terms of ‘New racism, new realism: two sides of the same coin’.

The neo-liberal turn: from multiculturalism to ‘diversity management’

However, although we were among the most dogged critics of the actual practices of migration policy and institutional practices of ‘multiculturalism’ of the time, we still hosted faith in a prospective political realignment that would lead to a renewal, on new grounds, of a broad and far-sighted political consensus that could preclude the appeal and spread of populist discourses and policies. This was also to take place, to the effect that Sweden, in the midst of a deep economic and social crisis in the 1990s, carried through a profound political-ideological review of its policies on migration and migrant incorporation (Schierup, Hansen and Castles 2006, ch. 8). While parts of its political programme was in fact co-opted, in pace with Sweden’s gradual harmonisation of its migration policies with general EU policies, the incipient populist surge was effectively pressed back by a realigned broad left-right political consensus on a new integration policy, and New Democracy vanished from the parliament.

The emblematic concept of a new, so-called, integration policy, which was to replace an earlier, so-called, immigrant policy - became that of ‘diversity’ (mångfald). The conceptual meaning of ‘diversity’ was henceforth, like what happened also in other parts of Europe, an import from US policy and practice of ‘diversity management’ in public policy and business, rather than the old multicultural policy’s focus on rights and agency of culturally or ethnically defined corporate groups. The refurbished policy of integration was conceived as a policy targeted at the ‘total population’ grounded on a progressive development of institutions within the labour market, the educational system, housing, health, culture, etc. (Proposition 1997: 19). Certainly the policy was meant to take into particular consideration all who suffered disadvantage due to their ethnic, cultural or religious background, and the struggle against discrimination, xenophobia and racism was accordingly given high priority. All citizens and inhabitants were to carry a responsibility for integration; however, not primarily understood as a question for immigrants or ethnic minorities, but as a policy targeted at the development of an integrated society as a whole. This should include building a new Swedish identity and a renegotiated national community, based on shared democratic values rather than any common historical provenance (op.cit. 23). To these values should belong also ‘the right to be different’. But in contrast to the corporatist spirit of the 1970 the question of ethnic and cultural identity was now regarded as foremost a question for each individual (op.cit.).

In spite of differences in interpretation of the exact meaning of the new integration policy between left and right, there is an obvious convergence of its agenda with a general neo-liberal turn in Swedish politics and policies in general, with a ruling ’third
way’ social democratic party elite as the driving force (Schierup 2006a). The merger of integration policy with new policies for economic growth is evident from a range of public reports. Keywords closely connected with policies for integration are ‘life-long learning’, ‘employability’ and ‘ethnic entrepreneurship’. Government reports abound with rhetoric depicting immigrants as a flexible resource for local and regional economic growth and as objects for ‘diversity management’ in business. This also influenced the perspective on migrant and ethnic minority associations (Ålund and Reichel (2007). In the reforms of the 1970s the political emphasis and public funding were on migrant organisations as vehicles for democratic agency, while by the turn of the millennium they would receive support for ‘integrative’ activities enhancing ‘employability’. While, at least in theory, the idea by the mid 1970s had been supporting migrant organisations in capacity of autonomous corporative actors in civil society (Borevi 2002; Soininen 2002), the emphasis was now displaced towards a prescribed role as market oriented stakeholders in employment projects and local and regional partnerships for growth.

At the same time the political practice of the old ‘Swedish model’ of the welfare state, driven by an ideology of distributive justice and aspirations for equality of outcome, now had to give room – even within the domain of integration policy – for an ideology and institutional practice driven by market incentives, focusing on equal opportunities. This implies efforts to create a level playing field for enterprising individuals. A significant measure of social inequality is, according to this logic, a sound incentive for innovation, entrepreneurship and individual need of achievement. However, this also implies a role for the state in creating institutional and structural conditions for fair play, even for those who, due to historical-structural reasons, have come to be excluded from the playing field. That is to secure actual opportunities for the individual to become included in the game and thereby to increase her/his cultural and social ‘capital’. In line with this the new integration policy set out, in tandem with EU directives, to place the question of discrimination solidly on the agenda. The Swedish corporatist model, which had formed the wider context for the reforms of the 1970s, rested on the expectation that the general welfare policy and the accord between unions and employers that guaranteed its validity, would as such function as a powerful counteracting force for combating disadvantage. Consequently binding sanction-based legal frameworks, focusing on equal rights for the individual, were deemed obsolete. This proved highly idealistic. Thus a tightened legal framework for combating discrimination - harmonised with EU law and directives, and with strong affinity with US anti-discrimination law and practices - which were introduced around the turn of the millennium, represents an important volte face in Swedish policy (see further Schierup 2006a).

The new integration policy, reinforcing policies for combating discrimination and enhancing ‘diversity’ in public institutions, has conceivably supported a considerable social mobility among individuals with migrant and ethnic minority background, and the ascent of an increasing number to leading positions in business, public administration, politics, academia, and the media. But the reforms were introduced alongside a gradual demise of the welfare state’s protective framework of social citizenship taking sway from the mid 1990s (op.cit.). Thus, given a parallel neo-liberal twist to economic policy, welfare and labour market regulation, anti-discrimination
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legislation and diversity management have also come to operate under social circumstances that, step by step, have becoming more similar to structurally grounded forms of poverty and racialised exclusion in countries like the United States and the United Kingdom (Schierup, Hansen and Castles 2006; Schierup and Castles 2010 [forthcoming]).

