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# Muslims in Sweden

## *Introduction*

Swedes today generally believe, and often proudly claim, that Sweden is a globally aware, free, open, secularized and unprejudiced society with progressive and generous immigration policies; that they are living in one of the most open, democratic, egalitarian and just societies in the world. This picture is also largely accepted outside Sweden. Fortunately this is also to a high extent true. But this does not mean that this claim is not in need of discussion, debate and analysis. It could even be claimed that it is this kind of discussions that constitute the backbone of an open and democratic society. A key area in our discussion will be that of religious liberty, a liberty which the Swedes was formally granted in the Religious Liberty Act of 1951, which took effect on 1 January 1952.<sup>1</sup>

Even though it is true today that hardly anyone, as Robert Bellah expresses it, “would fail to list religious freedom and religious pluralism among those obvious good things that any enlightened society would want to defend” it is as true that “through most of the history of Western civilization neither religious freedom nor religious pluralism were obvious goods. They were in fact quite consciously rejected” (1982:33). Both of these statements fit Sweden as hand in glove.

A glance back at the Swedish history shows all too clear that religious liberty, as well as human rights in general, has been rare phenomenon. It could even be said that the very concept of human rights – the idea that humans should have special rights just because they are humans, and not because they had other properties, like a specific social position – did not appear until fairly late in history.

One problem in all discussions of religious liberty, that has to be mentioned at an early stage, is that “religious liberty” can mean many things and that it often is taken to mean different things to different people. It can, for example, be interpreted to mean any or all of the following: “freedom from discrimination based on one’s belonging or adhering to a religious tradition in general or to a specific religious tradition or variety of such tradition”, “freedom to hold religious beliefs, attitudes and values”, “freedom to be able to act and live according to one’s religious beliefs in private as well as in public”, “freedom to organize and belong to religious institutions” and “freedom not to have to belong to a religion, to be religious or to have to take part in religious activities”. To this can be added the freedom to be able to define what should be understood by “religion”, as well as what its area of function and competence should be from within one’s own religious tradition and its self understanding. The last is a point not rarely pressed by Muslim minorities in Western societies. Furthermore, religious liberty may be understood mainly as a collective or as

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<sup>1</sup> Religious Liberty Act (Religionsfrihetslagen), Printed in *Svensk författningssamling* (SFS) för 1951:680, Sec. 1, pp 1643–1646 (Stockholm 1952). Important documents regarding the Swedish legislation on religious liberty are also SFS 1999:932; SFS 1998:1593, Sec. 16; SFS 1999:974, Sec. 4 and SFS 1999:974, Sec. 12.

an individual phenomenon, understandings that has a tendency to come in conflict with each other. We will already here make it clear that the constitutional protection of religious liberty, as most liberties, in Sweden has been understood as that of the individual, and nothing else.

Many of the problems the Muslims in Sweden are facing can be largely attributed to the notion, nature, position and place of religion in our society, which includes the notion that it should not be allowed to affect your behavior outside your very private sphere. To allow religious considerations to affect your public life is considered both irrational and wrong. Society, its institutions and representatives should be impartial, rational and objective, i.e. secularized. This ideal has saturated the general consciousness of the Swedes to a high extent during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The result is that religion has disappeared almost totally as a factor in our way of seeing and understanding other people and their ways of thinking and acting, including the ways we see and understand immigration. Religious aspects of immigration have been almost completely neglected in Sweden until very recently.<sup>2</sup> Immigrants have been seen as people without religion, or, at best, with a religion as secularized and privatized as we have in our modern era. Until quite recently immigrants have also almost exclusively been viewed in terms of secular labels such as nationality, language, ethnicity, political opinion or socioeconomic class, and their identities and loyalties have been considered to be almost exclusively tied up with one or a combination of just mentioned categories. It has been largely ignored that "religion" from the Islamic horizon means something different than from the Western Christian horizon. It has also been ignored that Islam is for many Muslims a very important factor in how they think, what they do and why they do it; in many cases perhaps the most essential aspect of their identity and "cognitive universe". When Muslims have pointed out and insisted upon the fact that they are Muslims first and foremost this has normally been met without understanding or with negative attitudes.

## **MUSLIMS IN SWEDEN - THE BACKGROUND**

### **SWEDEN - A LAND OF UNITY**

#### **The history of religious freedom in Sweden**

With few exceptions the history of Sweden, up until the last decades, can be described as the history of an ethnically, culturally, religiously and socially isolated and homogeneous society. One of the reasons for this isolation is that until fairly recently, Sweden, largely owing to its relatively low level of "academic", economic and industrial development, its geographical position and its climate, was not a very attractive target for immigration and therefore remained relatively untouched by Europe's various population movements. Moreover, Sweden has never been colonized or been

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<sup>2</sup> This is an opinion that many of our informants have emphasized with vigor.

a colonial power itself, even if it had its own regional empire in northern Europe during the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

On the whole Sweden can be said consciously to have tried to protect itself from foreign influence since the end of the sixteenth century – and, in the minds of the legislators, thereby from the risk of domestic disruption and split – with the aid of a highly restrictive legislation, particularly on religion. The formula on which Sweden was to be built and governed was: “One nation, One people, One religion.”

The starting point for the so-called Lutheran unity society is normally set to the time of the synod that was summoned to Uppsala in 1593 (Uppsala möte) where its delegates of Lutheran clergy declared the Evangelical Lutheran Church to be the national church of Sweden (Alwall 1998: 147; Cnattingius 1943: 66–76 and 97).<sup>3</sup> It was, for example, decided that Sweden and the whole Swedish social life were to be based on an Evangelical Lutheran foundation. No exemptions should be tolerated. The unity in faith was seen as the foundation for the stable society. The Lutheran religious ideology was supposed to be the social cement that held the nation together.

This principle of religious unity, according to which all Swedes should adhere to the same Lutheran faith, was from this time on forcefully imposed for the next 300 years. The first paragraph of the 1634 Instrument of Government, for example, states that: “...unity in religion and the right divine service is the strongest foundation for a rightful, unanimous and lasting government”.<sup>4</sup> Religious unity was seen as an absolute presupposition for the prosperity of the people and for a good royal government. Other religious systems were considered a threat to religious unity and thereby to the nation. In the Constitutional act of 1665 the practising of every other religion than the version of Evangelical Lutheranism officially accepted in Sweden was prohibited, and made punishable with severe penalties. This meant that it was necessary to be member of the officially recognized Swedish State church to be able to be a Swedish citizen. Every dissident from the "Right Faith" was, by definition, no longer Swedish and could, normally after other penalties be expelled from the country (Karlsson & Svanberg 1997).

All so-called foreign religious adherent (i.e. nonLutheran) where during the 17<sup>th</sup> and most of 18<sup>th</sup> century subject to harsh circumstances, including forced conversions and Christian baptisms. Roman Catholics, Jews and Muslims experienced this fate during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Forced christenings for Muslims were arranged in, for example, 1672 and 1695 (Alwall 1994: 89; Alwall 1998: 149).

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century the state, mostly due to economic necessities, started to take a more pragmatic view on some foreign religious adherents. But it should be emphasized that Jews and Catholics were still generally prohibited to settle in Sweden. Catholics and Jews were given restricted religious liberty in the Tolerance edict from 1781 and the so-called Jewish regulations from 1782 (Karlsson & Svanberg 1997).

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<sup>3</sup> The text from the synod was published under the title *Confessio fidei* (Swedish translation in 1993).

<sup>4</sup> Regeringsformen 1634: 6.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century the importance of this pragmatic motives of the state grow as this was the period of the industrialization of Sweden. One example of this liberalization is the 1809 Instrument for Government which, in the sixteenth paragraph, claim that the king should protect the liberty of religion and not force anyone to follow a certain religious tradition as long as it was not harmful to society. Although it was a long way to the “modern” religious liberty this was an important step.

Despite the writings in the 1809 Instrument for Government it was not until 1860 that the prohibition for Swedish citizens to leave the Swedish Lutheran state church was lifted, and further only after teaching, exhortation and warnings by a state church priest, and then only if they changed their confession to another accepted Christian faith/church (Karlsson & Svanberg 1997 and Alwall 1998: 151152.)<sup>5</sup>

So far in history the debate about religious liberty had only concerned one kind, the “positive”, of what is nowadays considered to be two equally important kinds of this liberty. No serious debate of its “negative” side, i.e. freedom from religion, took place in Sweden until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. That the process from a limited and restricted positive religious liberty to a more unrestricted and unconditioned religious liberty of a both positive and negative kind was long and painstaking can be seen from the fact that it, as we have seen, took almost another hundred years, until 1951, for the Swedes to be formally granted their Freedom of Religion Act.

In 1974, religious liberty was included in the Swedish constitution (Instrument of Government, Chapter 2).<sup>6</sup> Several debaters have even claimed this piece of legislation to be among the most important amendment to the constitution during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In yet another amendment in 1976 – the same year the Sweden ratified the UN Declaration on civil and political rights from 1966 – the constitutional status of religious liberty was further strengthened by being proclaimed to be an “absolute right”, which means that this right, at least *prima facie*, should not be restricted by other laws and regulations. In reality, however, this protection has for various reasons proved itself rather weak. The religious liberty in Sweden was further strengthened when the European Convention on Human Rights was integrated in the Swedish legislation 1995.<sup>7</sup>

EvangelicLutheran Christianity has throughout history exercised a tremendous influence on Swedish culture and the Swedes’ manners and customs, norms and value systems, as well as their ways of thinking in general. The notion of a common culture and religion, including common manners, norms and value system, as well as a common way of thinking in general, implemented by the state, in cooperation with the church, in a strong assimilation policy, has throughout history exercised a tremendous influence on the Swedes' patterns of thought and life.

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<sup>5</sup> Regeringsformen 1809, § 16 (Stockholm 1891: 156).

<sup>6</sup> Here, religious liberty (*religionsfrihet*) is defined as “the freedom to practice one’s own religion either alone or in company with others”.

<sup>7</sup> Lagen om den europeiska konventionen angående skydd för de mänskliga rättigheterna och de grundläggande friheterna. Printed with English and French translation in *Svensk författningssamling* 1994, nr. 1219: 2543–2649.

Regardless of what many Swedes like to think today, it is a misconception to think that these old ideas about religious and other homogeneity should not, to a large extent, still exert influence today. Even if the Swedes from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century have become free from overt religious oppression, this does not mean that the idea of the “unity society” (enhetssamhälle) was dropped. It was mainly that religion was dropped as the main tool for its achievement.

## "Folkhemmet"

During the 1920s and 1930s Sweden was, in the wake of strong national romantic ideas, one of the leading nations in Europe in "racialbiological research". In 1921, for example, the Swedish parliament decided to found a special institute for racialbiological research in Uppsala (Svanberg & Tydén 1992). This type of thinking was also propagated by what can be considered the chief ideologists within the social democratic party at the time, Alva and Gunnar Myrdal.<sup>8</sup> According to them a major goal for Swedish politics should be the creation of a strong and healthy "Swedish race" which was "Nordic to its essence" and which had strong capabilities for survival and for defending the Swedish *lebensraum*, and the like (see for example Myrdal 1934). The result of all this was that leading Swedish politicians, under the guise of science, could argue that the pure Swedish race was superior to other races which, subsequently, based on their physiognomic characteristics, were considered to be in varying degree inferior (Broberg & Tydén 1991). The time during which these ideas were peaking was also the time of the birth and development of the ideology of the *Folkhem* as well as of the *Folkhem* itself.

The *Folkhems*ideologi was an unique attempt to create a middle way between capitalism and fullblown socialism/communism, to create an all-encompassing, all-encompassing welfare state in which the securities of the lost agrarian society, traditional ties of family and community, should be substituted by the security of the government. It can be said to be an attempt to make society a large family world, a village organization world on a large scale. The foundation of society was during this period interpreted, not as liberal or civic contract between individuals or voluntary interest, etc. groups of individuals, a *Gesellschaft*, but as a community, an organic unit of human beings united through shared characteristics of origin, race, culture, ethnicity and religious tradition, a *Gemeinschaft*. This can be said to be Sweden's second attempt to, through social engineering, create a “unity society” (see for example Larsson 1994, Rojas 1998). This ideology, according to them, centrally included the idea of the social necessity of social equality, common culture, elimination of inequalities and one and the same social order for all individuals and social groups; a social uniformization, homogenization and standardization in combination with an attempt to achieve, by way of education and social reforms, as equal an outcome as possible for all citizens on as many socioeconomic dimensions as possible.

