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Swedish Muslims and Secular Society: Faith-based Engagement and Place

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This article sets out to explore how Muslims in Sweden identify with and create social life in the place where they live, i.e. in their neighbourhood, in their town/city and in Swedish society at large. In a paradoxical religious landscape that includes a strong Lutheran state church heritage and a Christian free-church tradition, in what is, nevertheless, a very secular society, Muslims may choose different strategies to express their faith, here roughly described as “retreatist,” “engaged” or “essentialist/antagonistic”. Focusing on a non-antagonistic, engaged stance, and drawing upon a combination of authors’ interviews, and materials published in newspapers and on the internet, we first bring to the fore arguments by Muslim leaders in favour of creating a Muslim identity with a Swedish brand, and second give some examples of local Muslim individuals, acting as everyday makers in their neighbourhood, town or city. Third, we also give attention to an aggressively negative Islamophobic stance expressed both in words and in physical violence in parts of Swedish society. In conclusion, we reflect upon the challenges and potentialities of an emotionally engaged,

dialogue-orientated Muslim position facing antagonistic interpretations of Islam, and an ignorant, sometimes Islamophobic, environment.

Keywords: Islam in Sweden; Muslims in Sweden; Muslim everyday makers; Muslims facing Islamophobia; faith and place; faith-based engagement

Introduction¹

Religion can be a strong driver for taking collective action, as illustrated by individuals and groups of believers taking faith-based action on issues of welfare and social justice (Cloke, Beaumont and Williams 2013; Beaumont and Cloke 2012; Bäckström *et al.* 2011), or by terrorist groups inspired by fundamentalist interpretations of a particular religion. In this article, we want to explore how Muslims in Sweden relate their faith to social life in their neighbourhood, in their home town/city, and in society in general, i.e., a question of place identity on different scales (see Pile 2010, 15). Irrespective of scale and level, identity formation is a process and not a fixed category. Such processes are

linked to self-perception, choices, and social structures, but could also be complemented by or based on a particular territory, such as a neighbourhood or an entire city. Some people identify with their region while others see themselves as cosmopolitans – connected to a variety of cultures all over the world. All these identifications could be complemented by identification with a nation. (Andersson 2011, 35)

Given the lack of systematic research on Muslims in Sweden,² our approach is exploratory, illustrating the way some Muslim imams, other community leaders and “everyday makers” (this term will be explained in a separate section later in this article), identifying themselves

as Muslims express an orientation towards finding ways of relating Islam to perceived Swedish culture and traditions without losing their Muslim identity.

Faith-based action can take different forms, depending on the interpretation of Islam, or any other religion, that is adopted. In a study of the political psychology of globalization and Muslims in the West, this article identifies three ideal type strategies of identity formation among Muslims: essentialism, engagement and “retreatism” (Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking 2011, 12). An essentialist interpretation indicates vigorous proselytization, sometimes even including a propensity to use violence to spread the message, whereas an open-minded, although engaged interpretation favours of mutual understanding and dialogue with other religions and even with non-believers. The retreat-orientated stance means keeping faith as a purely personal thing, more or less invisible when leaving the household sphere, i.e. not including an explicit attempt to win the souls of non-believers.³ Illustrating the difference between a clear-cut retreatist stance and an engaged but non-violent position, a Swedish journalist recently reported on recurrent conversations with an old Jewish woman who had reacted strongly to an article describing the rabbi Shneur Kesselman in Malmö, who always wears a traditional kaddish garment in the street. Drivers sometimes lower their car window and shout ”damned Jew” at him. The woman kept saying: “I as a Jew have my religion at home; he should do that too – not walk in such clothes!” (Orrenius 2013b). This is indeed a strongly emotional response, but at the same time indicates a retreatist kind of position with regard to religious faith. It is also an example of a member of a religious minority internalizing a need to conform to a majority that is traditionally claiming a certain territory, here a secular Lutheran society.

Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking argue normatively in favour of the engagement position, suggesting that both majority and minority communities in society should strive to become “postnationalist, self-dialogical, and engaged in dialogue with a range of others. Activist,

assertive, and agonistic rather than antagonistic,” and concluding that “Muslims are positioned to contribute toward new cosmopolitical potentialities for a renewed pluralistic global order” (Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking 2011, 196).⁴ Well aware of the wide spectrum of different interpretations of Islam and other religions, the aim of this article is to bring to the fore Muslim initiatives that aim at accommodating Islamic faith to values and practices perceived as inherently Swedish, which in turn also becomes an alteration of what it means to be Swedish. The focus will be on a few official representatives of Muslim associations, a Muslim adult education association, and some “everyday makers” who openly refer to their Muslim identity as a faith-based driver in order to help their fellow Muslims to identify themselves as members of Swedish society, i.e., to become socially included without losing their Muslim identity.

It is to be noted that this focus does not imply that we deny the great variety of orientations among Muslims in Sweden; we acknowledge, for example, the “silent majority” of not so ardent believers, reports saying that 100 young men (and, on occasion, women) have travelled from Sweden to Syria to join the Islamic State (IS) (SÄPO 2014), and a growing feminist re-interpretation of patriarchal Islam among Muslim women (ETC Örebro 2014; Awad 2014). As stated by a young male immigrant who escaped with his family from Bosnia and arrived in a Swedish town in 1992, one’s religious approach in a new country is strongly related to one’s previous experience: “Here are Muslims from many countries. Many newly established groups. What you bring with you from your homeland and your culture influences how you practise your religion” (Nerikes Allehanda 2011; cf. Nordin 2004). Or, in line with Bevelander and Otterbeck (2012, 72): “Merely the diversity of origins – national, ethnic, religious etc., – opens up a pluralism of Islams being practiced, not to mention individual preferences.” There is also a generational aspect – in the long-run, second- and third-

generation immigrants may develop “softer” interpretations of their parents’ religion, or even become secularized (Ley 2008).