Crisis and the new ‘xeno-racism’

The racialised poverty (Schierup 2000) associated with neo-liberal flexibility regimes and the casualisation of low-salaried jobs is still more limited than in the US or the UK. Yet, substantial groups have come to find themselves, not only outside the ordinary labour market, but also excluded from unemployment insurance. Given Sweden’s traditional priority in implementing an active labour market policy and the upgrading of skills, the welfare regime was simply not geared to cope with large-scale and long-term unemployment (Schierup 2006a). The active labour market policy of the post-Second World War ‘Swedish model’ was the baseline for a de-commodification of labour, aiming at eliminating low-wage occupational ghettos. Its neo-liberal character since 1990, reminiscent of a US-style workfare regime (e.g. Junestav 2004), has come to underpin a disciplinary adaptation of a marginalised reserve army exposed to the market discipline of precarious low wage niches. A growing number of migrants and ethnic minority Swedes have been pushed from the centre to the periphery of the welfare system and into a casualised labour market and a degraded informal sector. Moreover, since 2006, fiscal measures of the current centre-right government’s have squeezed growing numbers low wage workers out of the unions. Further measures, forcing higher tariffs for unemployment insurance for workers in low pay realms of the labour market, combined with a reduced coverage of the health insurance system, are likely to exacerbate these trends. Organised labour has seen its protective capacities significantly reduced in the current period, and migrants as well as other groups outside a relatively protected core labour market, are feeling the consequences in terms of greater insecurity and a deterioration of employment conditions. Some of the most worrying social consequences have become incremental proliferation of precarious labour relations and social marginality, skyrocketing youth employment concentrated in particular among youth of immigrant background, as well as urban poverty and unrest, exposing the results of unemployment, and the shrinking of public services, particularly in the educational sector within disadvantaged districts of larger cities (e.g. Välfärdsbokslut 2000).

A profound shift in ideological orientation and institutional practices is taking place at various levels. The dominant trend in state policies and practice, of what has been phrased as ‘integration of immigrants’, is quickly moving towards culturalizing ‘problematic immigrants’ rather than problematising structural restraints and institutional discrimination. Complex processes of reorientation have certainly meant a move away from heavy-handed manifestations of new racist groups at street level, but have given room for a new encompassing ethnocentric xenophobia - by Liz Fekete (2009) dubbed xeno-racism - which is indeed considerably more worrying, and which is bringing Sweden closer to Denmark, the Netherlands, Austria, Italy, the UK and other EU countries with a similar development. Its manifestations ranges from discrete and sometimes almost imperceptible reformulations in government reports (which in general
tend to focus increasingly on ‘cultural problems’) to more openly illiberal government policies including war-like strategies of securitisation and counterinsurgency on the domestic territories of Sweden’s multiethnic suburbs.

The word ‘immigrant’ has become a metaphor for The Other, which does not belong, bolting and barring the door to ‘Swedishness’. Public debate has become increasingly concerned with imagined cultural differences between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’, the threat of ‘fundamentalism’, exposing Muslims as a special target ‘group’, with the alleged criminal behaviour of immigrants in focus. In this context “immigrant youth” has a special meaning, referring to young people born and raised in Sweden, but stigmatised as ‘strangers’ in both popular and, not seldom, scientific discourse (Ålund 2003).

Mainstream parties have started to co-opt the language and messages of populist extremists in a toughening competition for the hearts and votes of ‘the authentic people’ (e.g. Alliansfritt Sverige 2009). This development has, in consequence, ‘fired back’ in terms of a radicalisation of social movements among immigrants and their descendents, among other resulting in a violent urban youth rebellion. It all goes in tandem with the resuscitation and, possibly, the eventual – which, however, still remains to be seen – broad public rehabilitation of a defamed openly extremist nationalism exploiting the ‘immigrant problem’ as its main political issue and electoral booster, with the populist party, The Swedish Democrats (Sverigedemokraterna), as the winner, already present in a number of municipal political boards.

Spaces of marginality

A since long discussed, mutually contingent, racialisation of the labour market and the housing market (Rex and Moore 1967; Rex and Tomlinson 1979), in which social and structural constrains take on spatial and territorial forms, is also going on in Sweden, as in the rest of Scandinavia (Urban 2009). Urban residential segregation and the concentration of racialised poverty in disadvantaged Swedish neighbourhoods are in general similar to processes observed in a number of other European countries and, in particular, to the kind of disadvantaged poly-ethnic suburban environments found around Paris and other French cities and in neighbouring Denmark.

New suburban satellite towns were set up as part of an ambitious social-democratic municipal housing programme in the Sixties and early Seventies, targeted at the fast construction of ‘one million’ modern flats (Millionprogrammet). This took place in tandem with fast industrial development and concentration, vast internal and international migrations and ambitious slum clearance. Old inner city housing areas were cleared and rebuilt, fit for business and gentrification. Whilst office premises spread in city centres, expensive housing was built in the new satellite suburbia. Immigrants and people on low incomes were directed to these new suburban housing areas. Many people became permanently dependent on public rent assistance and social welfare transfers. These multiethnic suburban areas in cities like Stockholm, Malmö, Gothenburg and Uppsala have evolved into stigmatised territories with the reputation for being a ‘social problem’ in itself, populated largely by socially marginalised ‘majority Swedes’ and disadvantaged new ethnic minorities of recent immigrant background (Ålund 2003). These areas are now, due to the (global) economic crisis, neo-liberal policies, combined with reduction of public services investment in the country generally, and in the multiethnic suburbia in particular, exposing a kind of
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development, which may increasingly come to deserve comparison with the ‘advanced marginality’ observed by Lòic Wacquant in the United States (1996; see also Bunar 2000).

Fixing failed neighbourhoods

A growing unrest in Swedish multiethnic suburbia during the autumn of 2009, and eventually running like a wildfire across disadvantaged districts of major Swedish cities, appear to be a logic consequence of the unsettling development of Swedish society described above. It should be analysed as an integrated constituent of a protracted dual crisis of the welfare state and the nation in North-Atlantic liberal democracies (Schierup, Hansen and Castles 2006, ch. 1; Schierup and Castles 2010 [forthcoming]). Burning city wards in Sweden, caught up in violent conflicts between youth and police, are just among some of the latest instances of a row of urban rebellions with early manifestations in the US and Britain in the 1980s, culminating in the great Los Angeles insurrection in 1992; after the turn of the millennium most notably followed by the Paris insurrection of 2005 and the rebellion in Copenhagen and across Danish cities in 2008. It demonstrates that ‘even Sweden’ (paraphrasing Pred 2000), habitually renowned for its generous welfare policies and inclusive policies of asylum and multiculturalism, has eventually caught up with the pace of neo-liberal globalisation and related processes of segregation, racialised exclusion and social disadvantage, concentrated in big cities across the ‘Western’ world. However, the dominant tendency in media discourse and in politics has been to explain these most spectacular outbursts of a contemporary social crisis in terms of ‘cultural deviancy’ and oriental peril. This is matched by illiberal political measures targeted at ‘inner homelands’ reminiscent of strategies of bio-political counterinsurgency towards ‘failed states’ in the global theatre of the ‘war against terrorism’.