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<sup>8</sup> What's just been said shall not be interpreted, as we want to claim that, for example, the Myrdals were racists. They were probably only, so to speak, children of their time. Even if they played an important role in the building of the Swedish welfare state and its thinking and attitudes, we do not believe it is reasonable to credit (or blame) individual people for the emergence of so complex phenomena as attitudes to “the other”, including racism.

It also, according to them, centrally included the conception of the existence of a special class of politicians and civil servants of the state who were experts with superior knowledge about what is “good” or “best” for its citizens, experts on “the good life” and “the good society”; the existence of a special class of “moral technocrats” (cf. Thorseth 1999). What this in reality boils down to is, of course, a version of the old idea of the existence of an enlightened elite, which in their wisdom and benevolence by social engineering should design and organize the good life for the less enlightened mob (cf. Rothstein 1994).

As long as the country, generally speaking, in most respect was very homogeneous this policy can be said to have been something basically positive for the country and its people. During the first half of the twentieth century Sweden, for example, had the highest economic growth rate in the Western world.

The “trouble” began when Sweden from the late 1970s started to become an ethnically, culturally and religiously plural society and, despite the official formulation in the immigration policies, tried to solve the various “problems” that arose in the wake of this pluralization by applying the old strategies from the *Folkhems*-ideology: Swedish experts should decide what was best for the immigrants. Applied to people and groups of people with backgrounds in cultures, religions, etc. rather different from Sweden and not rarely with colonial experiences, this, from the immigrants' point of view, very easily was perceived as patronizing and ethnocentric. Our interviews confirms that this way of looking at the Swedish integration efforts is common among them.

We are not claiming that this analysis presented by various critical “immigrants spokesmen” is the correct one.<sup>9</sup> We are only arguing that they very well might have pointed to one of the explanations for why many Swedes, and particularly representatives of the official society, have such a tendency to say “integration” but mean “assimilation”. We also believe this just roughly sketched general way of thinking also might be one of the reasons behind the fact that the term “tolerance” has been so much more frequently occurring in the discussions of the relationship between Swedes and immigrants than the term “respect”. Tolerance is, in our ears, an attitude you have towards something you believe to be wrong or inferior in some ways or towards something you generally do not like, but that you for the sake of some other principle or value are prepared to accept, while respect is an attitude you manifest towards something you experience as equal or better than what you yourself have; something you even think you might or can have something to learn from.

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<sup>9</sup> This should not be understood as implying that we do not believe that they are basically on the right track in their analysis of the situation and the cause of the situation for the migrants in Sweden. We believe they are. We do not believe, however, in many of the very neo-liberal suggestions for solutions to “the problem” they are arguing for.

# MUSLIMS IN SWEDEN - THE FACTS

## The definition of Muslims

In discussions about the number of Muslims in Sweden, both in the past and in the present, two things must be mentioned.<sup>10</sup> One is empirical: no official statistics exist since the 1930s which tell us what ethnic or religious groups immigrants belonged to on arrival or what religious groups they belong to in Sweden. All statistics used here are based on nationality or country of origin. The other is theoretical: what is the definition of "Muslim"? Obviously it is difficult to get any accurate measure of anything until we know what we are going to count or measure.

Let us begin with the latter question. To solve this problem in a relatively simple way we will stipulate four different definitions of "Muslim", which also have difference in scope. We will, for want of a better term, call the first, and widest, an ethnic definition, the second, and somewhat narrower, a cultural definition, the third, and still narrower, a religious definition and the last, and narrowest, a political definition. Here the first and the third are the focus of attention.

We define *ethnic Muslim* as anyone born in an environment dominated by a Muslim tradition, belonging to a Muslim people, of Muslim origin, with a name that belongs in a Muslim tradition and/or who identifies her/himself with, or considers her/himself to belong to this environment and tradition. This definition is independent of cultural competence, attitudes toward Islam as a cultural, political or religious system and its various representatives and leaders, religious beliefs and whether or not the individual actively practices Islam as a religious system.

We designate as *cultural Muslim* anyone who is socialized into, and has to some extent internalized, the Muslim cultural tradition – the Muslim "cognitive universe" (Berger & Luckmann's phrase)<sup>11</sup> – and who has Muslim cultural competence. In this sense someone is a Muslim if the "Islamic cognitive universe" functions as her/his "frame of reference" or "pattern of thought, life and communication" and thereby as that which gives her/his world and its objects, words, situations, behaviors, etc. their meaning and sense. In other words: if the Islamic cognitive universe is the phenomenon "through" which the individual constitute and experiences her/himself and her/his life-world. Cultural Muslims can have very different norm and value systems, very different political opinions, very different attitudes towards Islam as a religion and very different degrees as well as ways of practicing religion from one another. But, and this is what is important, they all have a certain common knowledge, in the wide sense of the term, owing to which they can use the same terms, the same religious, political, etc. words of prestige and abuse, the same metaphors, allegories, proverbs, symbols, pictures and jokes, with the same meaning in relevant respects. Stated differently, when they hear a word or a phrase, see an object, picture, gesture or human behavior, they get the same associations in relevant respects. In other words, they understand each other, in both direct and indirect means of communication.

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<sup>10</sup> These problems are discussed more at length in Sander 1993.

<sup>11</sup> The Muslim cognitive universe includes, among other things, the cultural, political, religious, etc. history and tradition as it is seen and defined from a Muslim point of view as well as their literature, mythology, art, architecture and popular beliefs and customs.



We define someone as a *religious Muslim* if (s)he professes specific beliefs, participation in religious services and other religious practices, personal piety and other elements of personal life style. In other words, if (s)he "measures positive" on a set of criteria designed to measure religiosity.

Finally, we define someone as Muslim in the *political* sense if (s)he has specific ideas about the place, role and function of religion (Islam) in society. A person is a political Muslim if (s)he claims that Islam in its essence or primarily is (ought to be) a political and social phenomenon. In other words, if (s)he in an integristic<sup>12</sup> way underscores and claims the "dogma", "belief" or idea of unity under, or oneness of, God (*tawhid*) and the exclusive transcendental sovereignty (*hakimiyya*) of God as the most central and important characteristics of Islam; i.e. if (s)he – usually in the spirit of people like al-Maududi or Sayyed Qutb – sees Islam as a total way of life for the individual as well as for society at large. (cf. Choueiri 1990, Esposito 1992, 1997, 2001; Esposito & Voll 2001).

The definition that, explicitly or implicitly, is the most commonly used in statistics about the number of Muslims in the world or in Sweden is the first and widest one: the ethnic definition. This is also the one we use in our attempt to arrive at a reasonable estimate of the number of Muslims in Sweden.

When trying to answer this question we face the empirical problem just mentioned: how to find what we want to count when the only available statistics are based on nationality, which, for at least some national groups, admittedly is a poor indicator of which religious tradition people from there belong to, even in the ethnic sense? Here the only feasible method – given a reasonable amount of money and work – we can see is to start out from the number of people with foreign backgrounds from countries we know have sizable Muslim populations and adjust that with what we know from other sources about these countries, their populations, the structure of immigration from the various countries, etc. The obvious fact that this procedure of estimating the number of Muslims in Sweden is open to criticism in many respects and that its results will be afflicted with a considerable uncertainty and a large margin of error – the populations in most countries are, just to mention one problem, made up of several different ethnic and religious groups – is something we have to put up with, at least until we find an alternative procedure that is feasible and practicable.

The most essential factor to adjust for is what we know about the percentage of ethnic Muslims in the various countries of origin. However, when trying to do this we again run into the problem of a lack of reliable figures. Various sources give different, sometimes very different, figures for the percentage of Muslims in a country. Generally speaking it seems that what we can call "Muslim sources" on the whole give higher figures for the percentage of Muslims in a country than do what we can call "western sources".<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Or radical or activist or whatever term one prefers to use in stand of the ambiguous and to some extent discredited term "fundamentalist".

<sup>13</sup> Our primarily sources have been Weeks 1978, Kettani 1986 and Shaikh 1992. We have also consulted several other "minor" sources, like various area or country specific books. However, almost all sources give figures between Weeks (on the low end) and Kettani (on the high end).

How many of this total of roughly 300,000 – 350,000 ethnic Muslims can be said to be Muslims in a religious sense, according to a religious definition? Not surprisingly the answer to this question depends on one's definition of "religious Muslim".

We count anyone a Muslim in the religious sense who: *i*) accepts (claims to accept) the words of the Islamic declaration of faith (the *shahadah*) that there is no god but Allah and that Mohammed is his last messenger, *ii*) believes and has faith in Allah as the highest authority, *iii*) believe and have faith in his Angels, his books, his prophets, the day of judgment and the final resurrection and, as a consequence of *i* - *iii*, *iv*) claims to have as her/his, at least long term, goal in life to try, to the best of her/his ability, to realize the commands and intentions of the Quran and the example of Mohammed (the *sunna*) (as (s)he understands it) in her/his life, and *v*) that because (s)he, independently of how (s)he at the moment *de facto* is living his/her life right now, seriously believes (claims to believe) that it is a life in accordance with the Quran, etc., as (s)he understands it, that constitutes the meaningful, the right, the good, the correct or the most valuable life. Included in this goal in life should be, among other things, that (s)he, to the best of her/his ability, shall perform the daily prayers (*salat*), visit the mosque with reasonable regularity, fast (*sawm*) during Ramadan, perform the pilgrimage (*Hajj*) and follow the basic rules of Islam in matters of food, dress, ethics, family relations, etiquette and so on as (s)he understands them.<sup>14</sup>

With starting point in a "definition" of the kind just mentioned and by means of a set of criteria developed from it,<sup>15</sup> involving both "attitudinal" and "behavioral" aspects, we concluded in a study, using both survey questionnaires and counts of visitors to local mosques and prayer-halls in the early 1990s (Sander 1993) that 40-50% of the ethnic Muslims in Sweden could reasonably be considered to be religious. Given what we know about changes in the Muslim population since then – for example, that the Iranian group, then the largest and by far the least religious group, today makes up a smaller part of the total Muslim population, and that Muslims from some of the "newer" groups, such as those from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Somalia and Ethiopia, manifest a relatively high adherence to Islam and Islamic practices – it seems reasonable to conclude that the relative proportion of religious Muslims should not be less today than in the early 1990s.

A special problem here is the second generation Muslims born and raised in Sweden. How many of these that can be considered, or considers themselves, Muslims in a religious sense we have no idea. From discussions and interviews with Muslim leaders among others, it does not seem that the percentage who they consider to be religious Muslims in more qualified sense exceeds fifteen percent, if anything it is less. However, the group whose first choice of religious tradition, if they were to "turn to religion", would most likely be Islam is however, considerable and growing. There are also indications that during recent years these youngsters to an increasing degree

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<sup>14</sup> More exactly, what "empirical" forms this understanding takes in real life for a specific individual can vary with a number of factors (cf. Sander 1988, 1993). What is important, however, is not the exact empirical forms of manifestation, but what correspondence there is between what the individual seriously considers it to be for a Muslim to live a good or correct life according to Islam, on the one hand, and the life (s)he *de facto* is (thinks (s)he is) leading, on the other.

<sup>15</sup> Sander 1993, esp. § 8 and pp. 149 - 187 and part II.

have started to identify themselves as Muslims. On the basis of considerations such as those just mentioned we do not think it unreasonable to put the figure of religious Muslims in Sweden at the time of writing at close to 150,000.

Starting from a somewhat different and more exclusive way of defining "religious Muslim",<sup>16</sup> mainly based on membership and participation in the activities of "recognized" religious congregations, the Commission for State Grants to Religious Communities (SST) in 2000 arrived at 100,000 for the number of people "served" by the Swedish Muslim congregations. Given *a*) that the estimates of the SST tend to be on the conservative side, *b*) that not all Muslim congregations are members of SST, either because of their own choice or because they do not live up to the standards for membership and thus fall outside this figure, and *c*) that their criteria for "religious Muslim" is more exclusive than those we used, it seems reasonable, by including second-generation Muslims also, to accept the above mentioned figure of close to 150,000 religious Muslims in Sweden.

