

## **From Paradoxes of Multiculturalism to Paradoxes of Liberalism. Sweden and the European Neo-Liberal Hegemony**

**Carl-Ulrik Schierup**

Linköping University, Remeso, Norrköping, Sweden

**Aleksandra Ålund**

Linköping University, Remeso, Norrköping, Sweden

...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).

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 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 and developing a multicultural citizenship, he maintains. 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, the fledgling democracies of the 'East', still fairly newly 'liberated' from communist rule, can hopefully learn from a politically mature West ... how to manage, ethno-cultural relations in a peaceful and democratic way' (*op.cit.*: 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 was moulded into tutorial packages for good governance of ethnic relations imposed on governments in post-communist Europe; from 'peace-keeping' and 'reconstruction' in the war torn region of former Yugoslavia to the conditionality faced by 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', 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'. This may be one reason behind the actual lack of effectiveness of EU directives for combating racism and discrimination in, for example, the Baltic region (Woolfson 2010). In, among other, Hungary, 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 (Malahova, Tishkova and Jakovljevoj 2011).

All of this is indeed worrying, and the need for good governance of ethnic relations in Europe remains exigent. However, at the same time, remembering the evangelist Mathew's famous aphorism on the fallacy of hypocrisy is 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). Matching theory and practice is indeed 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 problem similar to that of the 'actually existing socialism' of the 'East' in the recent past; that is, to reconcile a grand liberating ideology with another reality and practice.

Following the end of the Cold War an affirmative reception of ethno-cultural diversity has certainly been part and parcel of the *credo*, official policy and post cold war parlance of the European Commission in its capacity of setting standards for good governance across the EU, and well beyond. One of its more emphatic manifestations can still (2011) be found on the webpage, *Together in Diversity*, designed by the Directory General for Education and Culture in order to promote the *European Year of Intercultural Dialogue* (European Commission 2008) and to set long term processes of intercultural dialogue in motion in the EU's individual member states. 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 recent manifesto for EU policies on diversity goes on, 'intercultural dialogue has an increasingly important role to play in fostering European identity and citizenship'. Migration is here 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.

Yet, facing the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, rethorics of 'intercultural dialogue' appears - along with Kymlicka's morally elevated missionary lesson to the 'Second' Europe of the East - like an anachronistic invocation. With speech on good governance in the EU exceedingly dominated by paroles of 'prolonged austerity' (CEO 2011) legitimised through a 'sacralisation' of imagined monocultural nations' moral majorities (Houdt, Suvarierol and Schinkel 2011), with one western European leader after the other standing up to solemnly declare the 'death of multiculturalism', and with country after country adopting an authoritarian neo-assimilationism explicitly designed to kill off cultural diversity with reference to an 'earned citizenship' and 'community' (*op.cit*), little political space appears to remain for liberal pluralism or multicultural togetherness in the 'First' Europe of the West.

Flying banners of Western liberal democratic 'core values', a good deal of academic brush clearing has prepared ideological ground for this new moral highway crisscrossing the lands of Europe. Webs of contradictory signals are circulated in visions of 'unity' and the interconnection of 'unity' and 'diversity'. Academic interventions, official policy documents, political speeches and media reports bring forward that migration, multiculturalism and 'diversity' can become, or is indeed, a

serious threat to *Our* cultural Unity, social cohesion, core values, equality and progress. 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 neo-communitarian appeal of Amatai Etzioni and the ‘Communitarian Network’ (Etzioni 2002) to ‘free societies’ to take their historically common values seriously. They should stand up firmly for ‘unity in diversity’ and the worries of ‘very large segments’ of people who ‘sense that they are threatened by massive immigration and by the growing minorities within their borders that hail from different cultures, follow different practices, and have separate institutions and loyalties’. Another exemplary intervention is that of the British publicist, David Goodhart (2004), warning that ‘open borders’ and ‘too much diversity’ undermines the solidarity on which a large welfare state rests; an intervention subsequently discussed widely by some of the most prominent scholars on citizenship, multiculturalism and international migration (e.g., Banting and Kymlicka 2004; Glazer 2004; Parekh 2004). Ruud Koopmans (2010: 1), for one, deliberating on Goodhart’s argument, concludes a comparative regime study with the judgement that ‘multicultural policies – which grant easy access to equal rights and do not provide strong incentives for host-country language acquisition and interethnic contacts – when combined with a generous welfare state, have produced low levels of labour market participation, high levels of segregation and a strong overrepresentation of immigrants among those convicted for criminal behaviour’. Such interventions in a proliferating intellectual and political debate on multiculturalism and the postulated core values of ‘free societies’ find powerful support among 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.