Culturalisation of problems – problematisation of ‘culture’

Media representation of the 2008-09 youth riots across Swedish cities consistently alludes to contemporary war zones in Afghanistan, Gaza or Libanon - occasionally interlaced with, since long habitual, allusions to urban ghettos in the US. Most reports convey a critical picture of police violence and brutality. ‘Police attacks demonstrate a level of violence with no support in any legal provision. Cops appear to believe that they have been dropped onto a war-zone in Gaza’, one commentator asserts (Nicklasson 2009), relating to riots in Gottsunda in the administrative area of the city of Uppsala (for the purpose wittily re-dubbed into Ghettosunda). Some reporters blame ‘society’ and ‘politicians’ for negligence, relating critically to ‘social problems’, focusing on unemployment, welfare dependence, police harassment, and the short-sighted character of investments in projects aiming at combating social inclusion, etc. (Buskas and Andersson 2009). ‘A sad picture of exclusion’, one reporter (Sandahl 2009) comments on the situation in the Gothenburg suburb of Hjällbo. More than every third young person between 20 and 25 ‘outside the system’. Not working, not studying, and only a few of them with access to social welfare transfers. A new ‘underclass’ emerging in the poverty of suburbia. Youngsters
are born in Sweden but ‘placed outside a society’, which ‘does not care a damn’ (op.cit.).

However, most media reports appear to draw more banal and less analytical conclusions. While overexposing crime and violence among migrants, the dominant focus is on the spectacular, and on culturally related difference and deviance, veiling significant aspects of the related social context, most palpably concerning the conditions under which immigrant youth spend their adolescence. Acts of violence among young people - usually characterised as ‘immigrant youth’, not considering the actual composite character of the protests or the varied background of involved individuals - is seen as conditioned by private family problems, most often publicly interpreted as inherent to ‘their culture’. This kind of representation of problems, related to social exclusion in Swedish cities, illustrate a more general tendency as to how social problems are represented in the public sphere, mass-media and institutional practices. They also indicate how worries can turn out as self-fulfilling prophecies, creating their own reality (Grillo 1985), as a discursively produced negative fame, projected, become binding (Schierup 1993). The looming problem of ‘immigrant culture’ is disconnected from the existing social reality (Ålund 2003, 1995). It is produced as uniform and as collectively shared by ethnic groups or communities, at the same time as it is exiled to the private family sphere. A stereotyped ‘culture’ becomes the explicit explanation that obscures other explanatory factors. The image of ‘immigrant’ gender relations, usually personified as an oppressive man and a passive woman - has been created along the way (Ålund 1999). The scrutiny of social conditions is neglected in favour of culturalised explanations. ‘Immigrant culture’ becomes the phantom image, which the combination of publicly communicated text and picture projects from suburban multiethnic life. The societal context of their life is concealed or explained away. Violent behaviour is related to ‘immigrants’ implicitly ‘foreign culture’ colliding with that of an imagined ‘majority society’.

Similar to a neo-conservative ‘moral underclass discourse’ (Levitas 1998), since long, established in the US and the UK, exposing cultural ‘deviancy’, ‘disfunctional’ families, and ‘deficient parenthood’ as root causes of an evil circle of social exclusion and escalating violence, the most common explanation for the recent youth riots was to declare parents guilty for family conditions and a lack of adequate socialisation, forcing youth onto the street. At the same time, the cure is seen in remitting the solution for general social problems to these same parents and families. This was well illustrated by a debate broadcasted by the private Swedish TV-4 (Debatt, evening 6th of May 2009), focused on youth protests in Rosengård, a multiethnic suburb of Malmö, which had been in focus of Swedish media during the most of the Spring of 2009. Unrest in the area initially sprung from young people’s occupation of a cellar-mosque that had been closed down by local authorities. It subsequently involved other actors from across the Malmö-Copenhagen conurbation in protests and demonstrations, voicing grievances from different perspectives. However, the TV-debate concentrated on young people setting garbage on fire and throwing stones on the police, fire brigades, busses, security officers, etc. It juxtaposed two separated groups: on the one side representatives for youth and youth leaders from Malmö and on the other side Swedish politicians and

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2 E.g. report on youth riots in the area of Gottsunda in the district of the city of Uppsala at the Swedish state television news programme, Aktuellt (Tuesday, 8/9, 2009).
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public celebrities. The young Malmö spokespersons emphasised the isolated character of the unrest in the area, with violent acts of protest carried on by some youngsters in a particularly disadvantaged and highly segregated neighbourhood, marked by 85 percent unemployment, a reduced access to publicly sponsored meeting places (ungdomsgårdar) for youth (from six in the area down to two during 10 years) and frustrations emerging from these conditions. Politicians, on their part, particularly emphasised that ‘tragic conditions’ in local families force young people onto the streets and suggested that parents need to take responsibility and control that their kids stay at home in the evening. A conservative politician, participating in the debate, suggested a regular ‘curfew’ as a more potent means for banning young people from staying outside their homes during evenings. Another of the more militant interventions in the debate suggested the need to institute a specialised national police force, aimed at bringing back order to Rosengård and, at the same time, preventing violence and disorder to spread across the rest of Sweden.

A politicised cartography of exclusion

The representation of the Swedish ‘suburban problem’ in terms of cultural deviancy is nothing new. It was an integrated part of the looming ‘new realism’ already in the late 1980s; the flipside of an emerging ‘new racism’, which, in Paradoxes of Multiculturalism (Ålund and Schierup 1991), we described as a potential graveyard for the liberal Swedish policies of multiculturalism. But the important difference, two decades later, is an imminent tendency towards the elevation of this discourse to the status of political correctness and a tangible realpolitik in the name of ‘liberal core values’ (Sabuni 2008).