## **The Muslim population in Sweden**

Today Sweden might have one of the most heterogeneous Muslim populations of all countries in Western Europe. They have different cultural, ethnic, political, economic, religious, linguistic, educational, etc. back grounds. They come from over forty different countries in "Arabic" and "Black" Africa; in "Persian", "Ottoman" and "Arabic" Asia and in Europe. They come from Islamic states such as Iran, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, from secularized states as Turkey and from (former) socialistic states such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania and several of the new states formerly belonging to Soviet Union. They have migrated or fled, and that for many different reasons. They have very different opinions in political matters as well as many different attitudes and ways of relating to Islam as cultural, social, political and religious system. That this heterogeneity makes any statements about Islam and the Muslims in Sweden as a group more or less meaningless should be clear. Therefore we will as far as possible avoid making generalizing statements about them of the kind that they, as a group, possess this or that characteristic; that "the Muslims" can be characterized in this or that way when it comes to integration, attitudes to Sweden and the Swedes, when it comes to religiosity, attitudes to women or whatever it can be. And if we do, we will urge the reader to regard such statements with skepticism.

If we keep the Swedish situation of heterogeneity in mind we think the advantages, at least in an overview like this, of describing the Muslims in Sweden in terms of a few different groups outweigh the disadvantages. So, on organizational as well as on other<sup>17</sup> grounds we think it reasonable to speak of them as roughly constituting seven

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<sup>16</sup> These are discussed in Sander 1993.

<sup>17</sup> One being the fact that the Muslims themselves have a tendency to think, talk about and organize themselves in those terms. This does not mean that we are unaware of the fact that there is a considerable heterogeneity within the groups here distinguished and that differences of various kind (for example along the lines of politics, religion and gender) within the groups in question sometimes can be more important than differences between them.

different sub-groups:<sup>18</sup> the Turkish Muslims, the “Arab” Muslims, the Iranian Muslims, the African Muslims, the Pakistani Muslims, the Balkan Muslims, and “the rest”.<sup>19</sup>

The *Turkish Muslims*<sup>20</sup> were, as just mentioned, the first Muslim group of any size to come to Sweden. Up until approximately 1980 they were by far the largest single Muslim community. For a long time they were even larger than all the other groups together. This has given them a rather special position (Sander 1990). For many Swedes, both individuals and authorities, they were *The Muslims*. They represented the Muslims in both official and unofficial contexts, their opinions were heard, they received, or at least directed, almost all financial or other "help" to minorities of Muslim background, etc. And this was no problem as long as they actually were by far the largest group.

But by 1985 the relative size of the group was down to roughly thirty-three percent of all the Muslims, around 1990 to around sixteen percent and today they constitute less than ten percent of the total Muslim population. This, in combination with the fact that they for a long time succeeded to quite a large extent in retaining their status as *The Muslims*, created certain problems. What kept these problems relatively small was the fact that the Muslims have realized that unity in itself has a high "lobbying" value for such a relatively small and weak group.

The *Arabic-speaking group* includes people from almost twenty countries covering a large geographical area.<sup>21</sup> The largest sub-group here is the Iraqi. They constitute, with their at the end of 2000 a little more than 52.000 members, almost half of this whole group. Among the Iraqi Muslims roughly one third are Kurds. The Iraqis started to come to Sweden in relatively larger numbers in the late 1970's. Most of them are refugees due to, on the one hand, the Iran-Iraq war and, on the other, due to Saddam Husseins "policies" when it comes to internal affairs, particularly with regards to the Kurds. This group was during the 1980's, together with the Iranians, the fastest growing Muslim group in Sweden. The relatively large influx of Iraqis continued during the 1990s.

The second largest sub-group here is the Lebanese group, with its roughly 21.000 members. Included in the Arab group are also people from among other countries

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<sup>18</sup> The taxonomy given here is based on geographical criteria's, not on ethnic or other. The taxonomy could, of course, be made on other criteria's, be more fine grained, etc. We believe the one presented here is sufficient for our purpose.

<sup>19</sup> In more specific and detailed discussions, of course, it is necessary to make further specifications and distinguish among Sunni, *Shia*, the *Alevi*, the Kurds, the *Isma'ilis*, the *Ahmadiyya*, and so on, as separate groups.

<sup>20</sup> A "Turkish Muslim" here means a person with background in the state of Turkey and who is ethnic Muslim. Of all the immigrants from the state of Turkey in Sweden roughly 60 - 70% are Muslims. The majority of the rest is *Suryoyo*, and in religious terms Christians (Orthodox). The large majority of the Turkish Muslims are also ethnical Turks, but the group also includes a few thousand Kurds. The total number of people in Sweden with background in the state of Turkey was in 2000-12-31 roughly 36 000. This should make the number of ethnic Muslims in the group in our sense to somewhere between 22.000 and 25.000.

<sup>21</sup> For the reasonableness of speaking of all these people as one group, see, for example, Hamady 1960, Laffin 1975 and Patai 1973.

Morocco, Syria and Tunisia as well as Palestinians of various nationalities. Altogether this group - with its roughly 90 000 members - make up roughly one third/one quarter of the Swedish Muslims.

The *Iranian group* is the second single largest group of ethnic Muslims in Sweden with almost 52.000 individuals. They themselves make up one sixth of the country's total number of ethnic Muslims. Most of them arrived in Sweden after 1984/85. In 1984, for example, the total number of Iranians was around 7.500 (of which 1.500 were born in Sweden), in 1985 it was around 8.500. The absolute majority of them were refugees with the intention of "returning home" if the situation in Iran should change in what they consider a favorable way. Their existence in Sweden was for many years in many respects characterized by (the consciousness of) temporariness, as well as of being focused on Iran. Many of them have extremely negative attitudes towards Islam (as a religion), and often in a crude way identify Islam (as a religion) with "Khomeini Islam". In spite of this many of them regard "the Persian culture and way of life" very highly, and as in very many areas and ways superior to the Western/Swedish way, a way that many of them furthermore in many respects have negative opinions about. The picture of them as on the whole strongly anti-Islamic has to a large extent also been taken over by the Swedish public opinion. In reality the picture is not that simple, though. There is a significant number that practice Islam as a religion in the sense that they, as far as it is practically possible in Sweden, follow Islamic religious rules and regulations, pray, fast at Ramadan, etc. We would estimate that the group of in this sense religious Iranians in Sweden is about one sixth to one fifth of the total group.<sup>22</sup> The way they are religious is, for various reasons, rather secularized and privatized, however. They rarely participate in mosque or other official public Islamic activities.

As a result of various political activities in North-East *Africa* from the second half of the 1980s Sweden saw a fair number of refugees from that region. Today the main number of people from that region is around 16.000 Somalians and around 12.000 Ethiopians. Other African Muslims have arrived from, for example, Eritrea, Ghana, Gambia, Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal, Sudan and East Africa. Together their number can be estimated to around 5.000. These groups, especially the former, have manifested a strong Islamic identity and sense of belonging, but, compared to most other groups, a low level of integration.

The *Pakistani group* in Sweden is, compared to for example the groups in Denmark and Norway, relatively small. They are a little over 3.000, or around one percent of the total number of Muslims in Sweden. Up to twenty-five percent of them could be Ahmadyyans.

The *Balkan Muslims* can be divided into three separate groups: those from ex-Yugoslavia, those from Bosnia-Herzegovina and those from Kosovo-Albania. The number of people from ex-Yugoslavia in Sweden at the end of 1988 was around 76.000. How many of those that are or considers themselves as Muslims are very uncertain. Among the Yugoslavians that had come to Sweden, mainly as labor and family-reunion migration before the latest civil war, the estimation of the proportion

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<sup>22</sup> See Sander 1993

of Muslims were around twenty percent. This is higher than the estimated proportion of Muslims in Yugoslavia during the 1970s and 1980s. The main reason for this is that the migration community consists of proportionally more members from the poorer areas of Yugoslavia which, to a large extent, were coexistent with its "Muslim areas", for example Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo-Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro, areas which in the beginning of the 1980s had estimated Muslim populations of fifty-one percent, eighty-five percent, thirty-one percent and twenty-six percent, respectively (Kettani 1986). As the number of migrants from Yugoslavia in Sweden in 1988 was a little over 50.000 that will put the number of Yugoslavian Muslims in Sweden at around 10.000 at the time. That number today is, if at all, probably only slightly larger as people from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo-Albania have been separately treated in the statistics since the latest war. Relevant to note is that the development on Balkan during the last decade, according to Muslim leaders, has had the effect that the Yugoslavian Muslims in Sweden to a large extent have increased their interest in and attendance at the Muslim religious organizations.

In the wake of the civil war in Yugoslavia a relatively large number of refugees came to Sweden. Between 1990 and 1993 around 150.000 people from former Yugoslavia applied for asylum in Sweden. Many of them were from Bosnia-Herzegovina. At the end of 1998 the number of people from Bosnia-Herzegovina that had been granted asylum and were living in Sweden was around 54.000. In surveys we have conducted in the group seventy-five to eighty percent of the Bosnians in Sweden have reported Islam as their religious tradition. That would set their number to a little over 40.000. This group has shown remarkable activity and capacity when it comes to building institutions.

Besides Muslims with these origins, there are today in Sweden Muslims from virtually all parts of the world. Their exact numbers is most difficult to estimate. We doubt, however, that it exceeds 10 000 - 15 000. Most of the Swedish Muslims are Sunnis. The number of Shias was at the end of the 1990s estimated to slightly over 60.000 (Thurfjell 1999). Probably no other groups, like the Ahmadiyya, the Alevis, the Ismaelies, exceed 1.000 individuals, and the number of converts, mainly women married to Muslim men, is probably no more than 5.000.

This will most likely put the total number of *ethnic* Muslims in Sweden from the groups mentioned above somewhere between 250.000 - 260 000.

A group of increasing importance is Muslims born in Sweden, so-called second-generation Muslims, a group which due to the way the statistics is organized to a large extent is not included in figure above. The size of this group is for various reasons hard to estimate. A rough estimate of its size, however, puts it at close to 100,000. The total number of "foreign born" immigrants and their children is, as we have seen, close to 2 miljon. Of those around 700,000 have been born in Sweden. Given that somewhere between twenty and twenty-five percent of the "foreign born" immigrants are ethnic Muslims and that the various immigrant groups has roughly the same nativity rates, the number of "Muslim children" should be around 150,000. However, in the light of other facts about this group - which cannot be dealt with here - we do not believe that they exceed 100,000 individuals.

All in all this will bring the total Muslim population of *ethnic* Muslims in Sweden in the end of year 2000 to a total of between 300.000 – 350.000.

### **The process of Muslim institutionalization in Sweden**<sup>23</sup>

In discussions of the process of institutionalization of the Muslims in Sweden and elsewhere, it is useful to make a distinction between Muslim and Islamic institutions. Islamic institutions are institutions that are considered, by the Islamic authorities, absolutely necessary for people to be able to practice Islam as a religion in a correct way, and thus for them to live a life as real, true or good Muslims. The absence of these institutions makes it impossible, or at least difficult, for Muslims to fulfill what *shari'a* (the *Quran* and the *Sunna*) prescribe as necessary duties for a correct religious life. Examples of institutions in this category include: mosques, prayer halls (*musalla*) and the essential conditions for the proper performance of *salat*, *sawm*, *zakat*, *haji*, slaughter, circumcision, weddings, funerals, etc. according to Islamic Law and ritual as well as the necessary conditions for the availability of religious leaders (*mullas*, *imams*, *khujas*, *molvis*) and possibilities for them to operate and exercise their duties as they are supposed to.

Muslim institutions are institutions of a much wider nature than Islamic ones. They are institutions which (at least traditionally) constitute important parts of life in Muslim societies at the same time as their existence cannot be derived from the obligations of *shari'a* - they cannot be said to be either *wajib* or *mandub*. These are institutions that have their origin in various local, regional or national, sometimes even pre-Islamic, historical traditions and cultures. These kinds of institutions would be more correctly called Moroccan, Turkish, Persian, Pakistani, etc., than Islamic. They include a number of customs and practices concerning the position, behavior, dress, etc. of women as well as customs and practices in connection with birth, circumcision, name giving, weddings, sickness, funerals and other rites de passage.

It goes without saying that the distinction is not sharp, and that opinion is divided among the *'ulama* within the Islamic world about what falls more exactly within one or the other category, as does the fact that the reason for this is largely due to the fact that Islam, as we have argued, is a far from uniform and homogeneous phenomenon.

In spite of this the Islamic/Muslim distinction is an important distinction, and this is true for non-Muslims trying to understand Islam as well as for the Muslim communities themselves. The distinction is also frequently used in various policy-making discussions among Swedish Muslims, although not in exactly our terms, especially among the increasing number who argue for a unification of all (Swedish) Muslims under various versions of the appeal of "Back to pure non-culturalized

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<sup>23</sup> "Institution" is defined in this context as mutual and to some extent fixed and routine patterns (typifications) which mediate, regulate and determine the knowledge, values, norms, behaviors and activities of the members of a particular society (or group) vis a vis each other at the same time as they relate their knowledge, etc. to the larger context of meaning which constitutes the cultural framework of the societies (groups) in question. Institutions in this sense can be both ideal and real and have more or less rigid, concrete or "materialized" forms and structures etc. (This concept of institution is discussed in greater detail in Sander 1985, 1988a.)