After this introduction, we set out Muslim initiatives taken in the context of the religious landscape in Sweden, i.e. the paradoxical combination of a strong Lutheran state church heritage, a Christian free-church tradition and, today, a very secular society. The three sections that follow highlight three different, emotionally-driven expressions of activism related to Swedish Muslims: first, the commitment by some Muslim leaders to make Islam an integrated part of Swedish society; second, some examples of Muslim everyday makers at the neighbourhood level of society; and third, the very emotional and aggressive stance sometimes displayed against Muslims, for Islamophobic attitudes do not only manifest themselves in anonymous posts on the internet,⁵ but also include violent crimes such as arson or physical assault. In conclusion, we reflect upon the challenges and potentialities of an emotionally engaged, dialogue-orientated Muslim position facing an ignorant and sometimes even antagonistic segment of the Swedish population. Methodologically, we draw upon our own interviews with representatives of Muslim congregations, stories told and action taken by some Muslim everyday makers as studied by ourselves and other researchers, and reports in Swedish media. The imams interviewed and cited represent the major mosques in the three largest cities in Sweden (Stockholm, Göteborg, Malmö), who address a wide audience of Muslims in Sweden.

“Blue and yellow Islam”?⁶

How do Muslim believers in Sweden perceive and react to the paradoxical Christian secular landscape? A precise answer to this question is impossible for several reasons, but most importantly because the different strands and conflicts within Islam in the country have hardly been investigated as objects of research (Larsson 2014, 116). It is important to keep this in

mind in the context of the present article, whose aim is not to discuss this diversity per se. As stated in the introduction, its deliberate focus is on representatives of Islam who, in their statements and actions, express a desire to develop an interpretation of Islam that will make it intrinsic to perceived cultural, religious and political conditions in Sweden. Precisely because of the current lack of knowledge about the diversity within Islam in Sweden, the notion of one imagined “blue-and-yellow Islam” is also questionable, as is the concept of a clearly defined “Swedish” culture [*svenskhet*], i.e. both notions are “empty signifiers” (Carlbom 2006). Nevertheless, as will be illustrated, imams representing various Muslim congregations in Sweden are eager to declare that they take a stance of emotionally-driven, positive engagement in relation to perceived Swedish culture and politics (Larsson 2014, 117–137; Olsson 2009).

Muslims in a pluralist, multi-ethnic society

Over the past few decades, globalization and immigration have transformed Sweden into a pluralist, multi-ethnic society with implications for the range of faiths practised in the country (Larsson 2014; Cato 2012; Elander and Fridolfsson 2011). Muslim immigrants arriving in Sweden encounter something of a paradox; Sweden is a strongly secular society but also has a strong Lutheran heritage, as physically symbolized by the more than 3500 Church of Sweden buildings located across the country. There are also thousands of small free-church buildings that are likewise used for eucharistic services, prayer, baptisms, weddings, funerals and other religious ceremonies. These buildings serve as signposts of place identity and create the impression that Sweden is a religious landscape. However, these physical signposts of a religious society hide a paradox. Although as many as 67.5% of Swedish citizens are still members of the Church of Sweden (Svenska Kyrkan 2013), Sweden is often considered one of the most secular societies in the world (Norris and Inglehart 2004, 90). Most Church of

Sweden members joined before 2000, when the church was still a state institution and membership was automatically assigned at birth. Most are not active Christians.

Approximately 1% of Church of Sweden members cancel their membership every year, whereas Muslim congregations and Catholic and Orthodox Churches are attracting more members (Dagens Nyheter 2009; Svenska Kyrkan 2011).

Muslim congregations reported in 2011 that they had 110,000 registered members (SST 2013), and the number of Muslims born in Sweden is also increasing. Many Muslims are not practising believers, although they are often counted as such in the public debate, not least in Islamophobic contexts⁷ and, among Muslims, as well as among Christian and other religious believers, there are great variations in the forms and level of zeal in religious practice (Roald 2012).

Six different Islamic umbrella organizations are eligible for support by the Swedish Commission for Government Support to Faith Communities [*Nämnden för Statligt Stöd till Trossamfund; SST*] (SST 2014). Aside from these organizations, there are also many unregistered Muslim congregations (SOU 2009, 27), and a survey carried out in spring 2013 found 140 Swedish-based Muslim websites on the internet (Andersson 2013, 64–172). In contrast to Christian churches and congregations, Muslim congregations are not formalized in terms of administrative structures and established leadership; there is no obvious “pope,” “vicar” or “patriarch” to ask for correct interpretations. A rough estimate based on reports to SST indicates that the number of imams in Swedish Muslim organizations amounts to more than 240. No system of education for imams is formally authorized by the state. A government investigation has concluded that such education should not be a matter for state supervision as that would contradict the confessional neutrality of the state and threaten congregational autonomy (SOU 2009, 109). Having these circumstances in mind, we now turn to a few examples of how imams may define their position regarding the way Islam

relates to Swedish society. The imams interviewed represent mosques in the largest cities in Sweden: Stockholm, Göteborg and Malmö.

The reciprocal role of two cultures that should try to understand each other is stated by former president, now vice-president of the Islamic Association in Stockholm, Abdallah Salah:

Our vision is that Islam should be a natural part of Sweden. It should not be anything odd being a Swedish Muslim. Our task is to strengthen Muslims in Sweden and to give non-Muslims more knowledge about Islam.⁸

“It should be” is a firm expression of emotional engagement and reinforcement of “Swedishness.” Salah says in the same vein “[w]e are part of society. Saving souls is not enough,”⁹ thus underscoring that everyday activities cannot be separated from the purpose of maintaining Muslim identity in a country where this means being a minority. Mosques, including cellar or backyard mosques, are important as platforms for creating bonding and bridging capital for Muslims in Sweden. Besides being a place of resort for Muslim believers, they are also arenas for developing links to the Christian and secular parts of Swedish society:

Our members are dedicated to the religious practices in the Mosque. But a Muslim can be playing football too. For us it is a religious activity. God says it is good for the body. Even going to work can be a religious activity.¹⁰

Thus, even sport, while commonly referred to as a secular activity, becomes a religious Muslim practice, reinforcing its meaning. At the Stockholm Mosque, although it is basically a place for prayer, cultural and welfare activities now dominate, including, for example, marriage support sessions, youth activities, female gym classes and swimming lessons. Aside from being an important node for Muslims, not only in Stockholm but from all over Sweden, the Stockholm Mosque functions as a community centre, a central place for both cultural and religious fellowship. Salah speaks of the Stockholm Mosque as a community centre, using the

term *Folkets Hus*, which literally means “people’s house,” a term usually reserved for public buildings used for the Swedish Labour Movement’s cultural activities.¹¹ Only around 10% of the 50–60 activities organized by the mosque are religious in a specific, literal sense. Salah says that people like to spend their time in the mosque doing other things since it is a place where they feel comfortable. Its location close to Citizen Square (Medborgarplatsen) and its subway station also means that Muslims from other parts of the city can easily reach it.¹² This is therefore a place with strong emotional identity ties for Swedish Muslims. The social profile of Islam in Sweden is also represented at the local level, where Muslim congregations deliver intensive voluntary social work. These congregations are also “the most interested in co-operation with other organisations and with authorities of different types [...] and those that have the most positive experience of the wider society” (Borell and Gerdner 2011, 968).¹³