Problems connected with concentration of recently arrived migrants (mainly asylum seekers) and disadvantaged ethnic minorities, combined with the social segregation in urban settlements, have been pointed out as critical in several official Swedish state sponsored investigations, as well as by academic research (e.g. Andersson 1998; Urban 2009). It has since long become a hot spot of contention in politics, with parties to the left and to the right blaming each other for having caused ‘failed integration’, and competing with each other in marketing solutions to the problem of the country’s, so-called, ‘exposed city-districts’ (utsatta stadsdelar). While left rhetoric habitually urges for more public institutional involvement and state investment the political right will persistently blame ‘failure of integration’ on the toxic and - basically, discriminatory - embrace of a bureaucratic nanny state, turning potentially resourceful new Swedish citizens into permanently passive and culturally deviant ‘welfare clients’ and a threat to public order. Yet, the exploitation of the ‘immigrant problem’ as a weapon in electoral campaigns was for decades played down as a tribute to an overall left-right consensus in Swedish politics (Schierup, Hansen and Castles 2006, ch. 8). This has now changed and Sweden appears, step by step, to move closer to the state of politics in neighbouring Denmark and many other parts of Europe.

Largely thanks to strategic development of a sturdy stand on the so-called ‘question of integration’, the Swedish Liberal Party (Folkpartiet) made an excellent 2002 election (Dahlstedt 2009a). In the debates preceding the election, the party was able to take command of the political agenda by directing the focus at ‘demands on immigrants’, most notably relating to an alleged lack of skill in mastering the Swedish language.
In December 2004, the party, then in opposition, presented a new report with the title, *The map of exclusion* (Folkpartiet 2004), which emphasises that profound exclusion is present in almost all larger Swedish cities. Sweden has become "dangerously close to the point when ethnic and social conflicts may degenerate into open riots and other extremely tragic events", the report states (Folkpartiet 2004: 6). A following report from 2006 (Folkpartiet 2006) announces that half a million people belong to the ‘excluded’. The majority of these are, the report states, ‘immigrants’. More than fifty percent live in the 20 most exposed neighbourhoods, and three in five come ‘from outside Europe’. These areas are seen characterised by high levels of unemployment and criminality. The latest report in a series was published in 2008 (Folkpartiet 2008), with the liberal party, by then, being one of the partners in a ruling centre-right coalition. Here the dramatic fact could be established that the number of ‘exposed’ big city areas had grown dramatically from three in 1990 to an alleged 156 in 2008, a period with social democrats in government most of the time (Folkpartiet 2008).

The reports emphasise the high levels of unemployment as the major reason for this adverse development. Yet, Dahlstedt (2009b) argues, it is the specific imagined lifestyle, or morality that is spotted as the problem behind this development. Though fuelled by structural conditions, cultural frames of reference are being described as a cause in their own right. Through a depiction, in general terms, of the culture in these areas as ‘radically different from that of the rest of society’, and as a ‘culture of exclusion’ cultural development is separated from the surrounding material and social context, argues Dahlstedt (*op.cit.*), commenting on one of the reports (Folkpartiet 2004). In this manner ‘culture’ becomes regarded as the major motor of exclusion, starting as an effect and becoming a cause of exclusion, Dahlstedt concludes. In a similar vein another critic (Meijling 2009), commenting on one of the reports (Folkpartiet 2008), maintains that this ‘cartography of residential segregation’ virtually ‘produce’ the ‘excluded’ by the use of measurements lacking scientific ground. Residents – with immigrants in majority– are linked with geographical areas, but the marginalisation of these areas is disconnected from the wider structure and processes in society. Given that, residents of these exposed areas are depicted in terms of different ‘social problems’ – with the number of immigrants living there defined as one of the major such supposed problems – it is strange, Meijling (2009) maintains, that structural conditions on the labour market are absent from the report. Growing unemployment among residents living in exposed suburban areas has nothing to do with their place of living (*op.cit.*). Quoting the report’s conclusions that ‘we are watching how Sweden is becoming divided’, he argues, that rather than just watching, these reports actively contribute to the production of such divisions: They regulate ‘normality’ relative to ‘deviance’ and they carry fuel to the idea that ‘deviance’ is spreading by itself in an ‘uncontrolled manner’ (*op.cit.*).

**The enemy within**
In order to fix this perceived uncontrolled proliferation of ‘failed neighbourhoods’ a motley mixture of measures have entered the political agenda, merging a forceful neo-liberal programme for growth with disciplinary surveillance, counterinsurgency, and conservative concerns for moral rearmament. This includes, among other, work/workfare instead of welfare transfers, more police, anti-discrimination measures,
investment in small business support, stimulation of private ownership of housing instead of public housing, better training in the Swedish language, stop for free schools, the promotion of shared ‘core values’, in particular oriented towards cultural practices as honour related violence, child marriage, and genital mutilation. The activities of immigrant associations should be selectively supported on the condition that they work with issues of gender equality and democracy (e.g. Folkpartiet 2006).

One of the first and most determined measures taking by the centre-right government (November 2007), after ousting the social democrats from power in the Autumn of 2006, was to engage researchers from the Centre for Asymmetric Threat and Terrorism Studies at the National Defence College for an investigation of problems of ‘fundamentalism’. The specific target was the multi-ethnic neighbourhood of Rosengård in Malmö, seen as one of the most problematic, spotted by the Map of exclusion. In January 2009 this specially commissioned report (Ranstorp and Dos Santos 2009) - which has met heavy critique due to its lack of scientific validity - was presented to the public and endorsed by the minister for integration, Nyamko Sabuni, member of the liberal party.

The report depicts, based on interviews with a limited number of local professional staff ‘engaged in school, social services and police’, the emergence of an alarming and growing ‘culture of threat’ (hotkultur) challenging Swedish democratic values in a local community, more and more permanently ‘isolated from the rest of society’. A similar trend is maintained to prevail also in other parts of the city. A reverse development related to cultural fundamentalisation among (immigrant) residents is seen to take place, among other forcing young women to dress traditionally. ‘Some respondents indicate’, the authors of the report maintain, the presence of ultra-radical Islamist parties and that prevailing problems in terms of the proliferation of anti-democratic forces could lead to the affirmation of a violent radicalisation (op.cit: 4).