Islam", "Back to the Sources", "Back to the Revelation (the Quran and the (early) Sunna)" and the like. These groups and individuals advocate, in other words, a "going beyond" the differences in Islam grounded in cultural and national differences, as well as often a "going beyond" the *madhahib* and their various systems of *fiqh*.<sup>24</sup>

Those who argue for a "reformation" of Islam along these lines seem to do so with the intention of being able to achieve (at least) two things simultaneously. On the one hand they hope to liberate the Diaspora Muslims from their religious (and even other) ties with their different "home-countries", liberate them from their "home-countries'" attempts to control the form as well as content of their religious life, in order to break down the religious (and other) differences between the Diaspora Muslims that hamper the unification of all Muslims. On the other, they hope that they will be able to get Islamic (religious) legitimation for their polices from important religious leaders as well as from international or "pan-Islamic" organizations such as The Muslim World League in Mecca, the London-based Islamic Council of Europe and others, using the basically "fundamentalist" ideology of going back to a traditional understanding of Islam. And as far as we can see, they are right 1) in the view that they need to succeed with both of these aims to be able to create something that can become a "self-propelled" variety of Western European Islam (among the other forms of Islam in the world), and 2) in the opinion that if they fail with 1) the long term future of Islam in Sweden looks more bleak.

During the first phase of Muslim immigration to Sweden the process of institutionalization was very slow and provisional - despite the fact that the establishment of associations, including religious ones, is relatively easy within Swedish law. The "meeting places" of the Muslim immigrants during this early phase were almost invariably a room in somebody's flat or shop, or some small premises rented for the purpose, that were "converted" into a "house mosque".

It was not until the mid 1970's, when many Muslims started to realize that their time in Sweden was going to be much longer than they first had expected and, as a result thereof, a growing presence of women and children in the Muslim community, that the activities aimed at creating cultural and religious institutions started to be attempted in any more serious way.

A major problem with the earlier institutions was that an unreasonable amount of the time and effort on the part of their leadership was devoted to various internal disputes over facilities, influence, power, money, political and religious aims, goals and strategies which, given the situation, are of secondary importance. This did not only lead to neglect of the organizations' primary goals and functions but also to organizational splits and a growing alienation of the members from the organizations and leadership.<sup>25</sup>

From the end of the 1970's this situation started to change. Not only did the number of Muslims, as well as their heterogeneity increase, but also the number of "congrega-

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<sup>24</sup> We will discuss this form of Islam a little more in details later under the headings of Euro-Islam and "Blå-Gul Islam".

<sup>25</sup> The now for over twenty years drawn-out process of attempting to build a central mosque in Göteborg is an almost paradigmatic illustration of this (see Sander 1991).



tions" with "mosques" or *musallas*, as well as the number of people attending them. Some figures: the first Swedish national Muslim organization or federation, *Förenade Islamiska Församlingar i Sverige* (FIFS), was created in 1973. In 1977 it organized eight local organizations or "congregations". There was also one Ahmadiyya congregation in Göteborg that, until the mid-1970's, shared facilities with the other Muslims. In 1976 they opened their own purpose-built mosque, which was the first of its kind in Sweden.<sup>26</sup> Altogether these eight congregations claimed to represent 16,000 registered members.

All reference to "registered members" should be taken with caution. The numbers quoted are, first of all, based on figures reported to the Commission for State Grants to Religious Communities by the "congregations" themselves. Secondly, Muslim "congregations" do not seem to be very "statistically minded". Some of them also have an explicit aversion against membership registration, and they give both religious and ideological reasons for their stance, for example fear that the "authorities" could use it against them in various ways, and/or that Islam is not Christianity and mosques are not churches that have congregations with members. Of course there might also in some cases be what can be called cultural reasons. Many of the people belonging to these "congregations", including their leaders, come from a cultural background where there was no tradition for religious (or other) organizations to collect and systematize this kind of information about themselves. As it is also a fact that they receive financial and other forms of assistance partly based on numbers of members it is, thirdly, not in their interest to report too few "registered members".<sup>27</sup>

In 1982 a second national federation, *Svenska Muslimska Förbundet* (SMuF) was created after a split within FIFS. At the time together they claimed to organize 23 local congregations and claimed 22,000 registered members. Two years later, in 1984 a third national federation, *Islamiska Centerunionen* (ICU) came into being after another split within FIFS. ICU was accepted as eligible for state grants in 1987.<sup>28</sup> In 1988 they together claimed to organize a total of 38 local congregations with 63,000 registered members. All three have joint representation within SST under the name of *Islamiska Samarbetsrådet* (IS). In 2001 FIFS claimed to organize 41 local congregations, SMuF 48 and IKUS 28, some of which are claimed also to have religious activities in "external branch offices". Besides this, the Ahmadiyya have, as we have seen, one "real" mosque, built for the purpose, and report "branch offices" in five other cities. There are also a number of places where smaller groups of Muslims – including Isma'īlis, Sufis, etc. – meet to pray, etc. on a more or less regular basis.

In 1986 FIFS and SMuF created a joint organization called *Stiftelsen Islamiska informationsbyrån*, since 1988 *Islamiska informationsföreningen* (IIF), in order to inform Swedes

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<sup>26</sup> It can be, and has been, debated whether or not the Ahmadiyya movement is Islamic and their members (true) Muslims. We do not want to get involved in this dispute and as the methodology of our research (so-called methodological agnosticism) bases itself on the individual's own account of her/his religiosity. We therefore count them as Muslims.

<sup>27</sup> When it comes to the financial assistance distributed by the Commission for State Grants to Religious Communities, their own reported figures are, however, not accepted at face value, but with a very critical attitude.

<sup>28</sup> In 1993 ICU changed its name to *Islamiska Kulturcenterunionen i Sverige* (IKUS). At the time of writing this, IKUS has, as a result of internal schisms, break-ups, etc more or less ceased to exist.

and Muslims about Islam by publishing information as well as giving lectures in schools etc. IIF also publishes the first major Islamic periodical in Sweden, *Salaam*, which was originally started in 1986.<sup>29</sup> Today IIF has branch offices in Stockholm, Göteborg and Lund and is in the process of opening new branch offices in four more locations. During the year 2000 *Svenska Islamiska Akademin* (SIA) was created on the initiative of well-known Muslims in Sweden, among others the retired Swedish ambassador Mohammed Bernström, the latest translator of the Koran into Swedish (Larsson 1999). Among the goals of the Academy is supporting education and research in and on Islam and working for the establishment of an Islamic university in Sweden that, among other things, should be responsible for the education of Imams. The Academy also publishes the periodical *Minaret*, which first came out in February 2001.<sup>30</sup>

FIFS and SMuF also co-operate in *Sveriges Muslimska Råd* (SMR), created in 1990 as an organization to concentrate and centralize power and to demonstrate a more united front with respect to the various authorities as well as to Swedish society in general.

In 1990 the by now large and very active youth organization *Sveriges Muslimska Ungdomsförbund* (SMUF (today SUM)) was created. In 1998 they were functioning as umbrella organization for thirty local youth organizations.<sup>31</sup>

There is also the umbrella organization *Islamiska Rådet i Sverige* (IRIS), centered on IKUS and a few other smaller organizations, for example *Islamiska Kvinnoförbundet i Sverige* (IKF), *Islamiska Ungdomsförbundet i Sverige* (IUF) and *Sveriges Imamråd* (SIR). Apart from their 26 purely religious congregations, they organize a number of local branches of IKF and IUF.

The increased proliferation and heterogenization of Islamic groups during the 1990s have resulted in the creation of a further number of Islamic national and local organizations. For example, the growing number of Shiites has led to the creation of *Islamiska Shiasamfundet i Sverige* (ISS) in 1992/93, which claims to organize twelve congregations. Two years later, in 1995, the growing number of congregations formed by Bosnian refugees created their own national organization, *Bosnien-Hercegovinas Islamiska Riksförbund*, which in 1999 claimed to organize nineteen local congregations. The latest national federation, *Islamiska Riksförbundet* (IRFS), started in 1995, claims to organize sixteen. None of the three last mentioned national federations are yet "officially recognized" and accepted as being entitled to state funding.

The various Muslim national organizations in Sweden today claim to organize around 200 local organizations, of which around 150 have being a place of worship as their main function. Of these congregations six (including the Ahmadiyya) have what can be considered proper mosques (purpose-built or extensively rebuilt separate houses): Göteborg (Ahmadiyya), Malmö, Trollhättan (Shi'a), Uppsala, Västerås and Stockholm. In another half dozen locations congregations have obtained building permits and are more or less well on the road towards having real mosques. The rest of the congrega-

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<sup>29</sup> An interesting feature of *Salaam* is that, throughout its history it has for all practical purposes been dominated and run by women, some key people among them being Swedish converts (Otterbeck 2000).

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.svenskaislamiska.org/>

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.ungamuslimer.nu/> (+ intervju Durani/Katlan)

tions have facilities more or less rebuilt and suited for their new purposes. Many of those are in basements, which often are in poor condition and ill suited for their purpose.

All in all, the three "recognized" national organizations reported in 2001 to SST to have the equivalent of 146,75 full time posts or positions as imams connected to their at the time 153 reported congregations (FIFS: 42, SMuF: 71,75 and ICUS: 32 imams). Of these they claim to pay the salaries for 41,75 positions themselves, 20,5 are reported to be paid for "by others", including foreign sources (for example the Turkish *Diyamet*) and unemployment allowances, and 84,5 are working on a voluntary basis. That these figures, for various reasons, must be taken with a grain of salt should be obvious. For example: for the total number of imams reported to be paid by the congregations themselves (41,75) they report a total salary cost of 4.334.820SEK ( $\approx$  €465.000 or  $\approx$  €11.100/ person/year), which would seem a bit on the wee side to live on. Some other data of relevancy when it comes to the imam situation among these congergations are: of the total number of congregations affiliated with the three "recognized" national organizations 35 had imams paid for by the congregation (of which 3 were only part time), 15 had imams paid for by external sources, five had part time paid imams only, 39 only had imams working on voluntary basis, and 27 were reported to be without an imam all together. Only judging from these figures it is obvious that the imam-situation is far from satisfactory.

When it comes to the in the long run perhaps most important question concerning imams, namely their level of education and competence, we unfortunately have not been able to get too much reliable data. From what we have understood in our conversations with spokespersons for both national and local Islamic organizations we, however, do not think we need to hesitate to claim that it is in dire need of improvement. The number of imams with "a reasonable" amount of education in Islamic theology, law, etc., and a degree from a *madrasah* – connected with the congregations is way to small. Of the "formally educated" imams in Sweden today seven to eight seems to be sent out and paid for by the Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyamet Isleri Baskanligi*) in Ankara which, since 1979, has been sending imams to serve among Turkish immigrants in Western Europe.

One other issue raised by Muslims in connection with the supply of imam is the problem for imams to obtain residence and work permits in Sweden. To get a work permit as a "priest" in Sweden you have, among other things, to have a degree from a university/theological faculty/seminar accepted by the Swedish authorities. And many Islamic *madrasah*, it is claimed by the Muslims, do not qualify as such according to the Swedish authorities. The ones with degrees from one of the Turkish *Ilahiat* faculties sent out by the *Diyamet* do. Besides Turkey, no other state seems to have sent any officially sanctioned imams to Sweden on more permanent basis. During Ramadan some "congregations" have, however, had visits from various "state sponsored" "guest imams".

We have seen how the Islamic institutionalization in Sweden, from a slow start in the 1960s and 1970s, during the past few years has begun to move into more of a consolidation phase. By this we mean that Muslims have now achieved a rudimentary "institutional completeness", in the sense that many of the most essential Islamic and

Muslim institutions – mosques, *musallas*, Muslim periodicals, Muslim burial grounds, pre-schools, schools, shops, etc. – now exists, although not yet in adequate numbers. They have now started to come to a point in their institutionalization, and in manifesting a physical and ideological presence, where more and more Swedes are beginning to consider them an integral part of Swedish domestic religious life, as Swedish Muslims.