However, as we shall argue, these worries about ‘multiculturalism’ or ‘too much diversity’ appear 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 multicultural policies or the lived multicultural multitude in contemporary ‘Western’ societies. The way in which ‘culture’ and ‘diversity’ are here conceptualised indicates that the critique we directed towards prevalent academic discourses on migration and culture in our book on Swedish society, *Paradoxes of Multiculturalism* (Ålund and Schierup 1991), published two decades ago, may be as timely 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 and to ‘blame the victim’ theories. 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 common sense and institutional practice, integrated in technocratic techniques rationalizing and organising ethnic divisions of labour and a racialised society. Following a critical note by John Rex (1985; 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 past South African apartheid as the ultimate example of a ‘plural society’.

In the present essay we shall venture into the convoluted reality of a contemporary Europe, which we fear that such 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 from a retrospect on the Swedish experience. With more than 20 percent of the population being foreign born or second generation Swede, Sweden matches Canada, Australia or New Zealand in terms of being a country of immigration and settlement. Access to citizenship and naturalisation remains, so far, a function of residence with no claims for passing language and citizenship tests or oaths of allegiance. No formal restrictions have so far been imposed on Sweden’s comparatively generous rules for family unification. The institution of double citizenship remains a flexible instrument for adapting to the particular conditions of life and needs of transnational migrants. Yet, the country’s trajectory between the set up of a far-sighted liberal, tangibly ‘multicultural’ and internationalist agenda by the mid 1970s and today’s growing alignment with retrogressive illiberal policies across Europe, is indicative in exposing the reach of the adverse direction in which European ‘integration’ is currently heading.

### **Paradoxes of multiculturalism**

In *Paradoxes of Multiculturalism (op.cit.)* 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 reform of the country’s policies on immigration and migrant integration passed by parliament in 1975. Its slogan, *Equality, Freedom of Choice, and Partnership*, paraphrased 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. 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 tests, oaths of allegiance, income criteria, etc. ‘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. 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. In terms of cultural rights of citizenship (Taylor 1992), ‘multiculturalism’ (Rex 1985; Castles 1994) or ‘liberal pluralism’ (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 version of multiculturalism 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 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.<sup>42</sup>

Yet this synthetic 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. 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 institutional practices transformed into a bureaucratically managed ‘tower of Babel’: 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.

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 the shortcomings 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’. Its actual implementation was jeopardized 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 was to become especially problematic in pace with growing disjunctions in the Swedish model of the welfare state, expressed among other in in mounting disadvantages experienced by refugees from Asia and Africa in an increasingly exclusivist Swedish labour market and society. Violent proto-Nazi grassroots movements mushroomed, excelling in attacking and burning up refugee camps. An overly 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.

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<sup>42</sup> Along similar lines as the model of multiculturalism suggested by Castles (1994)

### **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 could rule out institutional mismanagement, as well as, 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). 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 took place also in other parts of Europe, imported from market driven US practices of ‘diversity management’ in public policy and business, rather than the past 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). 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 emphasised. 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, Hansen and Castles 2006; Schierup 2010). The merger of integration policy with new policies for economic growth are 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 rhetorics depicting immigrants as a flexible resource for local and regional economic growth and as objects for ‘diversity management’ in business. This also influenced policies on migrant and ethnic minority associations), which were to become market oriented stakeholders in employment projects and local and regional partnerships for growth (Ålund and Reichel 2007).

At the same time the political practice of the ‘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* rather than *equality of outcome*. In line with this – in response to EU

directives and aiming at forging a level playing field - the new integration policy set out, to place the question of *discrimination* solidly on the Swedish political agenda. Politics on migrant incorporation and Swedish multicultural policies had long rested on the assumption that the Swedish corporatist model of the welfare state - with its emphasis on general welfare policies covering the whole population together with an elaborate system of collective agreements between the employers and unions - would *as such* function as a sufficient counteracting force for combating disadvantage. Consequently binding sanction-based legal frameworks, focusing on equal rights for the individual, were neglected. This had proved highly idealistic. General welfare policies and social partnership were in themselves neither an efficient, nor a sufficient, guarantee against discrimination, disadvantage or social and political marginalisation.

The reforms towards the end of the past millennium came to include a refurbished legal framework for combating discrimination - harmonised with EU law and directives, and with strong affinity with US anti-discrimination law and practices - (Schierup 2010) came indeed to reinforce policies for combating discrimination and function to enhance 'diversity'. New norms, legislation and institutional practices have facilitated social mobility among individuals with migrant and ethnic minority background and ascent 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 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 2010).