Following Abdallah Salah’s argumentation, Muslims in Sweden do not place an unconditional emphasis on assimilation [*assimilering*] – neither is it considered essential to preserve or protect a “pure” or “real” form of Muslim identity. Instead, the task at hand involves mutual accommodation, as another of our interviewees said:

The most important goal is integration, to integrate Muslims into Swedish society. The organization also works for Muslims to keep their identity as Muslims, in terms of culture, religion and socially. Third is that the organization functions as a bridge between the majority of Swedes and Muslims [...] One should co-operate, be on speaking terms and have acceptance. Then it will be complicity; complicity creates dialogue, and dialogue means that we feel together. I think Sweden is like a boat that we are all aboard. We should unite to foster peace so that there will be a good livelihood for all of us.¹⁴

What is expressed here is a desire for mutual accommodation on the part of Muslims and non-Muslims. Even though Islam is fairly new to Sweden, it is now an established part of Swedish culture and life:

We want to get more understanding from society so that Islam is not considered an alien religion. That's what complicates the situation for us Muslims. [...] Islam should be a self-evident religion. If someone wants to become a Muslim then it should be the same thing as for Christianity or Buddhism, why look at it differently? [...] There is this slogan "alien religion" [when referring to Islam]; that is what we find problematic.¹⁵ (Mohamed 2009)

The interviewee here refers to a general discourse in society in which Islam represents the exception to the Swedish Lutheran norm and in which it is easier for an individual Muslim to be accepted as a part of Swedish society than it is for Muslims collectively.

Ibn Rushd¹⁶

The Muslim Adult Education Association Ibn Rushd was founded in 2007 and is one of ten adult education associations recognized and funded by the Swedish National Council of Adult Education. This association links the Swedish Muslim community to the Swedish corporatist tradition, with strong ties between civil society and popular movements, and the state. A project run by Ibn Rushd, "The Promotion of Islamic Peace Culture," is targeting Muslim youth across the country, training them to become Peace Agents:

A Muslim peace agent is an active citizen who promotes positive interaction between Muslim and non-Muslim communities by for example visiting associations, schools, authorities and companies. They subscribe to the Islamic peace culture and counteract mutual prejudices such as phobia towards Islam and

the Muslim (Islamophobia) and phobia towards the West and the non-Muslims (Westo-phobia). (European Muslim Peace Agents 2013)

The view expressed by the former president of the Muslim Association of Sweden, a few imams interviewed and Ibn Rushd has a value basis that states that Islamic faith should be adapted to fit into the framework of Swedish society. The stated intention of the programme is to eradicate prejudice and to construct a Muslim identity within the Swedish context by emphasizing the emergence of a new Muslim peace movement. Notably, in this process, the idea of a non-peaceful Muslim movement is also implicitly recognized, which, it could be argued, is based on the same idea – that mass identity influences the public identity, to use an analogy from Relph (1976). We shall return to this in the next section.

Speaking with forked tongue?

Any religious congregation in Sweden that receives state funding is also expected to “uphold and reinforce the basic values of Swedish society” (SST 2014, 11). In public communications, religious leaders in Swedish mosques are careful to assert their adherence to such values – for example, that men and women have equal standing, and that congregations are to promote efforts to counteract discrimination and violence. However, when the Swedish Television programme “Uppdrag granskning” [Assignment Investigate] went undercover with hidden cameras to mosques around the country to find out the real situation, an embarrassing picture emerged (Swedish Television 2012). The answers received, which were also recorded, reveal that there is a huge discrepancy between the official picture and the actual values some Muslim congregations communicate when they are unaware that they are being monitored, especially when it comes to gender issues. Answers given by imams and family counsellors in several cases revealed a situation quite different the official picture.¹⁷

Swedish Television concluded its website summary of the programme with a statement by Dr Mohammad Fazlhashemi, Professor of the History of Ideas in the Department of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies at Umeå University, and himself a practising Muslim:

This needs to be laid to rest. Relationships between men and women simply cannot be regulated by this type of perspective [...] this conservative, ultra-orthodox and patriarchal interpretation of Islam is being called into question in Sweden and throughout Europe [...] I believe that an overwhelming majority does not wish to have this type of Islam in charge.

The Assignment Investigate programme was widely referred to in traditional and social media, and put winds on the sails of Islamophobic thoughts. The programme provoked representatives of the Islamic Association [*Islamiska Förbundet*] in Sweden to respond two days later under the headline: “Assignment Investigate raises important questions,” firmly stating that “our conviction is that having several wives here in Sweden is forbidden both legally and according to Islam” (Islamiska Förbundet i Sverige 2012). The press release was signed by the chair of the Islamic Association and the chair of the Imam Board in Sweden. Using the terminology of Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking (2011), the official spokesmen of the Muslim community here expressed an engaged and conciliatory view rather than a dogmatic, essentialist position.

Muslim everyday-makers and attraction to place

Place is an ambiguous concept that must be interpreted in relation to different scales, actors and interests. We now move from the more or less official views of the Muslim community in Sweden down to the street-level in cities and neighbourhoods. Since different actors experience and evaluate the qualities of their environment in different ways, people’s

environment can take on multiple identities. Also, the identity or reputation of a place signals to the surrounding world the qualities of the place and accordingly the perceived quality of its inhabitants. Relph (1976) elaborates on the different meanings or identities of place in the eyes of people residing in a particular place and knowing it from within, and through the eyes of others looking at the place from the outside, i.e. from a physical and mental distance. Depending on their background and personality, people make use of the place in different ways and thus experience it differently. When journalists, housing experts, researchers and others who do not themselves live in the area use the media to portray poor neighbourhoods in in powerful dark colours, stigmatization will most likely be the result. This corresponds to Relph's "mass identity" (Relph 1976, 59), i.e. ready-made images, fabricated by opinion-makers, and disseminated by mass media and advertisements. Paradoxically, such mass identities can sometimes also be too rosy, created, for example, by a housing company to attract buyers or apartment tenants.