Even from the brief account given above it should be clear that the Muslim community in Sweden has undergone important changes during the 1990s. One such change is, to repeat, that the Muslim population has become more and more heterogeneous, both in the sense that it now consists of a relatively large number of groups with different cultural, linguistic, etc. backgrounds, of which none can claim dominance, and in the sense that Muslims have been in Sweden for varying lengths of time. Another change is a noticeable alternation of generations. Up to ten years ago, the community was almost totally dominated by members of "the first generation", people born and raised in countries dominated by the Muslim tradition. Now a generation of Muslims who have been born and raised in Sweden, including converts, is increasingly starting to make their voices heard and presence known, not least on the Internet (Larsson 2002). These changes have affected the institutionalization process of Muslims in Sweden in important ways.

To the extent it is at all possible to talk about a "general pattern" in the history of the Islamic organizational process in Sweden, it seems to have been that the organizational start in most places was under the heading of "all the Muslims in one congregation", with the Turks as the natural leaders, mainly owing to their numbers and their relatively long stay in Sweden. As their relative number and position successively have been reduced, they have subsequently seen their position of power threatened. Conflicts have arisen, usually with the result that the non-Turks have moved out and opened their own congregation. Sometimes there has been further splits: on the one hand among the Turks along ideological, political or religious lines as well as owing to individual disagreements of other kinds, and on the other hand, among the other groups along the lines of *sunni-shia*, of "Arabs", Persians etc. Another part of this "general pattern" has been that the representatives of most of the various congregations or groups of congregations we have spoken to have claimed *a*) that they represent (the true) Islam, *b*) that they do not make any distinctions, at least not in any "negative way", between various groups of Muslims or between the various *madhahib*. Each and every Muslim is equally welcome. Most of them have also claimed *c*) that they are working to achieve one united and thereby strong Muslim *umma* in Sweden and *d*) that it is the others' fault that there is fighting and division in the group.

Yet another part of the reason for the growth of the number of congregations, but also for the growth of the number of national federations, is the probably unique relation between the state and the religious communities in Sweden. As stated above, the Evangelic-Lutheran Church of Sweden was between the sixteenth century and year 2000 a state church, funded by a church tax. And it was in principle mandatory for every Swede to belong to it up to 1873, when the right to belong to other Christian denominations began to be introduced. But it took, as we saw, almost another 100

years, until 1951, until the Swedes were formally granted their full freedom of religion, including the right not to belong to any religion.

During the 1950's and 1960's the role and position of the state *vis à vis* the various non-state churches and religious communities were discussed, not rarely with some heat. During these two decades the view developed that the state should welcome and support differences in religious view, life style and organization. All within fundamentally agreed limits. The general idea behind this was that the state should be impartial towards the various religious communities.

As a result of this debate, and as an attempt to establish this "impartiality" even on the economic level, The Council of Swedish Free Churches was created in 1972. This council was later (1980) reestablished as the Commission for State Grants to Religious Communities (SST). In the Commission members of the various non-state churches and denominations were represented. Its main tasks were to provide economic support to the various free churches and their congregations, granted that they qualified for such support. To qualify, besides having a certain number of members and a qualified religious leadership of a certain number in relation to the number of members, a free church had to fulfill certain organizational and bureaucratic requirements such as, for example, having a certain organizational structure with membership lists and specific processes for appointing their leaders. Each congregation also had to be able to pay at least thirty-three percent of their total expenses themselves to be eligible for support.

Another way of putting this, which is not rarely the way it is experienced from the Muslim horizon, is to say that to qualify for support a religious collective, for all practical purposes, have to accept at least functionally becoming a "free" church/-religion in the traditional Swedish sense of the term. This has, as can easily be seen, put the Muslims in a delicate position. Generally stated the issue is: can Islam conform to the Swedish form for church organization, i.e. functionally become a Swedish free church, without losing its own specific nature? Can Islam adapt functionally to Swedish Christianity in its organizational form without also, at least in the long run, doing so in the area of belief/faith and religious practice? Can the people remain (true) Muslims and at the same time adapt to the Swedish society; i.e. is it possible to develop a form of Swedish (European) Islam which, on the one hand, can be legitimized from an Islamic point of view (and thereby accepted within *dar al-Islam*) and, on the other, be accepted by the Swedish legal, bureaucratic etc. structures? Many Muslim leaders on both national and local level in Sweden we have spoken to seem to consider this a problematic and difficult task.<sup>32</sup> A common line of complaint is that they feel "stuck between a rock and a hard place". No matter how much they try to be good or true Muslims they are discriminated against from one or both of the following sides: they have difficulties in getting "their ways" legitimized from many important quarters within *dar al-Islam* just because they are living in, and are adapting to, *dar al-Harb*, and at the same time they feel that no matter how hard they try to become good Swedish Muslims, they are discriminated against in Sweden, both individually and institutionally, for not adapting, integrating enough, for not becoming

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<sup>32</sup> This problem was for example clearly emphasized by Imam Abd al Haqq Kielan in an interview, 2001.04.06.

Swedish enough. Another problem with the financial assistance is, as Imam Abd al Haqq Kielan claimed in our interview with him, that it turns Muslim groups into “lazy producers” (cf. Stark 1997).<sup>33</sup>

The financial assistance distributed by the Commission is distributed through the denominational national federations (to one of which a local congregation has to belong to be eligible for the state support), and is thought to parallel the church-state cooperation in, for example, the church tax. A free religious community can apply for support for basically three types of activities: 1) for running regular religious activities proper, including salaries for religious functionaries, for example imams (*organisationsbidrag*), 2) to build, renovate and pay rent for localities for religious activities (*projektbidrag*) and 3) for arranging and giving religious/theological education as well as for giving spiritual care in hospitals (*verksamhetsbidrag*).<sup>34</sup> Only the first of these was intended to be paid out to a congregation on a regular long-term basis. The other two were supposed to be paid out only in case of special needs and applications.<sup>35</sup>

The financial assistance for the first of these activities is made up of two parts: on the one hand, a fixed sum that every congregation that has at least three thousand “members” are entitled to. In addition they are entitled to a small amount for every member. All in all this meant at least two things: on the one hand that the local Muslim communities in Sweden, comparatively speaking, can be said to have, and have had reasonably good financial circumstances when it comes to public money, and, on the other, that in many cases it has been financially advantageous to break up national federations as well as local organizations when they have reached a certain “critical” size.

From the year 2000, and the formal separation of the Swedish Church from the state, the “free churches” have got access to yet another financial source. Even after the state-church separation, “the state” still collects the “church tax” from all its members on the behalf of the church. They have, however, from the year 2000 extended this service to include the members of all “recognized” churches, given that the church in question so wishes, fulfills certain bureaucratic requirement, and applies to have the service performed for them.

### **Problems for Muslims to organize themselves in Sweden**

By way of summary there can be said to be four main factors that, working together, are responsible for the way the Muslim community in Sweden has developed institutionally:

1) The relative large heterogeneity of the Swedish Muslim population and the successive “waves” in which the various groups have arrived in Sweden over time. 2)

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<sup>33</sup> 2001.04.06

<sup>34</sup> The total amount distributed year 2000 was: *organisationsbidrag* 43.022.996SEK ( $\approx$  € 4.528.736); *verksamhetsbidrag* 6.300.000SEK ( $\approx$  663.158) and *projektbidrag* 2.700.000SEK ( $\approx$  € 284.210). Of the *organisationsbidrag* the Muslim organizations/congregations received 3.865.000SEK ( $\approx$  € 406.840) for the year 2000.

<sup>35</sup> The more detailed rules for the support can be found in the Year Books of SST.

That the Muslim population in Sweden, compared with most other Western European Muslim populations, on the whole must be said to be relatively poorly educated and to have a poor cultural - including linguistic - competence in the majority culture. 3) The strong assimilation, distribution and "mixing up" policies that - all in the name of "no ghettos" - have been characteristic of the Swedish immigration policy, and 4) the economic support system for free religious organizations that have made it not only possible, but sometimes even advantageous, to create several small rather than one large organization as well as to split organizations when they reached a certain size. These four factors are also important parts of the explanation of why the Muslims in Göteborg, as we have seen, as well as in other places, not yet have succeeded in creating such a complex organization as a purpose built mosque. One other important part of the explanation is that the Swedish society is, relatively speaking, strongly saturated with bureaucratic and administrative routines that are very hard to penetrate.

We believe it is, at least in a schematic overview, defensible to divide the problems and obstacles the Muslims in Sweden are facing in their attempts to institutionalize themselves into the two commonly used categories "dominant society-bound" and "minority group-bound". It is also defensible to divide those categories into structural (and long-term) and non-structural (and short-term) obstacles, and at least the former, into the two commonly used categories "formal" and "informal" obstacles.<sup>36</sup>

### ***The main dominant-society-bound obstacles***

Given the way in which the Swedish policies on immigration, freedom of religion legislations and policies etc. are officially formulated,<sup>37</sup> one would not expect to find too many structural dominant-society-bound obstacles to the Muslim process of institutionalization, at least not of a formal nature. As we have tried to indicate above, we nonetheless think that there are reasons to consider the historic ideals of unity and homogeneity, deeply rooted in the consciousness of most Swedes, as an important barrier of this kind. Even if these barriers are not officially formulated as part of existing legislation, they are clearly part and parcel of the way in which the legislation is normally implemented. Reformulated in terms of the formal/informal distinction, the barriers the Muslims meet, even if not strictly of a formal kind, in reality - in implementation - to a very large extent work as if they were formal(ized). This is mainly due to the way the legislation and policies interact with informal factors, such as the prevailing deeply-rooted (positive) images among the Swedes of what Swedish culture, institutional life and religion is (ought to be) and of the corresponding deeply-rooted (negative) images of Islam, Muslims and Muslim cultures. Many writers prefer

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<sup>36</sup> In doing this we wish to emphasize that we do not claim that there are any clear boundaries between the categories, particularly not in the case of the formal/informal distinction. On the contrary, a little reflection soon reveals that there are a number of problems, and that on both the conceptual/theoretical and empirical levels. As long as we are aware of that, and do not consider what is being said as more than a highly schematic description, we do not think that such simplifications cause any harm.

<sup>37</sup> As well as normally perceived to be implemented by the vast majority of non-immigrants.

to call these barriers “institutional discrimination” (cf. Karmendal 2000). This was also a topic raised during our round tables.

One factor making this kind of “institutional discrimination” possible is the vagueness with which the policies are formulated. Nonetheless, the way many representatives of various Swedish political, bureaucratic and administrative institutions and agencies, when creating difficulties for, or saying “no” to, various Muslim demands and institutionalization projects, such as preschools, schools and mosques, often do so with reference to “existing laws and regulations”, i.e. with purely formal arguments. Much of the debate around, and the Swedish authorities’ reactions to, the various mosque projects in Sweden stand as good examples of this way of transforming informal barriers into formal ones (Karlsson & Svanberg 1995).

The formula on the basis of which most of Swedish society and its political, etc. authorities and agencies work *de facto* seems, as we have argued, to a high extent to be: as long as a religious (or any other) movement, group or organization fits in with, accepts and sustains the Swedish ideals and pattern of what Swedish culture, and more particular what a religion, as well as Swedish institutions (ideally) are and function, how they should be organized, what they should claim in the name of religion, etc., society is willing to support it with a relatively wide range of official privileges, both economic and others. But faced with alternative religious, institutional, etc. ideas and practices, ideas which, it might be feared, were not compatible with basic Swedish manners and customs, norms and values, etc., society reacts with bureaucratic rigidity, *ad hoc* administrative sanctions and difficulties, as well as with negativity and distrust in general.

The “Muslim problem” must also be seen in a wider perspective. This includes the realization that the various political, etc. agencies representing the Swedish state, on both national and local levels, have, as we have seen, a long history as bodies of state social control. The general functions for which they were intended, therefore, had little to do with religion, and even less with Muslims, but were of a much more general nature. They were intended to be objective, impartial and non-religious administrative agencies to safeguard the Swedish unity and homogeneity by marginalizing, limiting and solving all kinds of controversies in society, in the best interest of society at large. That the Muslims now happen to be their main target should therefore not be seen primarily as a more or less conscious intention to suppress Islam and Muslims, but mainly as an “indirect” effect of the contingent fact that today the Muslims are the main “deviant” group in Sweden and that they are viewed to a large extent as a threat (at least potentially) to the traditional Swedish notion of Sweden; Muslims, as we have argued, to a large extent are seen as problem people with problem cultures. The intention of the bureaucrats is, in other words, not primarily to discriminate against people with any particular religion or culture, but rather (only) to try to minimize disputes and conflicts in society. Safeguarding and upholding the (traditional) unity and homogeneity is considered to be the basis of a good and prosperous society.