The racialised poverty 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(*op.cit.*). 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 has 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 exacerbating 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 unemployment concentrated in particular among youth of immigrant background, as well as urban poverty and unrest, exposing the results of shrinking of public services, particularly in the educational sector within disadvantaged districts of larger cities (Salonen 2009).

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 (Ålund 2003). Manifestations of this trend range from discrete and sometimes almost imperceptible reformulations in government reports to more openly illiberal government policies including war-like strategies of securitisation and counterinsurgency on the domestic territories of Sweden’s multiethnic suburbs. 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). It all goes in tandem with the resuscitation of a defamed extremist nationalism exploiting the ‘immigrant problem’ as its main political issue and electoral booster with the populist party, The Swedish Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna*), surging into parliament in 2010.

Urban residential segregation and the concentration of racialised poverty in disadvantaged Swedish neighbourhoods are similar to processes observed in, for example, the kind of disadvantaged poly-ethnic suburban environments found around Paris and other French cities. 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 *op.cit.*). 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 development, which may increasingly come to deserve comparison with the ‘advanced marginality’ of the the United States (1996).

### **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, emerges as consequence of a dual crisis of the welfare state and the nation (Schierup 2006). Burning city wards in Sweden in 2008-09, 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, the rebellion in Copenhagen and across Danish cities in 2008 and London 2011. It demonstrates that also Sweden is eventually catching up with the pace of neo-liberal globalisation and related processes of segregation and social exclusion concentrated in big cities.

Media representation of the 2008-09 youth riots across Swedish cities brings forth a critical picture of police violence and brutality. ‘Police attacks demonstrate a level of violence without 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). Others 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). ‘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. The problem of ‘immigrant culture’, disconnected from the existing social reality, is produced as uniform and as collectively shared by ethnic groups or communities, focused in particular ‘immigrant’ gender relations. Violent behaviour is related to ‘immigrants’ implicitly ‘foreign culture’ colliding with that of an imagined ‘majority society’ (Ålund 1999; Ålund and Alinia 2011).

Similar to a neo-conservative ‘moral underclass discourse’ (Levitas 1998), since long, established in the US and the UK, exposing cultural ‘deviancy’, ‘dysfunctional’ families, and ‘deficient parenthood’ as root causes of an evil circle of social exclusion and escalating violence<sup>43</sup>, the most common explanation in public debates on the for riots was to declare parents guilty for family conditions and a lack of adequate socialisation, forcing youth onto the street ‘Curfews’ banning young people from staying outside their homes during evenings, were among the counter-measures proposed as well as a need to institute a *specialised national police force* securing order in suburban Sweden (e.g., Swedish TV-4. Debatt, evening 6<sup>th</sup> of May 2009).

The representation of the Swedish ‘suburban problem’ in terms of cultural deviancy is nothing new. It was an integrated part of a looming ‘new realism’ already in the late 1980s, which, in *Paradoxes of Multiculturalism*, we described as a potential graveyard for the liberal Swedish policies of multiculturalism. 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 tend to blame ‘failure of integration’ on the toxic 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). This has now changed and Sweden appears, step by step, to move closer to the state of politics in neighbouring Denmark and across Europe.

In order to fix a perceived uncontrolled proliferation of ‘failed neighbourhoods’ a motley mixture of measures have entered the political agenda,

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<sup>43</sup> 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).

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. 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, Nyamco 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**

During 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 end up, more or less directly, arguing for unity in terms of cultural assimilation. In this vein, the minister of integration, Nyamko Sabuni, focuses on 'strengthening respect for democracy and the fundamental human rights', inherent Swedish core values (Skr-2008 2008). Due to contemporary migration and ethnic 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' (*op.cit*. For an extended discussion, see Dahlstedt 2009).

More outrightly disciplinary conclusions with potential implications for fundamentals of Swedish politics on citizenship were drawn in documents elaborated

by *Moderaterna* the leading partner in Sweden's ruling centre-right government coalition; a party profiling itself as an openly neo-liberal party during the 1990s, but recently cultivating an image as Sweden's 'Workers Party of Today' and, during the most recent electoral campaign (2010), rephrased into the still more beguiling populist idiom of Sweden's *Only Workers' Party*. During the autumn of 2008, as the global financial crisis hit also Sweden, the party's Working Group against Exclusion and Segregation' (*Arbetsgrupp mot utanförskap och segregation*), including the Swedish Minister of Migration, Tobias Billström, articulated 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 claimed that the existing policy has suffered from misdirected permissiveness and the time had come to clearly communicate fundamental Swedish values and relate this to demands to be met by people who chose to come and live in Sweden.