Residents usually adapt to and defend their choice of neighbourhood, and when confronted with stigmatizing images of the place where they live, put forward qualities in the physical and social environment that the outsider is not aware of. However, even if it might be expected that the mass identity has a stronger impact on the (less informed) outsider's construction of the identity of a place, a stigmatizing reputation created by outsiders may also be internalized by the insiders (Permentier, Bolt and van Maarten 2011, 835). A physically tough or poorly built environment may convey an image of a similarly tough or poor living environment both to its inhabitants and to outsiders. On the other hand, the identity of a part of a city also builds on the social activities and interaction taking place there in places such as parks, squares, cafés, bars, etc. These amenities signal an identity of creativity and togetherness, at least between people with the same values and interests. Thus, when creating a sense of belonging and positive identification with a place, certain physical amenities can

sometimes be most helpful (Burgers 2009; Lilja 2011). As will now be demonstrated, Muslim identity can sometimes merge with place identity and produce faith-based engagement in a neighbourhood, town/city and society at large.

The everyday maker

Area-based policies targeted at multi-family housing estates have been commonplace all over Europe (Rowlands, Musterd and van Kempen 2009; De Decker *et al.* 2003). Riots and unrest in some of these areas are often classified as “hooliganism,” using the same language as that used for what sometimes occurs among violent football supporters. Instead of a structural analysis being undertaken, with consideration given to racism and class-inequality, the residents themselves are victimized.¹⁸ However, despite this gloomy picture of social life in poor neighbourhoods, engagement of a more constructive kind is also frequent, and may contribute to social inclusion and cohesion (Rowlands, Musterd and van Kempen 2009). To this end, an engaged faith-based stance could be a positive driver. As Katarina Nylund has put it:

To be a non-Swede does not give a constructive identity, and neither does being an immigrant in contradistinction to being a Swede [...] Religious identity as a Christian or a Muslim on the other hand, may be constructed as a positive belonging and become a platform from which the encounter with the other may occur on the same conditions. (Nylund 2007, 351; our translation)

In multi-family housing districts, there are often one or several people who are prepared to take action and mobilize residents in order to improve living conditions in the area. These people have sometimes been labelled “everyday makers” (Bang 2004; Bang and Sørensen 2001), “stand-by citizens” (Amnå 2010) or simply “dedicated persons” [*eldsjälar*].¹⁹ In this article we prefer the term “everyday maker,”²⁰ as originally conceptualized by Danish

political scientists Herman Bang and Eva Sörensen (2001). Bang (2004) argues that everyday makers live by a credo of everyday experience:

- Do it yourself
- Do it where you are
- Do it for fun, but also because you find it necessary
- Do it ad hoc or part-time
- Do it concretely, rather than ideologically
- Do it with self-confidence and show trust in yourself
- Do it with the system, if need be.

Using this stylized framework as our heuristic tool, we shall now give some examples of Muslim everyday makers in action.

Muslim women and invisible activity

In line with Islamic tradition and practice, Muslim congregations are strongly male dominated in terms of leadership and management (Edgardh Beckman 2006, 23–24), although Muslim women may be very active in everyday matters.²¹ Thus, in Swedish multi-ethnic neighbourhoods there are many examples of Muslim women, and men, mobilizing residents in sports, cooking, language learning, music, dancing, cycling and other activities. This kind of everyday “invisible activity” has been documented by, for example, historian Klara Folkesson in a study of Muslim women in the neighborhood of Fittja, situated in Botkyrka municipality on the periphery of the Stockholm conurbation.²² In the local branch of Verdandi, a non-religious temperance movement with roots going as far back as 1896, long-term unemployed Muslim women were given the opportunity to participate in activities such as sewing, baking, and education in Swedish. Within their local social networks, these women experienced a sense of emotional belonging and identity, making them better equipped for life

in the new country by educating and helping them with practical tasks. Moving within and between different societal arenas, they interact socially with each other in various ways, and also have influence on local politics. As Folkesson concludes, the Muslim women interviewed are:

...indeed, structurally excluded as they are stigmatized, most are unemployed, some speak poor Swedish and they all live within a suburb that is dominated by immigrants. But most of them are not passive at all, they simply move and gain personal capital in an arena that is not included in the hegemonic power structure. They carry out what can be described as *invisible activity* [...] The women's active choices of involvement and their strategies of inclusion tend to become unnoticed to the others who are not looking for them. (Folkesson 2011)

This and other similar examples (Nylund 2007) indicate that Muslim women may well be active participants in their surrounding contexts, thereby contradicting the stereotypical image of them as passive immigrant women.

Muslim woman “star in the neighborhood”

Malika Boualalla, a Muslim woman born in Casablanca and living in the Vivalla city district of Örebro was appointed local “sports leader of the year” in February 2014 on the grounds that she gave young people

self-confidence and energy [...] breaking cultural barriers [...] showing that nothing is impossible when you want it. Malika's work is spreading like ripples in the water; her great engagement with and burning interest in young girls in Vivalla has spread far beyond the neighbourhood and the city. Her engagement reaches more than 100 girls, including anything from basketball to swimming lessons. [She is] an important leader and role model. (Nerikes Allehanda 2014)

As the manager of the Vivalla Youth Centre [Vivallagården] testified:

Malika mirrors the women here and is one of them. As a Muslim and a woman they trust her. She is a star in the neighbourhood [...] I am quite afraid that Malika doesn't separate work and leisure time. She can finish her work here at five and be back again at six to coach a team. (Nerikes Allehanda 2010)²³

The trigger for Mailka Boualalla's engagement was when she participated in a project intended to help women become physically active that was organized by a nation-wide, non-religious organization for sports development [*SISU Idrottsutbildarna*] (Nerikes Allehanda 2010). She has been interviewed by local media several times, and from these interviews we can trace her religious and emotional motivation for engaging in developing the self-confidence of girls in the neighbourhood. She clearly also identifies very strongly with the area:

myself find everything great about Vivalla. The social life, neighbours, the area. One doesn't feel like an immigrant in this area. When walking outside, for example with your children, you meet people from different countries, who greet you and tell you things [...] Many people ask, "How can you stand living in Vivalla for 21 years?". But I feel good here. I don't feel alone, my family and I have neighbours, friends, in this area. I have my basket ball girls in the club, a lot to do in the area, I love living in Vivalla.²⁴

In an earlier interview (Nerikes Allehanda 2008), she spoke of her childhood in a Muslim family in Casablanca:

I kind of grew into faith. I did not realize until I emigrated to Sweden that there were people who were Christian, Buddhists – or belonged to another branch of Islam. But I am glad that all religions can live side by side here. For example, I have a Christian neighbour that I mix with. We live like human beings together.