Our claim, made above, that the historic Swedish ideals of unity and homogeneity can be seen as structural obstacles, obstacles that have to be made explicit and changed



before we can achieve a (truly) multicultural Sweden needs to be understood against this background.

When it comes to this kind of deeply rooted obstacle to Muslim integration and institutionalization it seems clear to us that Sweden, compared with many other countries in Western of Europe, is lagging behind. From what we have learned of the situation in Britain, for example, it is (has become) now possible for the Muslims, as well as other immigrants, to do things that are still not possible to do in Sweden. Whereas we are still seriously debating whether or not to allow the Muslims to build a mosque, have their own Muslim schools, be able to wear a turban when driving a tram, wear *hijab* as conferencier on TV<sup>38</sup> etc. – as well as whether it would be a threat to Sweden and its culture, way of life, etc. if we granted them this – as questions of principle, the situation in Britain seems to have moved to the level of practicality. In Britain the discussion more seems to revolve around whether a particular solution is practically possible, and if it will work, rather than, as in Sweden, around whether or not the underlying principles and the motives of the Muslims are acceptable from a traditional Swedish point of view, or whether or not their motives are compatible with traditional Swedish manners and customs, norms and values.

Another problem of this kind Muslims often brought up, including in our interviews and round tables, is the view dominant in the majority society on what religion, and its area of competence and function as well as its place and role in society, is and ought to be. The general idea of this view in Sweden is that religion and its expressions should not be displayed or lived out in public everyday life, but should be confined to places explicitly defined as religious (churches, mosques, etc.) or to the strictly private sphere which is a very limited sphere in a strong welfare state of the Swedish type. The rest of society should be secularized and free from expressions of religion and religiosity. For many Muslims it is, however, impossible to separate religion and society in this way. Issues of, for example, dress and food are integral and constituting part of them as Muslims, of their identity. Many of our informants with immigrant background, and not only Muslims, have argued that Sweden according to their experiences is an exceptionally negative and intolerant country when it comes to religious expressions in the public sphere.<sup>39</sup>

Yet another problem here claimed by many Muslims is the serious lack of knowledge about Islam and Muslims and their thought- and life pattern within virtually all Swedish institutions, including the governmental ones.<sup>40</sup> Despite the fact that it seems

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<sup>38</sup> The very negative attitude from leading persons within the Swedish public TV-corporation that was voiced in October 2002 regarding letting a young woman appear with *hijab*, and in a program about immigrants at that, is to us hard to understand. One of their arguments was that the viewer would react negatively. Whether or not this would be a good argument, it is dubious if it is true. According to the only nationwide survey in which the question “Do you believe that Muslim girls and women living in Sweden should have the right to use veil (*hijab*) in schools and on the labor market?” (or any equivalent question) has been asked, 70 per cent of the respondents age 15 – 59, and 78 percent of the respondents age 15 – 19, answered “yes” (DN-Temo, Dagens Nyheter, särtryck våren 1995, p. 32).

<sup>39</sup> This view was strongly expressed by several of the participants, an not only Muslim, but also Jewish and Christian Orthodox participants, at our round table conferences.

<sup>40</sup> This is also emphasized by for example the Church of Sweden in one of their research projects. <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/svk/tromtro/islam/eng/httoc.htm>

that the level of awareness of the Muslims as a group with specific demands and needs as well as to some extent the knowledge about them have improved over the years, this lack of knowledge is still experienced as severe by most Muslims and their representatives. This opinion of the Muslims is to quite high an extent also verified in our fieldwork. Even though the relationship between knowledge about and understanding for in this case can be debated, most Muslims seem to believe that an increase in the former would make their lives in Sweden easier and that it, at least potentially, could have the effect of reducing the islamophobia, xenophobia and racism many of them claim to be faced with on a more or less daily basis.

Yet another problem often mentioned by representatives for Swedish authorities as well as by Muslim representatives is the lack of functioning “interfaces” between the two groups, i.e. places and canals for the two groups to meet and communicate. One aspect of this problem is the problem of representation. One complaint from the side of the Swedish authorities and institutions has for a long time been that they do not know who represents “the Muslims”, and thereby whom they should listen to and with whom they should engage in dialogue with, as well as who they should ask if and when they experience themselves to have some Islam/Muslim related “problem” or question. This lack of a clearly defined and authorized opposite party have also frequently been given as a reason for why the Muslims have run into so much problems with the Swedish society and its various representatives when it comes to negotiations about various “demands” they have raised *vis a vis* the Swedish society, as well as when it comes to more concrete issues like mosque building permissions, etc. (Larsson & Sander 2001).<sup>41</sup>

That this problem, at least to some extent, has to do with the previously discussed lack of knowledge of Islam among the Swedes seems clear. In this case the lack of knowledge about the fact that Islam is not, as has also been discussed above, “another kind of Christianity”, hierarchically organized with an officially recognized bishop at the top who can speak for the whole organization and everybody within it.

Interestingly enough, in our various discussions with representatives of Islamic organizations we have been presented with the same problem – but the other way around. They, in other words, also complain about the fact that they, when they try to approach various Swedish authorities, not least on the governmental level, have great trouble to find some specific office or person who feels confident in representing the authority, for example the government/Sweden, and acting as opposite party to them. In the whole of “authority-Sweden” there does not seem to exist any “centralized” unit that have the responsibility for and competence in dealing with Islam in all its complexity.<sup>42</sup>

An example of this is that we ourselves have had great trouble in finding people at the government ministries who have been willing to act as informants for us within this project. Our requests for interviews have generally been met with the same response

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<sup>41</sup> In our opinion it would in discussions like this be wise to make a distinction between the two questions “Who represents Islam?” and “Who represents the Muslims?”. This has to our knowledge not been done so far in Sweden. In the first case we believe the religious scholars have a legitimate claim to be the spokespersons, but not so in the second.

<sup>42</sup> This was a problem especially addressed at our round table three.

as many Muslim leader reports having been met with, namely: "this is not my table", and "who's table it is" has, as a rule, not been possible to find out. To some extent, but only to some, this, of course, is a result of the specific Swedish view of religion, as discussed above. If you want to discuss *halal*-questions you get referred to the ministry of agriculture where they, as soon as it becomes clear that it has to do with Islam, become very uncomfortable, claiming no knowledge of Islam/religion (cf. Gunner 1999). The same goes for most other issues raised by the Muslims.

### ***The main minority-group-bound obstacles***

Before turning to the topic in the title of this section, we would like to mention a general problem with any attempt to present a short summary of a minority problem (of integration and institutionalization). Every attempt to separate and isolate "their problems" into some kind of "catalogue", although always necessary for analytical purposes, does violence to reality in several ways. Such listing, for example, easily gives rise to the idea that the problems singled out are independent, separate, isolated phenomena that can be treated, and perhaps even solved, in isolation, independent of one another. In "reality", however, it is necessary to realize that they often constitute one highly interconnected web of problems in which different, but strongly inter-related, aspects for analytical purposes can be singled out for individual discussion. Any serious attempt to solve them presupposes that the totality be taken into account.

With this in mind, we think that the main minority-bound problem for the Swedish Muslims can be said to be their size in combination with their cultural, national, linguistic, religious/theological and political heterogeneity and the consequent intra- and inter-community rivalry and split.

### **The small size of the group**

Even though, as we have seen, the group has grown significantly during the last decade or so, their number is, except for possibly in the Stockholm area, in combination with the fact that they at the local level in most areas are geographically "spread out", still a considerable problem. Not least because it largely prevents them from achieving the institutional framework (completeness) needed to "defend" themselves from the onslaught of the majority society with its thought and life patterns - particularly its social morality: the freedom and self determination of its youths, its feminism, tolerance for different sexual orientations, its dress codes for women, its "decadent" night life, its tolerance of alcohol and "promiscuous" sexual relationships. The problem of institutional completeness is, in other words, not only a problem of poor access to mosques, *musallas*, Muslim schools, religious and other Islamic "socialization agents", *halal* food, and Islamic media, but, and in the long run probably more important, the lack of a Muslim neighborhood as "safeguard" of Islamic thought and life patterns, and specifically its morality (particularly as regards women). Independently of how most Swedes happen to think of and value Muslim thought and life patterns with their norm- and value systems, this problem can probably be said to constitute one of the major threats to the very foundation of the

future of the Swedish Muslim religious community, as many Muslims conceive of such an entity.

### **The heterogeneity of the group**

The Swedish Muslim community is, as we have seen, characterized by a large and increasing cultural, linguistic, religious and political heterogeneity. As we have speculated above there have lately been signs that we might soon see the peak of this development, at least in the strictly religious field, due to increased activities, especially from young Muslims, with the aim of developing a so-called European, Swedish or “Blue-and-yellow” Islam (Larsson 2001; Sander & Larsson 2002). These “counter development” movements have so far mainly taken place on the theoretical/theological level, but there are, and this is more important, signs that it has also begun to find acceptance and be legitimated with organizations representing “official” Swedish Islam. If, as we believe, this developments, is going to continue, it will soon also start to be more visible in practice. It should particularly be mentioned that Swedish converts to Islam have played and play a significant role in this process, not the least on the Internet (Larsson 2002).

### **Lack of knowledge and competence**

Another problem of importance is that the group – including many of its leaders – still can be said to suffer from a lack of knowledge and competence. This is true both in a general way – the first generation Muslims, especially those arriving before the mid 1980s, tended to have a relatively low level of (formal) education often in combination with a conservative and provincial, country of origin oriented view on most matters, including Islam – and also in more specific ways. Above all, they often had deficient knowledge of Islam in general, and what they did have was often heavily colored by their local cultural, political and religious traditions. Added to this, they often also for a long time had, and not rarely still have, poor knowledge about and competence in the Swedish language and culture.<sup>43</sup>

Even though this situation have improved, and converts during the last decade have played important roles in the building of Swedish Islam, they have for obvious reasons not been able to fully compensate for the lack of “real” Muslim/Islamic intellectuals.

That the Muslim minority in Sweden when it comes to knowledge and competence in the majority culture in many respects were much worse off than their brothers and sisters in countries like for example Great Britain, France and the Netherlands should be obvious. Just to mention a few things: many Muslim immigrants to these countries came from their former colonies and could already speak their language. A fair number of them also had experiences of the countries' educational system, as well as of other social institutions and their way of working. There were even a non-

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<sup>43</sup> This was an issue brought up at all our round tables and in many of our interviews.

neglectable number who had gone through higher education in, or at least in the school system of, the country in which they now were immigrants.

Since many of the Islamic and Muslim leaders in Sweden still belong to the first generation, this has in several cases resulted in that they and the (other first generation) "members" of their "institutions" have shown a tendency to isolate themselves from the surrounding society. In some cases this isolation has also led to conflicts of various kinds with what they are trying to isolate and defend themselves from. And this, unfortunately, also includes conflicts with young dynamic Muslims who try to take an active part in the activities of the organization or mosques in order to "reinterpret" or "redefine" Islam and what it is to be a Muslim to fit the new Swedish situation.

This is especially problematic as *i*) young people are as a rule better educated and, as they have gone through the Swedish educational system, have better Swedish cultural competence than their parents, and also often better than their teachers in Islam and "home culture". At the same time they *ii*) realize that they are Swedes and have to live in Sweden. They cannot, and do not want to, become "little Turks" for example, which is to often what their parents and religious leaders at least appear to want. The young Muslims realize that, if they want to become and continue to be Muslims in more than ethnic respects, they must find ways to become "Swedish Muslims". Most of the people in the second and further generations who are involved in religious Islamic activities also seem to try to find formulas by which they can create both an Islamically acceptable or legitimable, and, to use Goffman's term, a "passable" form of Islam for Sweden. In this process in many cases, the older generation loses (or experience that they lose) their authority over the second generation. The older generation blames this on the young being Westernized and secularized, and become even more conservative and "stuck in their ways". In short: the generation gap grows (cf. Larsson 2002; Rogers & Vertovec 1998).<sup>44</sup>

### **The problem of leadership**

A final minority-bound obstacle is the problem of leadership. Many "congregations" today, as indicated, lack both religious and other leaders who have the necessary double knowledge of and competence in Islam and the Swedish language and the way Swedish society and culture function. Some "congregations" even seem to lack leaders with sufficient knowledge and competence in both of the two areas. This lack of good leadership is also one main reason why many "ordinary Muslims" have lost interest and confidence in the "congregations". That this problem can be solved by "importing" a "real" imam, as is still believed in many "congregations", seems,

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<sup>44</sup> The problem we have sketched here has perhaps been most noticeable – at least most discussed in the media – in terms of the conflict between young second, etc. generation women who do not want to accept the fact that their families (fathers) wants them to become "traditional" Kurdish, etc. girls; decide over their education, social life, who they should marry, etc., but want to live an independent and free life. During the last decade there has also been a number of very serious such conflicts, including a few so-called "murders of honor", which has resulted in much public debate. We will return to this issue.

however, to be a misconception from various cases we know of where it has been tried.