Retailoring citizenship

Reshaping the mindset
This incipient strategy of counterinsurgency is, in terms of ‘inter-cultural dialogue’, matched by a bio-political programme of re-socialisation and redemption, aimed at shaping or reshaping the mindset, ‘culture’, and social being of the ‘excluded’. During the 2008, following the EU initiative for promotion of intercultural dialogue, the government had started its work with dialogue on ‘core values’; an initiative supposed to go on until 2011(Sabuni 2008). Tracking official Swedish documents, involved with this dialogue, indicates that the same kind of tension is constantly repeated across them. Proclamations professing the need for combining unity (core values) and (cultural) diversity seem to end up, more or less directly, arguing for unity in terms of cultural assimilation rather than for any cultural plurality based on equity or equality. In this vein, the minister of integration (Skr-2008 2008) focuses on ‘strengthening respect for democracy and the fundamental human rights’, inherent Swedish core values. Due to contemporary migration and ethic diversity there is an urgent need for intensified work on integration around these values, Sabuni concludes. In this context intercultural dialogue is indeed positive, necessary and unavoidable, she maintains. However ‘it is
not enough to create similar conditions and possibilities for all people in the economic and social sphere’. In order to secure social cohesion in a democratic society it is ‘as important to have shared vision of and emotions of belonging’ (ibid.). The argument refers more precisely to those who are, or feel, excluded and in particular ‘newly arrived or those who find themselves in a long-term condition of exclusion’. A destructive condition of being placed on the margin of society, or leading an existence outside ‘society’, is, according to Sabuni, transferred between generations, resulting in new generations of becoming strangers and having gradually less and less shared values and contacts with ‘society’ than their parents (for an extended discussion, see Dahlstedt 2009a).

We find a similar perspective expressed in the research and development programme of the Swedish branch of the European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals. Here the programme’s Priority 4 is supposed to stimulate and develop an ‘intercultural dialogue’ targeted at ‘solution of potential conflicts that have been coursed by differences in cultural and religious customs, and in this way at securing a better integration of third world citizens into the member state societies, their values and life forms’ (European Integration Fund 2008). This can hardly be understood as implicating anything else but an adaptation - or a regimentation - without dialogue’.

‘Keys to Sweden’
The disciplinary character and wider political implications of this moral adaptation, or conversely sanctions on non-compliance, comes out clearly in documents elaborated by one of the liberal party’s influential partners in government, Moderaterna; a party profiling itself as an openly neo-liberal party during the 1990s, but currently cultivating an image as Sweden’s ‘New Labour Party’ (Sveriges nya arbetarparti). During the autumn of 2008, as the global financial crisis hits also Sweden, the party’s ‘working group against exclusion and segregation’ (Arbetsgrupp mot utanförskap och segregation), including the Swedish Minister of Migration, Tobias Billström, articulates an urgent need for change of course in Swedish integration policy. Under the heading ‘Put clear demands on our immigrants’ (Billström, Kristersson and Svantesson 2008), the working group claims that the existing policy has suffered from permissiveness and misdirected benevolence. This is, the group argues, a product of a typical Swedish fear of clearly communicating the country’s fundamental values and value founded legal provisions to immigrants. Thus, the time has come to clearly articulate these values and clarify demands to be met by people who chose to come and live in Sweden.

These are also the underlying themes in a new government proposal for amendment of Swedish policies of integration elaborated by the party with the heading, Several Pathways In: Keys to Sweden and Swedish Society (Nya moderaterna 2009). The programme is marked by a strongly restrictive turn, directed at so-called ‘newly arrived’ in particular and ‘immigrants’ in general. A special contract shall be established between the ‘newly arrived’ and the Swedish state. Here expectations and duties of each part to the contract bring out clearly a contemporary disciplinary workfare orientation of Swedish social policy. The background is, what the programme describes as a ‘welfare dependence that tends to be inherited across generations of immigrants’, and which is claimed to be particularly characteristic for multiethnic suburban areas where youth is fostered to social outsiders and to reject Swedish society, its laws and norms. On that
background, also conditions for immigrants to receive Swedish citizenship should be sharpened (op.cit. 27). Furthermore, the Working Groups concludes, ‘citizenship received on false grounds can be withdrawn’ (op.cit. 28), a claim particularly highlighted when the proposal was presented in the leading Swedish daily, Dagens Nyheter under the headline ‘Take away citizenship from criminal foreigners’ (Billström, Kristersson and Svantesson 2008). Here the authors leave no doubt about the importance of clarifying to immigrants that in Sweden, Swedish values are crucial. ‘Citizenship in Sweden should not be watered down’: a far cry from one of the basic principles of decades of Swedish policy, that citizenship unconditionally follows from residence (e.g. Sainsbury 2006), without any ‘cultural competence’ probing or language tests; nor claims for loyalty or oaths of allegiance.

The end of Swedish ‘exceptionalism’
In terms of our concerns here, a new law on ‘labour immigration’ passed through parliament in 2008 (Regeringen 2008; Sveriges Riksdag 2008) provides another, most tangible, example of the gradual erosion of citizenship. The new law opens up a temporary migrant workers’ scheme, even in Sweden. It has been characterised as ‘a slight revolution’ (Cerna 2009) in a country with a longstanding and ramified edifice of inclusive citizenship subject to democratic guarantees, perhaps more inclusive than anywhere else (Sainsbury 2006).

Among trade unions and left parties there is a fear that an imposed dependency of labour migrants on particular employers will lead to an exceedingly weak bargaining position and to exposure to excessive exploitation (Davidsson 2008; Hjärtberg 2008). The new law represents a qualitative break with inclusive regulatory and citizenship policies concerning immigrant labour, premised on union power and the expectation of full employment in Sweden. This affirmation of union power in a strongly regulated labour market has, for almost four decades, blocked – except for a few exceptional cases (seasonal workers, a limited recruitment to occupational areas with documented shortage of skilled labour, etc.) - almost all direct importation of labour from third countries. But, under the insignia of ‘human rights’ and ‘international solidarity’, it has been matched by the upholding of one of Europe’s most liberal asylum policies. This is a token of a Swedish exceptionalism, which has largely prevailed until the present, most recently manifested in a relatively large scale acceptance of asylum seekers from Somalia, Iraq and Afghanistan, certainly in comparison to other ‘Western’ nations.