She also spoke of the women's network, before the building of a mosque in 2008:

Earlier we women met in three small apartments in Vivalla. Twice a week we had a coffee morning [*fika*] and talked about everyday issues and read the Qur'an.

Now we shall meet in the mosque, which has nice rooms for small and big meetings. (Nerikes Allehanda 2008)

The first quotation shows that Boualalla distances herself from an identity as an "immigrant;" one of the positive features of Vivalla is that she "does *not* feel like an immigrant in this area." The last two quotations show her embracing a religious identity. In line with Nylund (2007), a religious identity here represents a positive identity construction, while being an immigrant does not.

Cosmopolitan everyday maker in Malmö

On August 27, 2013, Siavosh Derakhti, a 22-year-old Muslim, collected the first Raoul Wallenberg²⁵ award for his work against antisemitism, Islamophobia and other forms of xenophobia. The Raoul Wallenberg Academy organized the award, financed by the Ministry of Employment. The award was presented by Minister for Integration Erik Ullenhag. At the age of 19, Siavosh Derakhti started an organization called "Young Muslims against Antisemitism," now known as "Young People against Antisemitism and Xenophobia." It is based in Malmö, Sweden's third-largest city, but the ambition is to expand beyond Malmö. Before the award ceremony, Derakhti had a brief conversation with the organizers, quoted here at length:

How does it feel to be here today?

SD: Fantastic. Now it feels like I've made a difference. To receive support and attention in this kind of context is important in order to be able to achieve

something bigger. I've worked on these issues on a voluntary basis – struggled, travelled around giving talks, paid for my own coffee.

I also work as a social worker. But on the side I have travelled round to schools and given talks to raise young people's awareness of xenophobia, antisemitism and Islamophobia. These problems are on the increase, and that scares me.

How did you start your organization?

SD: It was three years ago. It began as a school project, when I organized a class trip to a concentration camp. I didn't think we had learned enough about the Holocaust in school. I wanted to build bridges between Jews and Muslims in Malmö because antisemitism is a problem in the city. After that I realized how great the need was to talk about this. Now I work to combat all kinds of xenophobia.

What will the award mean to you and your organization?

SD: I want to train more people who can travel around and give talks. At the moment there are just two of us. I also want to ensure that a talk isn't the end of it – I want there to be groups, in schools and in other environments, in which people are actively working to combat xenophobia. Hopefully we can expand beyond Malmö. There need to be more and more of us working with this, you can go far on your own but you can't take it all the way. (Government Offices of Sweden 2013)

In a longer interview in the biggest Swedish daily newspaper, he describes how he came to engage so actively in combating xenophobia (Dagens Nyheter 2013b). When he was 18, he realized what was happening around him in Malmö:

I read that my city was described as ghetto-like, as a kind of mini-Chicago. I heard that Jews were harassed due to their faith, and felt and thought that Swedish

citizens should not be mocked at due to their faith – irrespective of being Jews or Muslims.

He also says that his faith has become stronger year by year: “‘them’ and ‘us’. That would only lead to a world of xenophobia and wickedness.” His parents came to Sweden as political refugees from Iran. Although his father was educated as a microbiologist and his mother as an economist, they did not find any jobs that matched their skills. Instead, they started a shop for betting and video rental:

They have always found Sweden a fantastic country to live in, even though they were not able to work in fields they dreamt of. But to have the opportunity to say what you want, to practise whatever religion you want ... to live in a democracy is something many people around the world long for.

Siavosh underlines that the aim of Young People against Antisemitism and Xenophobia is basically to increase understanding between different groups in Malmö, where Jews and Muslims as well as Roma people are exposed to xenophobic harassment, including threats and physical violence (see, for example, Orrenius 2013a).

Siavosh Derakhti is arguably an example of a locally-rooted, cosmopolitan everyday maker, basing his engagement on an open-minded, non-sectarian interpretation of Islam, and thus corresponding well to one of the three types distinguished by Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking, i.e. “postnationalist, self-dialogical, and engaged in dialogue with a range of others. Activist, assertive, and agonistic rather than antagonistic” (Kinnvall & Nesbitt-Larking 2011, 196).

Muslims facing everyday Islamophobia

Serious assaults with racist undertones have taken place on Muslim, Jewish and Christian congregations in Sweden (Borell 2012). The Islamic Centre in Malmö has been the target of

several attacks, involving fire bombs and pigs released into the courtyard, and in 2003 the entire Mosque was burned to the ground (Becirov 2009).²⁶ In 2010, the construction of a new mosque at Hisingen in Göteborg city started. The contractor has been subjected to several threats and boycotts and pigs' heads were placed on the building site (Svahn 2010).

In 2009, a total of 184 antireligious hate-crimes were reported in the three metropolitan areas. Rarely is anyone actually held responsible for this kind of behaviour (Molarin and Frenzel 2010). During 2009–2010, a number of attacks on dark-skinned people occurred throughout the city of Malmö. A sniper was eventually captured and found guilty of two murders and ten attempted murders, all but one of the victims being immigrants. Before the sniper was caught, Christian, Muslim and Jewish congregations joined street demonstrations, using the slogans: “Stop the shooting” and “Love each other” (Dagens Nyheter 2010).²⁷

Of the many reports on everyday racism targeted at Muslims in Sweden, especially women and children, we shall here briefly describe one case. Tomelilla is a municipality in southern Sweden with about 6500 inhabitants, most of them living close to the town centre. By agreement with the central government, the municipality has received about 15 refugees annually over the last few years. However, Tomelilla like other parts of southern Sweden, is home to quite strong xenophobic sentiments, and receiving immigrants has met with loud opposition from some parts of the community. In August 2009, when a Somali woman who had escaped from warfare in Mogadishu, walking with her daughter to pre-school, passed a senior level school [*högstadium*], they were severely harassed by 14–15-year-old pupils, not once but more or less daily. The daughter asked:

“Why do they stone you ma? And why do they always scream things at us?” NN has no answers for her daughter, when, followed by cries of “nigger” and “pull back your curtain,” they escape from the streets of Tomelilla. For more than a

year, the family have been the victims of continuous hate crimes, but the police abandoned the investigation. Invectives from strangers are everyday incidents for women in scarves, as is shown by several reports. (Sydsvenskan 2011; frontpage)

This quotation from southern Sweden's biggest daily newspaper well illustrates what Muslims, especially women and children, face everyday, although throwing stones is not very common. Indeed, when a stone hit this woman in the face one day, she asked the school nurse for help to investigate the case and catch the offenders – probably some school boys. However, despite clear hints about the identity of the presumed offenders given by the headmaster of the school, the police cancelled the case. The headmaster was upset by this neglect and commented: "Honestly speaking, this is very much about the parents' values" (Sydsvenskan 2011, A10).