This is true for several reasons. One reason is that the “imported” imams, because they lack competence in Swedish and Swedish culture can at best only fulfill one of the functions expected and needed of a “congregation’s” leader. Another is that these imams normally see their roles too much as “guardians of the true faith”, which, among other things, includes the aim of purging the members of their “congregation” from syncretism, instilling in them the concept of Islam as a complete code of life, and preventing them from becoming secularized. In short: they usually work on the basis of the assumption that a purified Muslim community is a strong community able to expand, and that, conversely, the reason Muslims are weak is that they do not know and practice “true Islam” and are therefore “corrupt” in their faith. One of the main tasks these imams normally set for themselves is also to educate their “congregations” in “true Islam” in order for them to observe Islam correctly.<sup>45</sup> And this is in most cases not conducive of integration or the development of a “Swedish Islam” (cf. Landmann 1999).

In doing this<sup>46</sup> the imams, however, normally misjudge, or misunderstand, the effect this will have on the “members” of their “congregation”, who live and believe outside the context of a living (traditional) Muslim community, separated from the context which normally mediates their faith and the various ways in which it is expressed. As Geertz, among others, has noted (1968, pp. 60, 104 - 107) the crisis facing Muslim communities in the modern world – and thereby notoriously the Muslims in the Diaspora in Western Europe – is not so much one of knowing *what* to believe, as *how* to believe. When the context of a (traditional) Muslim society/community with its traditions is no longer available or powerful, the way people believe, or are Muslims, including the way they express their Islam/faith, must, as we have argued, be modified or replaced if religious faith is to survive at all (Sander 2002). These are some of the reasons that the solutions the “imported” imams often propose for solving the problems in the Swedish Muslim communities tend to be counterproductive or dysfunctional. The effects of their teaching may thus be different from what they intend, and it is not unusual for such imams to create more problems than they solve.

## MUSLIMS IN SWEDEN - THE RESULTS OF THE PROJECT

### *Muslims as seen by the Swedes*

The results presented in this part on the situation of the Muslims in Sweden, are based to a large extent on fieldwork: conversations and interviews with a range of individuals and groups of Muslims and opinions put forward by their representatives at the round table discussions. We would like to emphasize that what is presented here as the opinions, ideas and feelings of Muslims, are in fact our interpretations, recon-

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<sup>45</sup> And their ideas of “true Islam” mostly seems to be some specific “country Islam”.

<sup>46</sup> Which, of course, is not wrong in itself.

structions and reformulations of what they, often in different words, have told us in conversation.

Swedish Muslims now for the first time can, roughly 25 years after the foundation of the first Muslim national federation in Sweden, be said to have reached something that could be described as a consolidation phase.

This stage in their establishment, organization and institutionalization process also allows them to turn away from the most immediate, practical issues (and for an outsider often futile internal squabbles), and instead turn to the larger and more strategic issues and problems concerning their presence, role and future in Sweden. The issues they now seem to focus on can be described as political, in the broad sense of the term. The issues they now are formulating can roughly be summarized as: 1) What kind of (multicultural and multireligious) Sweden do we, as Muslims, want to have in the future?, 2) What kind of multicultural and multireligious society do we think is necessary to safeguard the long term survival of the Muslims as a cultural, ethnic and religious minority group in Sweden?, and 3) What can (ought) we as Muslims do to bring that about?

By beginning to address questions about multiculturalism and multireligiosity, or, in other words questions about a minority group's rights to recognition, respect, representation, power, and existence, they, of course, step right into center of the politically, as well as scientifically, both problematic and controversial field, with all its many dimensions, that we have touched upon earlier.

This "religio-political awakening" is not specific for Swedish Muslims.<sup>47</sup> All over the world, in recent years, one has witnessed a resurgence of cultural, ethnic and religious demands by minority populations who do not control the power of their states; and the movements wielding such demands, moreover, have proven increasingly militant. As Stavenhagen put it already in 1990:

From the Australian Aborigines to the Welsh, from the Armenians to the Tamils, from the Ainu to the Yanomami, ethnies around the world are mobilizing and engaging in political action, sometimes in violent conflict and confrontation, to establish their identities, to defend their rights or privileges, to present their grievances, and to ensure their survival. (p. 157)

That an analogous process of ethno-religious mobilization is under way to some extent, at least among certain Muslim groups, even in Sweden, has been clearly demonstrated by our fieldwork. An equally clear finding is that this ethno-religious mobilization process among the Swedish Muslims should be understood essentially as a local defense strategy and not (as seems to be believed by many caught up in the present media stereotypes of "the Islamic peril" and the like) as part of a world wide offensive move masterminded by some global Islamic fundamentalist movement. They do not mobilize in order to Islamize Sweden and the Swedes, they mobilize to achieve recognition, power and influence, to establish their identity and to ensure their survival as a distinct ethno-religious group, something they experience the Swedish "difference blind" or, as one Muslim expressed it, "equality fascistic", immigration policies are jeopardizing. Yet this mobilization process, as should be clear

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<sup>47</sup> There has been much written about the "religio-political awakening" the last decades in the Islamic world. One of the best expositions is Kepel (2002).

from above said, directly defies fundamental principles on which the Swedish nation-state has been built, and therefore presents a serious challenge to our political policy makers as well as social scientists.

Since our task is to describe the situation in Sweden we will, without much references to the rest of the world, only try to describe and articulate the attitudes and developments within the Muslim community in Sweden and the reactions from the majority society towards this process. From the point of view of the latter this change in attitude – from that of the French enlightenment and British liberalism which focus on universal individual equal worth and rights, to demands that the state shall recognize ethnic and religious groups *qua* groups and accept that they have rights and worth as groups – is, as it gets realized, creating conceptual and theoretical, and not least, political consternation.

As this “religio-political awakening” among the Muslims in Sweden to a large extent, and particularly so in the post 11 September period, has coincided with an increased popular awareness within the general Swedish population of increasing similar activities of Islam and Muslims in the world in general, this has put the Muslims in Sweden in a somewhat problematic position (Otterbeck 2000c). In Sweden, as well as in many other Western counties, one of the main topics of discussion in media during the last decade has been the, from a Western point of view, dramatic increase of religio-political activities of so called fundamenatlisic or Islamistic groups in the world (Esposito 1997, 2000; Esposito & Voll 2001; Hedin 2001; Kepel 1994, 2002). The media have, to quote Edward Said, “portrayed it, characterized it, analyzed it, given instant courses on it, and consequently they have made it ‘known’” (1985 s. xi). No Swede has, for example, been able to open his daily paper during the last 15 years without meeting words like *Ayatollah*, *Caliph*, *Chadoor*, *imam*, *jihad*, *mosque*, *mujahidin*, *mulla*, *Quran*, *Ramadan*, *salat*, *Shari’a*, *Shia* and *Sunni*. And most of what has been written and said has not been from a positive point of view (Larsson 2003; Sander 2003), so it is not strange that an increasingly large number of the media consumer does not seem to like what they read.

These presentations of Islam and Muslims in the Swedish media and debate, as well as the Swedes' responses to it, can, on the whole, be said to have been from a rather one-sided, ethnocentric, sensationalist, exotistic, emotional and negative point of view. It can to a large extent be said to have created and confirmed stereotypes, prejudices and clichés rather than to have put them in question. It has in a way more covered than uncovered Islam.<sup>48</sup> And this negative tendency can be said to have escalated in stages in connection with, just to repeat the most obvious examples<sup>49</sup>, the “oil crises” of 1973 and 1976, the revolution in Iran 1978/79, the “Rushdie affair”

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<sup>48</sup> Asp & Weibull 1996, See Berg 1988, Berggren & Lindblad 1998, Brune 1996, 1998, 2000, in press; Catomeris 1998, Fröberg 2000, Hafez 1997, Hultén 1993, Hvitfeldt 1998, 2002, Karim 2002, Karlsson 1994 (esp. pp. 11 - 50), Leth & Thurén 2002, Löwander 1997, 1998, Morge & Modh 2002, Nordström 2002, Quraishy 2002, Shaheen 2001, Wennergren 2002, Zelizer 2002.

<sup>49</sup> For a more detailed account of these and other similar events see, for example, Boularés 1990, ch 1. There, as well as in for example Choueri 1990 and Esposito 1992, 1997; Esposito & Watson 2000; Esposito & Voll 2001; Haddad, Voll & Esposito 1991, you also find general discussions of the problem as to whether or not Islam constitutes a danger to the Western World. A popular but very detailed discussion can be found in Bergen 2001.



1988/89, the Gulf war in 1991, the Talibans taking power in Afghanistan, and, of course, the various terror attacks around the world attributed to Islamists, with the ones in New York and Washington in September of 2001 as the most outstanding (Sander 2003). Even though the picture of Islam and Muslims in the media has changed and fluctuated over time, the confrontational perspective seems to be the dominating trend (see ref. in footnote 48). We think it can be rather safely said that the "Islamic peril" to a large extent has become accepted as an implicit and rarely questioned backdrop too much of what is written and said about Islam and Muslims.

That the Muslims, partly due to the way they are presented in the media, is an exposed and vulnerable group in Sweden, as well as in the rest of Europe, has been very clearly demonstrated in the wake of the terror attack of the 11<sup>th</sup> September and the following "War against terrorism" (Allen & Nielsen 2002). Despite the fact that the large majority of the Muslims have denounced the terror attacks, they have, as a group, to a large extent been pointed out as responsible. The question of guilt has often been made into a question of religion. It is "the Muslims" that are the guilty, and through some form of "xenophobic logic" the Muslims as a collective has been pointed out as terrorists and potential threats to society. The results of this "logic" can clearly be seen in the many anti-Islamic reactions in the Western societies after the 11<sup>th</sup> September. Acts of violence and aggression, both physical and verbal, has been reported from most countries.<sup>50</sup> But the Muslims had long before this been victims of stigmatization, islamophobia, muslimophobia and social exclusion on the labor market, housing market, etc. Within these markets it is obvious that Muslims in general are not experienced and accepted as belonging to "us Swedes/us Europeans". They are to a large extent not considered as belonging to same sphere of solidarity, loyalty and justice as other Swedes/Europeans. The conception of who belong to the sphere of solidarity, loyalty and justice, of who belongs to "us", is for many Swedes/Europeans still strongly determined by old marker: the ideas of a common history, a common language and a common religion. The Muslims are to a high extent still considered as foreign and possibly dangerous elements in our societies. And this not only by explicitly racist persons and institution.

The general idea that Islam and Muslims should pose a threat to Sweden and the Swedish culture in general, as well as to our basic Swedish principles of democracy and to our views of the status of women and children has during the last decade been brought forward in the public debate even by so-called established people. The voices in the debate that question the credibility of the claims that a group as small, as divided along linguistic, ethnic, religious, political, and other lines and as socially, economically and politically weak and marginalized as the Muslim group in Sweden should constitute a serious threat to basic elements of Swedish culture are, on the other hand, few and far between. Any serious assessment would, we believe, reveal that their "controversialness" in the debate strongly exceeds their real powers and influence. Despite the fact that all arguments, as far as we can see, that credit the Muslims in Sweden with the power to influence prevailing basic Swedish political, religious or moral norms, values and attitudes in the direction of Islam must be

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<sup>50</sup> The results of our own questionnaire study on the experiences of the Muslim population in Sweden after the 11<sup>th</sup> September is presented in Sander 2003 and in Larsson 2003.

considered very far-fetched, an increasing amount of Swedes, non the less, seem to take the "Islamic peril" seriously. This reaction to Islam and the Muslims is of interest, despite its irrationality, as it highlights important facts about our society and its way of controlling religious (and other) deviations.

Exactly how seriously the Swedes in general perceive this threat is, however, hard to say as there has been very little research directed to the question. Some example of research that support our claim that this negativity is extremely strong can, however, be given.