While, in practice, any recruitment of foreign labour from third countries previously needed acceptance by the trade unions, the role of the unions is through the new law reduced to a much weakened consultative status. The authority in processing cases, involving residence and work permits, has been transferred from firm structural inquiry through the Swedish public labour market authorities to an express and less probing management by the Swedish Migration Board. The granting of permits must be premised on the principle that it is the individual ‘employer’s assessment of the need to recruit [labour] from a third country that must be the basis for the administration of matters of residence and employment permits’ (Sveriges Riksdag 2008: 26). The conditions are proper adherence to the prevailing labour market regulations and that the unfilled posts have previously been announced as vacant in Sweden and in the EU/EES area and Switzerland.
It is the expressed target of the law-makers to move towards an equalisation of the rules for employment of third country nationals with those pertaining to EU/EES non-Swedish nationals and citizens of Switzerland. This contention appears open to question. However, the law appears to be more instrumental in repositioning the Swedish management of migration in line with temporary workers systems currently developing across most of the rest of Europe. It introduces the possibility of potentially large scale importation of labour from ‘third countries’ on the basis of temporary employment contracts, and – in contrast to earlier practice in Swedish immigration policy – provides a legal-institutional framework for extending migrants’ temporary residence on grounds of employment to longer periods. While any employment of more substantial duration used to provide basis for permanent residence permit and denizenship, including access to full social citizenship in terms of inclusion in the provisions of the general social security system, this is not the case with the new law. The duration of a residence permit is completely dependent on the duration of a valid employment contract. The residence permit is, in principle, terminated when the employment contract is terminated. An initial contract for employment can last for up to two years, with possibilities for subsequent temporary renewals up to a total of four years. During the first two years the contracted migrant is bound to a single employer, and to a certain limited section of the labour market. During possible further temporary employment contracts, the migrant is only bound to a certain section of the labour market, not to a single employer, but her/his residence permit is still dependent on a valid employment contract. After four years the migrant can be considered for full citizenship, on condition of being able to demonstrate a continuous employment record.

This new law on the importation of migrant labour consequently opens up a third tier concerning access to rights of citizenship, alongside the dual statuses of citizens and denizens. Through its strict insistence of making residence dependent on employment status, the law, in effect, extends Swedish authorities’ increasingly uncompromising insistence on a disciplinary workfare regime (Schierup, Hansen and Castles 2006, ch. 8), but shifting access to rights and entitlements from the realm of social policy and integration policy to the realm of immigration control. Given the current government efforts to reformulate the conditions of access to or retention of citizenship, the formal opportunity to eventually opt for full citizenship promised to migrant workers, may turn into a cloak for actual practices preventing their substantial realisation, thus forging a covert alignment of Sweden with emerging all-European practices on so-called ‘managed migration’ (e.g. Guild, Groenendijk and Carrera 2009). However, harmonization appears to proceed even in other realms of Swedish migration policy. Thus, the launch of the new legislation on importation of labour, forged through the political process beyond any broad parliamentary consensus (e.g. Rojas 2006), appears to be packaged together with an eventual alignment with the EU’s restrictive and convoluted refugee and asylum rules and policies (e.g. Hansen 2009), with Sweden becoming a fully integrated (and complicit) member of the EU’s Area of Freedom, Security and Justice. Thus, as the final irony, the so-called ‘Stockholm Programme’ appears to seal the end of a former Swedish exceptionalism (e.g. Guild 2009).

Contours of a ‘European apartheid’?
Beyond Liberal Pluralism

We have described a long and winding track travelled by Sweden during the past three decades. It is a track departing from a liberal multiculturalism that offered a ramified body of substantial rights of citizenship – civil, political, cultural, social, and labour rights - to ‘newcomers’. It was for long coupled with a generous policy of asylum. It has, during the latest two decades, step by step, led us towards disciplinary neo-liberalism, neo-conservative moral rearmament and the gradual breaking up of a comprehensive pact of citizenship. This trajectory demonstrates that Sweden is now well on its way to catch up with the currently rising wave of identity politics, erosion of citizenship, and (re-)emerging stringent policies of ‘circular migration’ across the old EU-Fifteen and other parts of western Europe.

In the name of ‘defence of liberalism’ and ‘citizenship’, we see political coalitions surfacing across Europe that are void of a realistic alternative to the historically produced edifice of rights citizenship that used to form the backbone of social solidarity and cohesion in post World War Two European societies. This appears, in effect, to make ‘together in diversity’ look as a contradiction in terms, especially to the extent that the ongoing moral crusade in the member states is matched by the European Commission’s obvious search for legitimacy through convoluted identity politics at the supranational level (Balibar 2004; Schierup, Hansen and Castles 2006: ch. 10; Ström Melin 2010). A conspicuous fixation on matters of ‘identity’, ‘moral duty’ and ‘community’, albeit often in the name of ‘liberalism’, appears to bring these appeals deeper and deeper into the ideological terrain of ‘integralism’ (Holmes 2000), focused on the virtues of a shared organic cultural community and the incompatibility and clash of different cultures and civilisations; a terrain shared with ill-famed radical anti-immigration nationalist-populist movements and parties across Europe. Populist parties appear, on their part – in spite of their philosophical roots and present day political agendas bordering on fascism (e.g. Holmes 2000; Berggren 2007) - increasingly successful in washing away their stigma of ‘racism’ (for critical perspectives, see Giraud 1988; Balibar 1990; Schierup 1993; Holmes 2000). They, thereby, also come to appear as sober potential soul mates of an actually existing liberalism in the crusade against ‘multiculturalism’, ‘urban ‘insurrection’, (Muslim) ‘extremism’ and ‘terrorism’.

Unholy alliances

By deviously positioning itself neither to the right, nor to the left, but as both right and left (Holmes 2000), a contemporary European populism potentially, in the west as well as in the east, appeals to broad categories of disoriented populations, suffering economic insecurity, social crisis and identity loss. It can appeal to parts of a traditionally conservative and nationalist right, frustrated by the threats to national self-esteem represented by globalisation, Europeisation and transnational migration. But it also vies to the allegiance of parts of the traditional left, frustrated with the denigration of the welfare state that imagined threats of migration and ‘foreign cultures’ are seen to represent in terms of deficient care for the elderly, labour market precarity and the corrosion of social solidarity in general. There is indeed a degree of ironic resemblance between the successful appeal of multiculturalism to western socialists after 1989 (Barry 2001) - as ‘class struggle’ and ‘socialism’ had, seemingly for good, been relegated to the status of a no-go ideological wasteland, only traversed by some obstinate stalkers - and the co-optation through inversion of traditional leftist darlings of
anti-racism and anti-imperialism (Schierup 1993: 158ff), which intelligent leaders like Jean Marie Le Pen and Jörg Haider have carefully developed during past decades, and which are adopted and currently put into daily action by populists in Sweden and across Europe.