A report based on interviews with 250 Muslims aged between 15 and 30 who were asked questions about their personal experiences of hatred, threats and harassment, records that nine out of ten answered that they had had such experiences. Almost all women who wear the Islamic scarf could verify this. Words such as "Easter witch," "ghost," "terrorist," "damned Muslims," "murderers" and "Go home!" were frequently reported (Gardell 2010). Needless to say, these are clear expressions of emotionally intense values uttered in everyday situations. The mere sight of a woman in a scarf provokes some people to scream such invectives: their narrow view of what it means to be a Swede [*svensk*] is enough to provoke such abuse. However, Sweden has not yet experienced anything comparable to Anders Behring Breivik's assault on 68 young Social Democrats at Utöya and nine other people in Oslo on July 22, 2011.²⁸

The Sweden Democrats [Sverigedemokraterna]

The Sweden Democrats, formally established in 1988, have successfully developed a nationalistic, anti-immigration and anti-Islamic policy profile. The party has built its organization from below, and was winning local government representation before reaching the 4% barrier to the Riksdag in the 2010 election.²⁹ In the 2014 parliamentary election, they received almost 13% of the votes and took 49 out of 349 seats in the Swedish parliament [*riksdagen*]. They promptly joined forces with the right-wing, four-party opposition in parliament, defeating the Social Democrat-Green Party government budget, and provoking an exceptional extra election in March 2014.

The party's official self-image is that it is a pragmatic, "social conservative" party, rejecting liberalism and socialism as "utopian" and outdated. Concepts such as "family," "nation," "a common national and cultural identity," and "people" [Swedish *folk*; German *Volk*] indicate the party's core values (Åkesson 2009). On their official website, the Sweden Democrats declare:

No to disruption policy: We do not believe in the idea of a multicultural society because this is an ideology leading to splitting, exclusion and segregation.

Multiculturalism is the idea that a state should be founded on diverse values to be accommodated to each other. We, on the other hand, mean that we shall stand up for Western World values like democracy, gender equity [*jämställdhet*], animal protection and human rights. These are the values we Sweden Democrats refuse to compromise about.

Prevent the sense of exclusion [utanförskapet]: Therefore we believe in assimilation and strengthening Swedish culture. We work for the return to an assimilation policy instead of today's failed integration policy. The many hundreds of excluded neighborhoods [*utanförskapsområden*] around Sweden are caused by today's integration and immigration policy. To break this trend we

have to break the current policy and change course. (Sverigedemokraterna 2013)

[our translation]

Thus the image painted by the party projects that the reason why many multi-family housing estates and districts in Swedish towns and cities are characterized by unemployment and social unrest is that Swedish immigration and integration policy has brought too many immigrants into the country. More precisely, immigrants of Muslim faith represent the major problem. Less than a year before the 2010 elections, the Sweden Democrats leader Jimmie Åkesson, in an opinion piece in the largest daily print newspaper, wrote: “[t]he Muslims are our biggest foreign threat since World War II and I promise that I will do my utmost to turn the trend around when we go for election next year.”³⁰ For the Sweden Democrats, the construction of what counts as Swedish could hence not include Islam.

The xenophobic discourse contains few traces of racial biological thinking, but instead uses the cultural essentialist paradigm (Grillo 2003) in which an imagined existing Swedish culture is contextualized as a constant, i.e. immigration becomes a threat to “Swedish national identity and cohesion.” But it is clearly not just a general xenophobic view that the party expresses, as they explicitly pronounce an anti-Muslim bias when it comes to whom to regard as worthy of integration support. When it comes to religion, the general standpoint of the party is that “one has to choose what comes first – religion or Sweden” (Jimmie Åkesson, quoted in Orrenius 2010, 10) thus stressing that national identity is more important than freedom of religion. At the same time as denouncing “religion,” the party loudly supports traditional Christian practices, such as celebrating the last day of school before summer break with a ceremony held in church.³¹

The Church of Sweden itself is now very outspoken when it comes to issues on immigration, and cooperates with Muslim, Jewish and other religious congregations on many policy related issues, as well as on practical matters such as healthcare provision for those

without residence permits (Fridolfsson and Elander 2012).³² Archbishop (since October 2013) Antje Jackelén, the first woman holding that position, has been scorned by her critics for her inclusive theology. The web-based extreme right-wing newspaper *Fria Tider* [Free Times] wrote in an editorial that: “Church of Sweden teaching has become reduced to a politically correct sentiment complex that has very little to do with Christianity” (Fria Tider 2013). Christianity is in this editorial again constructed as something central to Swedish culture and values – but not just any Christianity, rather one that does not consecrate gay unions or hire imams. Hence, not only Islam is caricatured here or constructed as something static in the Islamophobic discourse – but so too is the “real Swedish Christianity.”

Conclusions

There is no single Muslim identity that includes all currents of Muslim faith, i.e. there is a diversity of Muslim identities. In addition, these identities are not just a product of discourses produced by the Muslim community alone, but are embedded in a hegemonic non-Muslim discourse. Drawing upon our interviews with imams and other Muslim leaders, as well as written material published by Muslim congregations, and interviews with some Muslim everyday makers, we have found evidence of a strategy of engagement, i.e. an attempt “to deal with differences through bargaining, openness toward the other, collaboration, and dialogue ... Engagement implies passion and commitment and a determination to find and express one’s voice” (Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking 2011, 160, 193). The attempts by Muslim leaders and everyday-makers we have described as searching for a Muslim identity in Swedish society could be seen as expressions of this stance, either in programmatic statements by the former or in earth-bound action by the latter.