These were also the underlying themes in a government proposal for amending Swedish policies of integration, *Several Pathways In: Keys to Sweden* (Nya moderaterna 2009). A special contract should be established between immigrants, and and the Swedish state, with stipulated duties bring out clearly the spirit of a disciplinary workfare orientation in current Swedish social policy. What needs to be taken issue with is described as a 'welfare dependence that tends to be inherited across generations of immigrants', attributed to multiethnic suburban areas where youth is fostered to social outsiders and to reject Swedish society, its laws and norms. But 'citizenship in Sweden should not be watered down' and, thus, conditions for immigrants to receive Swedish citizenship should be sharpened (*op.cit.*: 27). Furthermore, the Working Group concludes, 'citizenship received on false grounds can be withdrawn' (*op.cit.*: 28), a claim specifically 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). The ideas of the working group are, as it were, echoed by a proposal for 'temporary citizenship' status for 'newcomers' put forth, at the time of writing (October 2011), by a prominent social democrat; a kind of insurance for good behaviour, as immigrants, according to the proposal, would stand to lose their citizenship in case they commit criminal acts (Kvällsposten 2011).

While such radical undermining of the unconditional and universal character of citizenship remain *still* (Autumn 2011) only on the writing desk a new law on 'labour immigration' passed through parliament in 2008 (Regeringen 2008; Sveriges Riksdag 2008) provides a most tangible, example of an ongoing erosion of citizenship.. Opening up for a temporary migrant workers' scheme 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). At the same time, the launch of the new legislation on importation of labour, forged through the political process beyond any broad parliamentary consensus (Rojas 2006), came packaged with an eventual alignment with the EU:s restrictive and convoluted refugee and asylum rules and policies (Hansen 2009), with Sweden becoming a fully integrated (and complicit) member of the EU's Area of Freedom, Security and Justice as stipulated by the Union's so-called 'Stockholm Programme' (Guild 2009).

Among trade unions a fear the new temporary migrants' dependency on particular employers, together with an ever present danger of losing employment and work permit, would lead to an exceedingly weak bargaining position and to exposure to excessive exploitation (Davidsson 2008; Hjærtberg 2008) has proved to be well

founded (e.g. Efendić 2010). The new law opens up, in consequence, a *third* - disadvantaged and precarious - status, alongside the, since long established, dual statuses of (full) *citizen* and *denizen* (without full citizenship, but with secure and permanent access to civil, social and, most, political rights). Moreover, through its insistence of making residence dependent on employment status, the law, in effect, extends the range of increasingly uncompromising insistence on a disciplinary *workfare* regime (Schierup, Hansen and Castles 2006), but shifting access to rights and entitlements from the realm of social policy and integration policy to the realm of immigration control. Thus Sweden is a latecomer to emerging all-European practices on so-called ‘managed migration’, more strictly monitored than the past (German, Austrian, Swiss) guest worker systems of *Mittleuropa* ever were (e.g., Guild, Groenendijk and Carrera 2009), with all their possibilities for migrants to, by time, actually acquire incremental rights of citizenship (Guiraudon 1998). That is an emerging European Apartheid (Balibar 2004), at least in theory, guaranteeing long term access to an abundant cheap and readily disposable labour force excluded from privileges of citizenship and at a safe distance from other de-privileged segments of a proliferating precariat in unruly poly-ethnic urban backyards. In the same fell swoop, the radical populist worries about ‘illegals’ may be appeased and co-opted.

### **A paradoxical liberalism**

We have described three decades of Swedish politics on migration and migrant incorporation, starting with the institutionalisation of a specific Nordic version of a liberal multiculturalism in 1975. It offered a ramified body of substantial rights of citizenship – civil, political, cultural, social, and labour rights - to ‘newcomers’ and included a generous internationalist policy of asylum and refugee reception. However, we have, step by step, seen a disciplinary neo-liberalism emerging and consolidated, together with exclusionary policies of ‘circular migration’, the gradual transformation and breaking up of a comprehensive pact of citizenship and a budding neo-conservative moral rearmament. During the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century a neo-liberal concern for growth, employability and individual responsibility merges with neo-conservative communitarianism and issues of securitization under the insignia of the ‘global war on terror’, all voiced with reference to ‘liberal’ core values of democracy, human rights and gender equality.