All since the late 1970s a pivotal ideological tenet of anti-immigration populist movements in Europe – such as the British National Front (forerunner of the present British National Party), the French Front National and the Danish Progress Party (forerunner of the present Danish People’s Party) - has been their fervent critique of multiculturalism as a political programme and practice for the governance of migration and the incorporation of migrants in European societies. They share company and overall worldview with a range of other radical populist movements across the EU-Fifteen such as Vlaamse Block in Belgium, the Pim Fortuyn List (forerunner of the Dutch Freedom Party), the Norwegian Progress party, Silvio Berlusconi’s coalition partners Lega Nord and Alleanza Nazionale in Italy, the Swedish Democrats and the Swiss People’s Party, just to mention a few of the more important. By usurping, and turning topsy-turvy, the underpinning premises of the cultural relativism underlying the anti-racist arguments and claims for the recognition of identity and diversity, typically brought forward by many protagonists of multiculturalist policies, the ideological spokespersons of the populist surge have, often with remarkable success, managed to wash away their own stigma of being ‘racists’ (e.g. Giraud 1988; Balibar 1990, Schierup, 1993 #32: 158ff; Brinks 2005; Holmes 2000).

Through carefully retouching their lacerated images, and nurturing their appeal to both right and left (Holmes 2000), populist leaders and parties become potential, as well as actual, partners for mainstream political parties vying for alternatives in terms of identity politics, as public policies concerned with rights citizenship, and in particular social citizenship and universal welfare policies, are progressively drying up as actually existing sources for legitimacy (Schierup, Hansen and Castles 2006, ch.10). These processes of, still more or less unholy, political realignment are, however, not so new. They have been on their way all along the neo-liberal restructuring of European welfare states since the beginning of the 1980s (e.g. Schierup 1993, 1994). Already fifteen years back Baumgartl and Favell (1995: 394), could conclude that a survey of 27 European countries ‘portrayed a Europe that is insecure, edgy, ready to look for scapegoats, and all too quick to take up confrontational positions’. They describe it as a Europe where ‘the question of xenophobia gets translated almost exclusively into introspective national concerns, as more fuel for the most blatant and regressive worries about national identity or the functioning of national political institutions’. However, a dramatically boosted panic over ‘Islamist extremism’, and over migration as a security threat, since 9/11-2001 has proved to fertilise the ground for a faster proliferation of xenophobia, racialisation and the denigration of norms and policies of citizenship in European societies (Kundnani 2007; Fekete 2009).

When Jörg Haider and his Austrian Freedom Party won its first spectacular electoral victory in 1999 there were hardly limits to the publicly expressed moral indignity directed towards an EU member state stepping beyond the pale. But when in 2005 racist anti-Muslim cartoons - no less vulgar, derisory and defaming than the anti-Semitic caricatures of the 1930s in Germany and elsewhere - were published by a major Danish daily paper and subsequently reprinted across Europe, racialising discourse and banal
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stigmatising scoff had already become a readily digestible everyday diet for a wide European audience; and the cartoons were mostly hailed by European media as the expression of ‘freedom of press’ and as a bold move against ‘self-censorship in a liberal democracy’. By then the Austrian ‘exception’ had also already come to share company with a broad anti-immigration, anti-immigrant and anti-multiculturalist populist surge across the continent, entering the mainstream political spectrum in several countries; and where this is still not the case, several of its main touchstones are often in the process of being busily appropriated by established political parties across the left-right political spectrum (e.g. Schierup, Hansen and Castles 2006).

Managing the ‘new migration’

These unholy alliances stand out as protagonists of an exclusionary or nested citizenship, fit to underpin precarious labour markets and divided societies; a ‘European apartheid’ in spem (Balibar, 2004).

Yet, as long as asylum seekers can be dubbed ‘illegal migrants’, detained, concentrated and put away in camps and ‘refouled’ to ‘safe havens’ in Libya, Ukraine, Moldavia, Turkey, Mali or Ghana, it may indeed seem possible for the European ‘West’ (moving eastwards), to uphold a chimera of tolerance and international solidarity. It can also appear affirmative to ‘liberal values’ when human trafficking is condemned and most legal channels for entry of asylum seekers and labour migrants are blocked in the name of security and humanitarian concern; although at the same time as the millions of ‘illegal’ - including numerous non-acknowledged asylum seekers - remain essential cogwheels on the shadow-side of restructured post-Keynesian economies and ‘flexibilised’ labour markets across the most advanced economies of the European Union. However, as the present preoccupation across the Union with formulation of the so-called Stockholm Programme indicates an immanent need for overseeing and regularizing today’s obscure governance of migration and asylum across the EU is felt and set high on the political agenda.

As a result of ongoing multilateral deliberations and current policy-changes across Europe new forms of circular migration may come to occupy the position of a sanctioned centre-piece in an integrated EU-ropean so-called ‘managed migration’ strategy. This may, at least in the short run, appear as a sound pragmatic solution to a precarious dilemma of ‘zero migration’ versus continued reliance on undocumented labour. Thus, in today’s EU, governments seem to believe that they may escape between the horns of their migrant dilemmas (Schierup, 2006). While dealing economically with the truth in relating to their constituencies, and under cover of the EU’s emerging overall programme for ‘managed migration’ as an umbrella, national governments are in the process of remoulding their cumbersome asylum and ‘illegal immigration’ problems into a vast new ‘guest worker’ complex (Schierup, Hansen and Castles 2006). Its configuration is a circular migration system as a substantial part of the solution to a projected chronic deficit of labour in Europe’s ‘aging societies’ and to the problem of ‘managing migration’.

Thus history certainly repeats itself, but in modified forms and under different circumstances. The new systems of circular migration, we see emerging today, appear in most cases to be more strictly monitored than the past (German, Austrian, Swiss) guest worker systems of Mitteleuropa ever were, with all their possibilities for migrants...
to, by time, actually acquire incremental rights of citizenship (e.g. Guiraudon 1998). Stricter management of ‘circular migration should, at least in theory, guarantee long term access to an abundant cheap and readily disposable labour force, with substantial costs of reproduction pushed onto poorer homelands (Meillassoux 1981 (1975); Schierup 1990). In the same fell swoop extremist populism could hopefully be controlled, the new helots of hyper-flexible labour markets kept excluded from privileges of citizenship and at a safe distance from Western Europe’s unruly inner poly-ethnic backyards.