In an emerging inter-religious dialogue concerning basic values, emotions and identities, the Muslim individuals referred to in this article as speaking and acting try to create bridges to

a secular Lutheran Swedish society, while elaborating on their own Muslim identity. In our examples, it becomes clear that biologically-based essentialist positions that refer to race have become virtually obsolete in the official debates, although they still flourish on less scrupulous internet forums. Cultural essentialism on the other hand is stronger than ever (Grillo 2003), and religion, here Islam and Christianity, has become a symbolic marker for that. In the Swedish case, this involves viewing Islam as a threat to an intact Swedish Christian heritage and a determinist view of Muslim practitioners' characteristics. The examples from this article, however, illustrate how constructed these characteristics are. Both Swedish Christianity and what it means to be a Swedish Muslim are under constant re-negotiation.

The Muslim everyday makers presented as examples all display an emotionally strong, faith-based engagement in favour of improving the life situation either for Muslim women or for young people, irrespective of religion, in the neighbourhood and the city. Engagement may also have an explicit cosmopolitan outlook based on values of religious freedom and democracy, as stated by the recipient of the Raoul Wallenberg award Siavosh Derakhti:

We humans are black, white or brown. We are Christians, Muslims or Jews. We were born in Sweden or in other countries. Basically, however, we are similar and must have the same rights. Build bridges and increase understanding are the only ways to reduce the emerging racism. (Dagens Nyheter 2013b)

Interreligious dialogue implies that Muslims in Sweden want not only to develop internal religious and ethnic and cultural bonds, but also to create bridges to the secular and Lutheran society of Sweden, i.e. to construct a Muslim identity intrinsic to Swedish society, in which Islam is considered an indisputable part. Notably this is not an issue of assimilation, but rather one of "striving for involvement on equal terms, in the discussion concerning the development of multicultural Sweden" (Nylund 2007, 352; our translation). However, as

argued by anthropologist Aje Carlbom, an uncritical acceptance of the notion of a “blue-and-yellow” Islam risks hiding the heterogeneity among Muslims in Sweden:

While nationalists value a homogeneous definition of the Swedish nation-state, pluralist scholars celebrate a heterogeneous definition of the country. The problem, however, is that in their ideological struggle to define “Islam” and “Sweden”, both pluralists and right-wing nationalists produce a false consciousness of Muslim integration. (Carlbon 2006, 246)

Thus there is no linear development among Muslims in Sweden towards some unified Swedish Muslim (blue-and-yellow) version of Islam. There are also fundamentalist orientations, where representatives of Muslim communities hold strongly patriarchal interpretations of Islam, and instances when young Muslim men, and on occasion women, have been reported going to Syria and enlisting with IS. Given the global flows of migrants and the open border vision of the EU, the prospect of increasing inter-ethnic, inter-cultural and inter-religious encounters throughout the world challenges nostalgic dreams of nations inhabited by “pure,” “original” and religiously unified Swedes, Germans, Dutch, English, etc., surrounded by fixed, impenetrable borders.

While we obviously regard religious or national identity as social constructions, they are not less real in their implications. Emotions connected with place and identity are hence ideologically presented at a national level in terms of political representation and what type of policy is possible to raise in debate, as well as by its more concrete manifestations such as the building of mosques or the wearing of specific clothing. The latter has a special relevance when it comes to Muslim women. To underline the dialogue-orientated focus of this article, we give the last word in the paper to a Somali woman in Scania (Skåne, southern Sweden), who has been harassed several times due to her visible Muslim identity: “I have both a strong Muslim identity and a strong Swedish identity. I feel great loyalty to Sweden. This country

opened its arms to us” (Anna Ismail Abdulkarim, interview in Sydsvenskan 2011). Again the Swedish and the Muslim identities are embraced together, in contrast to the hegemonic immigrant identity spelled out by the media and others. Abdulkarim furthermore tells the reporter that her counter strategy when being harassed is trying to start a conversation and behave as a human being in the eyes of the aggressor: “Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn’t.” Arguably, it is hard to find a better illustration of a faith-based, emotionally strong engagement spanning the levels of home and family, neighbourhood and street, city and nation. As argued by urban theorist Richard Sennett (2012), we have to learn the art of listening to people who are different from ourselves, i.e. to listen and discuss rather than debate and fight, an attitude of which Abdulkarim gives an example here.

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Notes

¹ An earlier version of this article was presented at the session "Faith, Social Justice and the City," at the Fourth International and Interdisciplinary Conference on Emotional Geographies, July 1–3, 2013, at the University of Groningen, The Netherlands. The article develops threads originating from two research projects, Faith-based Organisations and Social Exclusion in European Cities, FACIT (see Elander and Fridolfsson 2011; Beaumont and Cloke 2012; Gustavsson and Elander, forthcoming). The former was funded by an EU 7th framework Programme, Grant agreement no 217314, and the latter is a running project funded by ÖrebroBostäder, a municipal housing company in the city of Örebro, Sweden.

² As shown by professor of science of religion Göran Larsson (2014) in a recent survey, research on Muslims and Islam in Sweden is still underdeveloped, although on the rise.

³ This could be applied to any other religion.

⁴ Although an essentialist position implies strong engagement, we follow Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking's usage of the term, i.e. restricting it to a non-antagonistic, engaged stance in

the sense of actively trying to accommodate Islam to perceived Swedish culture without losing the core faith values of Islam.

⁵ Although anonymous posts on the internet are no longer securely anonymous, as experienced by several EU-parliament and the Riksdag representatives and candidates for the Islamophobic nationalist party Sweden Democrats when their racist remarks in an online forum were made public by the Swedish tabloid *Expressen* in December 2013 (Expressen 2013).

⁶ The Swedish flag is blue with a yellow cross.

⁷ The number of first-generation immigrants from Muslim-majority countries is greater than 300,000; most of them come from Iraq (100,000), Turkey (70,000), Bosnia (70,000) and Somalia (44,000) (Migrationsverket 2013; Svenska Kyrkan 2011; Dagens Nyheter 2011). How many of these individuals are *practising* Muslims is unclear, as Swedish law does not allow registration of individuals on the basis of religion or race.

⁸ Abdallah Salah, interviewed by Charlotte Fridolfsson, at the Islamic Association in Stockholm, Stockholm Mosque, March 12, 2009.

⁹ Abdallah Salah, FACIT Cross evaluation interview, at the Islamic Association in Stockholm, Stockholm Mosque, September 14, 2009.