Communitarianism is, in a wider sense of the idea, a terrain shared with ill-famed radical anti-immigration nationalist-populist movements and parties across Europe (e.g., Holmes 2000). Populist parties appear, on their part – in spite of their philosophical roots and present day political agendas bordering on fascism - increasingly successful in washing away their stigma of ‘racism’. By deviously positioning itself neither to the right, nor to the left, but as *both right and left* (*op.cit.*), a contemporary European populism potentially 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 and the precarisation of work. In the process ‘Culture’ has systematically been fabricated into, what Ernesto Laclau (2005) calls ‘an empty signifier’; without distinct content as such, but heavily loaded with symbolic spell and invested with primordial sentiments of love and hatred, and through its very ‘emptiness’ with the capacity of glueing

together the multitude of disparate and often contradictory political claims embraced by contemporary European xenophobic radical populism.

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 such as *Vlaamse Block* in Belgium, the *Pim Fortuyn List* (forerunner of the Dutch *Freedom Party*), the Norwegian *Progress party*, *Lega Nord* and *Alleanza Nazionale* in Italy, and the *Swiss People's Party*, just to mention a few. The so-called *Swedish Democrats* is among the late comers to the family; a populist party with roots in the Swedish National Socialist movement of the 1930s, and the explicitly Neo-Nazi movement of the 1980, but which has demonstrated a remarkable capacity of cleansing its public image from these historical blemishes.

Through usurping and turning topsy-turvy premises of the cultural relativism underlying the anti-racist arguments and claims for the recognition of identity and diversity – with Levi-Strauss' (1950) *Racism and Culture* among the most venerated scripts (Schierup 1993) - this racialising national-populism is becoming increasingly respectable. Thus populist parties become potential, as well as actual, partners for mainstream political parties vying for alternatives in terms of identity politics, as social citizenship and universal welfare policies are progressively drying up as sources for legitimacy (Schierup, Hansen and Castles 2006). These processes of pragmatic 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 *op.cit.*). But a dramatically boosted panic over 'Islamist extremism', and over migration as a security threat since 9/11-2001, has fertilised the ground for a faster proliferation of xenophobia, racialisation and the denigration of norms and policies of citizenship in European societies.

When Jörg Haider and the Austrian Freedom Party won the 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 at the time - were published by a major Danish daily paper (2005) and subsequently reprinted across Europe, racialising discourse and banal 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 political spectrum.

Certainly politics on migration and migrant incorporation has already for decades, as we argue in *Paradoxes of Multiculturalism*, been waged on a 'battleground' (Schierup 1993) with 'Culture' as 'floating signifier' (Laclau, *op.cit.*); a booty for 'multi-culturalists' and nationalist populists alike, as well as for pragmatic neo-liberals seeking legitimacy through including 'diversity management' in flexible

strategies for political hegemony (Schierup, *op.cit.*). The difference today is that the latter are now increasingly carrying the battle into the very discursive terrain that used to be identified as the monopoly of what was dubbed 'extremist' national populism. Appealing to a 'defence of liberalism', we see new political coalitions surfacing that are void of a realistic alternative to the historically constituted edifice of rights citizenship that used to form the backbone of social solidarity and cohesion in post World War Two European societies. A pernicious fixation on matters of 'identity', 'moral duty' and 'community' bring these appeals deeper and deeper into the ideological terrain of 'integralism' (Holmes 2000), focused on the virtues of a shared organic cultural community. The politics is still marketed as 'liberalism', but as a cover for an 'illiberal liberalism' (Guild, Groenendijk and Carrera 2009) building on the actual premises of neo-liberalism. That is a paradoxical 'liberalism', which has lost contact with liberal philosophical roots and founding institutional preconditions, forced to seek recourse to a conservative neo-communitarian nationalism for legitimising its claims to hegemony.

#### **Author details**

**Carl-Ulrik Schierup** (born 1948) is a professor in Ethnic Studies at Linköping University, Sweden and director of REMESO – The Institute for Research on Migration, Ethnicity and Society. He has published on subjects relating to international migration, ethnicity, identity and culture, racism, nation building and nationalism, political economy, and labour studies. Among his major publications are the books *Paradoxes of Multiculturalism* (1991), and *Migration, Citizenship, and the European Welfare State* (2006). *E-mail:* carl-ulrik.schierup@liu.se

**Aleksandra Ålund** (born 1945) is a professor at The Institute for Research on Migration, Ethnicity and Society - REMESO - at Linköping University, Sweden. She is Director of the REMESO Graduate School in Migration, Ethnicity and Society. Ålund's research on new ethnicities, gender, cultural production, immigrants in social movements, urban segregation, political marginalization and social exclusion is documented in a range of studies in Swedish and English. Among her major books are *Paradoxes of Multiculturalism*, 1991, and *Multi-Kulti Ungdom* (Multicultural Youth), 1997. *E-mail:* aleksandra.alund@liu.se

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