‘Without a mirror’

Matching theory and practice is a universal problem. However, difficulties may vary in both substance and intensity depending on the extent to which there is (still) a solid obligation to legitimise governance in terms of ‘democracy’ and substantial rights of citizenship. Seen in this perspective today’s ‘actually existing liberalism’ of the ‘West’ appears to experience a basic problem similar to that experienced by the ‘actually existing socialism’ of the ‘East’ in the recent past; that is, to reconcile a grand liberating ideology with a divergent reality and practice. Thus the product is still marketed as ‘liberalism’, but increasingly as a cover for an illiberal liberalism (King 1999; Guild, Groenendijk and Carrera 2009) building on the actual premises of neo-liberalism (O’Brien and Penna 1998). That is a ‘liberalism’, which has lost contact with liberal philosophical roots and founding institutional preconditions.

Beyond EU declarations and directives on diversity, discrimination and racism, illiberal ideologies and political movements and power blocks are building up across Europe, configured around ‘integralist’ philosophies evoking ‘nation’, ‘community’, ‘culture’, religion, ‘colour’, ‘blood’ or ‘descent’ (Holmes 2000). In some cases this transformation of seemingly ‘tolerant societies’ has developed during a long time, like in France and Denmark (Giraud 1988; Holmes 2000; Schierup 1993, 1994). But in several cases a transformation has taken place with astonishing speed and to an astonishing extent, as when, during a very short span of time, a ““liberal” and “tolerant” society’ like the Netherlands ‘go to the other extreme and demand conformity, compulsion and seemingly undemocratic sanctions against immigrants’ (Vasta 2007: 714; see also Brinks 2005). In the cases of Britain or Sweden, a similar development has come later, and appears still more convoluted and ambivalent. Here ‘diversity’ is still praised as a resource for economic growth and prosperity of the community. However, ‘cultural difference’ is, in contrast, increasingly branded as ‘deviancy’ (Grillo 2009), to be controlled through police action and bio-political counterinsurgency under the banners of democracy, human rights, and the crusade against terrorism.

During the two preceding decades Swedish politics and policies on migration and migrant incorporation have eventually become an integrated part of policies of neo-liberal globalisation and a subscriber to EU directives for the ‘management diversity’. These liabilities have, moreover, during the first years of our present millennium, increasingly merged with neo-conservative identity politics and issues of securitization under the insignia of the ‘global war on terror’. The preceding illustrates a widespread moral panic, focusing on problems of perceived culturally conditioned deviance,
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‘patriarchal traditionalism’, and uncontrolled violence, including ‘terrorism’. ‘Muslim fundamentalism’ or ‘Islamism’ is increasingly blamed for ‘integration failure’ and urban unrest - and is monitored accordingly. A need for strengthening social cohesion is being voiced with reference to fundamental democratic core values of democracy, human rights and gender equality. Hence, a neo-liberal concern for growth, through appropriate ‘diversity management’ merges with neo-conservative worries focused on cultural collisions, and perceived needs for reinforcing moral duty, family responsibility, cultural homogeneity and community cohesion. Measures for redemption are divided between concerns for core ‘values’ and national identity, on the one hand, and law and order austerity measures through reinforcing the executive, on the other hand; but with citizenship squeezed in between and its rich body of established rights, step by step, exposed to corrosion.

We have in some detail described how a dawning ‘New Sweden’ - which had already by the advent of the new millennium given up the last chimera of its traditional neutrality through joining NATO-led forces in ‘fixing’ the ‘failed state’ of Afghanistan - has lately managed to open a new front for the ‘global war on terror’ through bio-political counterinsurgency in its ‘failed neighbourhoods’ at home. We see the illiberal discourses and policies activated in response to the recent urban riots in Sweden as a litmus test telling us how far we have wandered on this obscure track, leading to an incremental erosion of established frameworks of citizenship. But beyond worried media images it is also possible to discern contours a trans-ethnic democratic alternative.

Contemporary urban unrest is often routinely represented as part of a world wide, but basically irrational, process of ‘losers fighting losers’, to paraphrase Hans Magnus Enzenberger’s (1994) joint interpretation of the Los Angeles rebellion and the civil war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, from a closer inspection this appears to represent just one minor corner of a rich Swedish and European contemporary urban multicultural multitude demonstrating anger or seeking alternatives. Violent ‘street gangs’, putting schools and other service institutions on fire, burning their neighbours’ cars, and attacking police, public busses, and fire brigades as well as other local incorporation of ‘the state’, are certainly those instances of urban ‘unrest’ most often exposed in the media. But they are just the more spectacular, and conceivably the most futile, manifestation of a continuous low scale insurrection, including a multitude of alternative networks, social movements, and voluntary associations; more or less anti-racist, anti-fascist or anti-neo-liberal, and more or less militant. Some represent apparently just ‘a nuisance to social order’ and the community, without clearly manifested aims or declarations. Others articulate themselves in positive political terms. They manifestly reclaim streets, cities, the country, Europe, and the World for a democracy, seen to have been sold out in return for neo-liberal gentrification, escalating social inequality and injustice; a pragmatic sale, bartering established rights of citizenship against supra-national technocratic management in the name of ‘European integration’ (Balibar 2004; Schierup, Hansen and Castles 2006).

A common denominator for the distrust housed by this multitude of voices, calling for a better future, could be summarised in the sardonic Swedish trans-ethnic youth argot for the police: Aina. Adopted from the Turkish expression Ainasiz, meaning ‘without a mirror’, it stands by implication for ‘those that should be ashamed of looking
themselves in a mirror’, or ‘those without shame’. The way in which the recent outbursts of frustration in Malmö and other Swedish cities were represented and acted upon by media and government indicates that ‘Aina’ may convey a symbolic meaning addressed to a wider assemblage than the Swedish riot police.

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Series editors:
Peo Hansen
Tel. +46-11-36 34 23
E-mail: peoha@isv.liu.se

Erik Berggren
Tel. +46-11-36 32 66
E-mail: eribe@isv.liu.se