¹⁰ Abdallah Salah, interviewed by Charlotte Fridolfsson, at the Islamic Association in Stockholm, Stockholm Mosque, March 1, 2009.

¹¹ Abdallah Salah, interviewed by Charlotte Fridolfsson, at the Islamic Association in Stockholm, Stockholm Mosque, March 12, 2009.

¹² The Mosque also has quite friendly contacts with people who are homeless and/or have drug problems, who spend time around the adjacent square and subway station.

¹³ The study is based on a nationwide survey of 105 local Muslim congregations.

¹⁴ Mostafa Kharraki, interviewed by Charlotte Fridolfsson, at the United Islamic Congregations in Sweden on January 29, 2009.

¹⁵ Abdul Rashid Mohamed, interviewed by Charlotte Fridolfsson, Islamiska förbundet i Göteborg [The Islamic Association in Göteborg], Angered, May 12, 2009.

¹⁶ Named after the Muslim scientist/philosopher based in Cordoba, Spain, during the twelfth century, known in the West as Averroes. The name is derived from the Arabic *Ibn* meaning son and *Rushd* meaning reason (http://www.ibnrushd.se/filer/ibnrushd_engelska.pdf).

¹⁷ None of our own respondents were interviewed in the programme mentioned.

¹⁸ The former Swedish Prime Minister said that residents in the neighbourhoods where cars were burnt etc. should themselves take responsibility for ending the riots. “They must themselves put an end to this, they have to show that they don’t accept this. You are not the governors here, it is the majority who want to live in peace and quiet” (Fredrik Reinfeldt, interviewed in Dagens Nyheter 2013a).

¹⁹ Cf. Fröding, Elander and Eriksson (2012) for a theoretically framed and empirically based discussion about the conditions that make people willing to participate in neighbourhood development.

²⁰ Everyday makers “draw a clear distinction within the realm of politics between elite networks and their own politics of the ordinary in the locality. Similarly, they are not driven by a sense of duty, nor are they interested in gaining influence; rather they wish to feel involved and develop themselves. They aim to encourage what Bang terms ‘small local narratives’” (Li and Marsh 2008, 250).

²¹ Notably, the Muslim umbrella association in Sweden [Sveriges Muslimska Råd] has had a female chair since 2005. Born in Siikajoki, a Finnish village, Helena Benaouda converted to Islam when she moved to Sweden at the age of 20 (Helena Benaouda, in conversation with Niki Bergmann, Radio Sweden [Sveriges Radio. Sisuradio] July 30, 2010. Accessed January

23, 2015: <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=1032&artikel=3888892>).

Gender issues can become very heated, as experienced by Muslim women arguing that “women have the same rights as men to be in the mosque” (Awad 2014). As noted by Ninna Edgardh on the basis of an eight-country comparative study on welfare and religion in the twenty-first century, Christian churches and congregations are also “highly gendered [...] with strictly divided roles for women and men; women are primarily located in relational caring work and men in more technical and organizational roles, as well as in the higher levels of decision-making” (Edgardh 2011, 95).

²² The story about the Muslim women in Fittja draws on historian Klara Folkesson’s work, (Folkesson 2011; in English), and more extensively in her PhD thesis (Folkesson 2012; in Swedish). Similar stories are told by Nylund (2007)

²³ Before getting engaged in neighbourhood work in 2002 Malika was employed as a cleaner [*lokalvårdare*].

²⁴ Interview with Malika Boualalla. *Vivallaprofilen* [local website], July 3. 2012. Accessed January 15, 2015: <http://www.vivalla.se/category/video/vivallaprofilen>

²⁵ Raoul Gustaf Wallenberg (born 1912, date of death disputed) was a Swedish architect, business man, diplomat and humanitarian. He is widely celebrated for his successful efforts to rescue up to about 100,000 Jews in Nazi-occupied Hungary during the Holocaust from Hungarian Fascists and the Nazis during the later stages of World War II. While serving as Sweden’s special envoy in Budapest between July and December 1944, Wallenberg issued protective passports and sheltered Jews in buildings designated as Swedish territory, saving tens of thousands of lives. When and how he died is still disputed (Forum för levande historia 2014).

²⁶ Bezjat Becirov, interviewed by Charlotte Fridolfsson at the Islamic Centre in Malmö, April 27, 2009. Notably, hate crimes have also been targeted at Jewish and Roma institutions and

people. Thus, there have been several attacks on the synagogue in Malmö, for example in the summer of 2010 (Kristianstadsbladet 2010). One Church of Sweden parish in Göteborg had a Roma family threatened with expulsion staying at the church premises when it became subject to attempted arson (Leif Dahlin, interviewed by Charlotte Fridolfsson, Church of Sweden, Göteborg, March 31, 2009).

²⁷ In the media, references are made to a similar series of assassinations or attempted assassination of people with dark hair and skin carried out in 1991–1992, in Stockholm, in a similar societal context with high unemployment among young people and immigrants, and the presence of a nationalistic, or populist party, at the time called New Democracy [*Ny Demokrati*], with a strong anti-immigrant profile in the Riksdag [the Swedish parliament]. The so called laser man [*lasermannen*] was caught and sentenced to life imprisonment for killing one and severely injuring ten people using a laser-sighted handgun (Tamas 2010).

²⁸ Before the assault, Breivik had for some years been active on the internet urging counter-jihad attacks. He saw the Norwegian state and the future potential political leaders as traitors in the battle against the alleged Islamization of Europe. Notably, the Norwegian secret service seemed to have all its focus on potential Muslim terrorist attacks, neglecting a number of hints that show with hindsight that Breivik had been planning a counterjihad attack for several years (Agrell 2013).

²⁹ In order to be represented in the Riksdag, a political party needs at least 4% of the votes.

³⁰ The title of article was “The Muslims Are Our Biggest Foreign Threat” (Åkesson 2009). For an extensive review of the Sweden Democrats’ Islamophobic stance, see Malm (2011, 69–117). Notably, Åkesson admits that “a substantial part of Europe’s Muslims are not true to the letter, although most of the studies in this area show that the fundamentalists are a large and growing minority” (Åkesson 2009).

³¹ This practice is no longer prevalent in most Swedish schools since the disestablishment of the Swedish State Church in 2000.

³² In contrast to the Danish State Church (Bachora *et al.* 2011, Church of Sweden has taken a firm anti-racist stance.