One indicator of the strength of this negativity we get from a study of the "image of Islam" in Swedish media (Hvitfelt 1991, 1998) carried out at the department of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Göteborg. Part of the project was a study of attitudes among Swedes towards Islam and Muslims. The attitude measurements were done by a questionnaire sent out to 2 500 randomly selected Swedes. One of the questions read: "Which attitude do you personally have to Islam as a religion?" The respondents had five options in their answers: "very positive", "rather positive", "do not know", "rather negative" and "very negative". Sixty-five per cent claimed to be very or rather negative while only two per cent claimed to be very or rather positive! Another question asked if they thought immigration of Muslims to Sweden should be restricted. Fifty-three per cent considered this a rather or very good suggestion and sixteen per cent considered it a rather or very bad suggestion. Yet another question concerned their attitudes to the suggestion that Sweden - in accordance with the goals and ambitions of its own official immigration policies - should "Increase the support to the Muslim immigrants to make it possible for them to retain their own culture". Here seventy seven per cent answered that they considered this suggestion rather or very bad, while four per cent considered it rather or very good. In the same investigation eighty-eight percent were of the opinion that Islam is not compatible with a democratic society of the Swedish type, and twenty five percent had the opinions that Muslims should not be granted the same religious rights and freedoms as adherents to other religious traditions.

To put these figures in a little perspective let us add the following: During the many years the Department of Journalism has carried out attitude surveys, the investigators had never come across any issue towards which the attitudes had been even close to this negative as towards Islam and Muslims. They were by far the most univocal results the investigators ever had received on any question.

Another indicator is the public reaction to Muslims attempts to institutionalize themselves, particularly when it comes to building mosques. Here we have, on the one hand, results from a few opinion polls carried out by national institutes of public opinions regarding the opinions of the Swedes towards the Muslims building mosques<sup>51</sup> and, on the other, some studies of how various Swedish authorities and decision makers have handled their applications for building permits and the like (Karlsson & Svanberg 1995). To that we can add some results from studies of the reactions from local residents when they learned that a mosque was planed to be built in their neighborhood.

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<sup>51</sup> The main once were carried out 1990, 1992 and 1995.

When it comes to the first of these, there is the complicating factor that the questions have been phrased somewhat different in different investigations, which makes comparative interpretation difficult. The general picture is however rather easy to summarize: the number of negative respondents have varied from three quarters to half and the number of positive from five to almost fifty percent. No really clear verdict can be given about how these attitudes have developed over time. The scientifically soundest conclusion is probably: they seem to fluctuate. The conclusion of Sander (1995) was that the attitudes towards Muslims and "phenomena" associated with Islam and Muslims tend to vary in relation to on the one hand the general economic level in the country and, on the other, the extent to which immigrants in general and Islam and Muslims in particular are discussed in the media, which in its turn is partly related to, among other things, Islamic activities in the world in general.<sup>52</sup> It is, however also possible to argued on the basis of the 1990, 1992 and 1995 surveys, given the assumption that they measure the same thing, that there was a turn to the better in terms of popular attitudes towards the Muslims building mosques between 1990 and 1992, and that the 1995 survey confirms this trend (Sander 1995). Even if this positive trend is true, most of the positive respondents seem to condition their positive response in the traditional way: "Of course the Muslims should be allowed to build a mosque, but not on my back yard". We do not know of any mosque project, including a present one in the North-East in Göteborg (GP 31.12.02), that has not evoked strong negative reactions from the neighbors in the area where it has been planed to be built.

The only exemption to this is the mosque built in Göteborg by the Ahmaddiyans in 1976, which was the first purpose built mosque in Sweden. At this time Islam and Muslims were still a rather unknown, rarely discussed and uncontroversial subject in Sweden. The building of their mosque was therefore greeted by almost complete silence in media as well as from neighbors (Karlsson & Svanberg 1995: 37 – 38; Sander 1991). The papers has a short mention of it "at the bottom of the fifth page" when it was inaugurated and some neighbors did complain a little about its color, which was pink. That was all. When "the other" Muslims twelve years later 1988, during which time Islam and Muslims had received much more media attention, started to make serious plans to build a mosque the scene had changed (Karlsson & Svanberg 1995: 58 – 64; Sander 1991). The media now wrote page after page in a seemingly never ending stream about it, the neighborhood went up in arms against it, local politicians and clergymen joined in the public outcry, etc. A political party with the main aim to prevent the Islamization of Göteborg was even formed. It even for a while succeeded in becoming the largest party in a local election for a select vestry.<sup>53</sup>

Since then we have seen similar reactions in more or less all other places in Sweden where Muslims have tried to obtain permission to build a Mosque, an Islamic Center of the like: they were met with increasingly strong opposition from the local community, not rarely heralded by local Christian religious leaders, mainly from within the Pentecostal movement (cf. Karlsson & Svanberg 1995). The latter have in

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<sup>52</sup> The Muslim experience of the discussions in the aftermath of the terror attack of the 11<sup>th</sup> September is discussed in Sander 2003 and Larsson 2003.

<sup>53</sup> A more detailed description of this process can be found in Sander 1991.

several cases reacted with a crusade-like lobbying against Islam and Muslims, and in several cases local politicians have jumped on the bandwagon. In these campaigns the public was warned that Islam and Muslims "in their true essence" represent an undemocratic, totalitarian, anti-modern, militant and violent force with the long-term goal of turning Sweden into a theocratic Islamic state.

The arguments presented in support of their claims against the Muslims have been of basically three kinds. The first has been to use quotations from the *Quran* and *hadith* as well as from texts by Muslim ideologists like Abdul a'al Maududi and Said Qutb, which, at least on the face of it and when read out of context by a Swede against the negative backdrop of Islam (see below), easily lend themselves to support such an interpretation.<sup>54</sup> The second has been to refer to how bad Christians are treated in Muslim countries. Some examples of this kind of arguments are: "They do not allow Christians to build churches in their countries.", "They do not allow missionary activities in their countries. In fact there is a death penalty for conversion to Christianity." and "There is an increasing persecution of Christians in many Muslim countries." From these arguments they draw or imply the following type of conclusions: "They would do the same here if we give them the chance" and "When they are so intolerant in their countries, why should we be tolerant to them here? Of course we should not!"<sup>55</sup> The third argument has been to point to the role Islam and Muslims, according to their way of interpreting the history, have played and play in the world. This, according to them, shows clearly that Islam is a fanatical, fundamentalist, dangerous, violence prone and demonic power with megalomaniac ambitions. And in all these cases it is Islam (always in the singular!) that uncritically is pointed out as the source of the problem. That there are different kinds and forms of Islam and that many of the "problems" we in the West often associate with Islam, Muslims and Muslim countries often have very mundane causes like demographic conditions, poor economic condition, repressive military governments, a colonial history, etc., is never even hinted at. No, it is always, as in the case of clash of civilizations theories, this "mythical" Islam that is depicted as the danger.<sup>56</sup>

It is, as far as we can see, clear that the structure of this argument has many features in common with the arguments that was raised against the Catholic Church during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Salvation Army in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Jews in Europe during the 1930s, against the Communists in the USA, capitalism in the USSR during the 1950s, and "the West" in certain Muslim media. "The World Jewish or Communist conspiracy" is to a large extent only replaced by the Islamic or Muslim one.<sup>57</sup> The

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<sup>54</sup> Given the similarities of the sets of quotations given and that most of the ones who use them most likely do not have any intimate first hand personal knowledge of Islamic texts, we give fairly high credibility to the rumors that claim that a "secret" document exists with such quotations and arguments for use by the anti-Islamic lobbyists. If it exists, it is most likely a translation of some international source.

<sup>55</sup> The fact that it, at least to us, seems to be a rather clear ethical inconsistency in claiming that what the Muslims do (what they accuse the Muslim of doing) towards Christians in the Muslim countries is ethically wrong, and, at the same time, be claiming that we ought to do the same thing towards the Muslim minorities here, do not seem to bother them very much.

<sup>56</sup> That there are apologetic Islamic leaders that claim various versions of the "oneness-of-Islam-ideology" does not, of course, make things better.

<sup>57</sup> Cf Karlsson 1994 on the yellow, red and green perils.

problem is that this type of argumentation, despite its history, still seems to work. That it does work can be seen from the fact that the Islamic and Muslim presence in Sweden clearly have developed during the period from the early 1970s and up to today from one among many oddities to a hot and serious political issue. Figuratively speaking, we think, as we will argue more later, it is correct to say that the Swedes' "image of Islam" during the post war period has changed from a day-dream – as depicted in for example *Thousand and one nights* and in Sheik movies – to a nightmare, to something that is considered a threat to our whole culture and way of life.

Islam and the Muslims did also during the early 1990s developed into somewhat of a symbolic target not only for various xenophobic, nationalist and extreme right wing groups, but also – in the wake of, on the one hand, the collapse of the Soviet Union and communism in general and the following political need in the West for a new threatening picture and, on the other the economic recession Sweden went through at the time – for many unemployed and generally politically-economically dissatisfied young Swedes. The pre 11 September 2001 culmination of this was the burning down of one of at the time three existing purpose built mosques in Sweden in August of 1993 by young nationalist right-wingers (Karlsson & Svanberg 1995: 42 – 45). This was not, and that should be emphasized, a purely anti-Islamic deed, but the reason why it was just a mosque that was chosen for this "political manifestation" shows, we believe, a change in the Swedish social and political reality. Islam and Muslims had become an important pawn in the political game – despite the fact that they, given their size, and lack of political and economic power, hardly ought to have been noticed (Sander 1995).

One result of the anti-Islamic lobbying was that Islam and Muslims, from the early 1990s, was brought up as an issue on the national political agenda to an extent that was exaggerated in relation to their real impact in Swedish society. And that in itself was something that magnified the problem as it gave rise to a general feeling that might be summarized as: "When everybody, including people within the government and the established political parties, are discussing 'them' so much, there must be something to the stereotype." That this in its turn was fertile soil for xenophobes and nationalists in general and for the anti-Islamic lobbying in particular should not be hard to see.

Another result was an increased polarization between native and immigrated Swedes, particularly those with a non-European and Muslim origin. The xenophobic nationalist war cry "if it was not for them everything would be all right" was heard both more often and louder as result of "clashes of civilization theories" and economic recession. The scapegoat syndrome was more and more clearly seen. Sweden's historically old nationalist, national state ideal, discussed above: "one state, one people, one religion" did, we think, gain ideological momentum during this time. In this development it was especially the Muslim immigrants that were victimized, and doubly so: on the one hand they were, in the recession from 1992, the first to get unemployed and otherwise marginalized and, on the other, they themselves were getting the blame for the increasing unemployment. The Muslims were more and more subjected to this typical case of "blame the victim ideology": On the one hand the native Swedes claimed that the Muslims should integrate or assimilate to the

Swedish culture and society, at least when it came to the public domain of Society. At the same time the native Swedes, on the other hand, by (systematically) excluding and discriminating the Muslims and by not giving them a fair chance on the labor market, housing market, etc., prevented them from integrating on these markets. And finally the Swedes blamed the Muslims' failure to integrate, as well as many other problems in society, on the Muslims unwillingness and inability to integrate.

This development gave, at least among some Muslim groups, rise to something that might be looked upon as a version of the old self-fulfilling-prophesy-idea: the more the Swedes claimed that "they" did not want to, and did not try to, integrate to the Swedish culture and society, the less interested in adapting "they", and especially the young people, become. Explained in terms of the metaphor of communicating vessels this phenomenon can be described as: the more exclusion and discrimination a group meets the more they tend to unite around, and fight back by making a resource out of, what they experience as being the cause of their discrimination - their ethnicity or their religion.

This process also to some extent lead to the, from the Swedish point of view, somewhat paradoxical result that the ethnic and religious consciousness of the Muslims did increase, along with a "new" ethnic and religious "self-esteem", which in its turn did have the effect that immigrant groups in Sweden started to mobilize themselves more and more along cultural, ethnical, religious lines. They and their organizations also became more and more successful in, so to speak, turning the table, and turning their disadvantage - their religiosity, their ethnicity - into a political asset, or weapon if you like, into a factor for social and political mobilization. To some extent it can, we believe, be said that the main result of the anti-Muslim lobby in Sweden was that they were instrumental in creating, rather than preventing, the kind of Islam and Muslim they were warning for.

An example of this is that one of the Islamic national federations in 1993 felt strong enough to send an open letter to a number of the Swedish political parties promising them "the Muslim vote" if they in return promised to work for the realization of a set of specific Muslim demands on the Swedish society. Of course it would have been political suicide for any party to accept the offer, and the Muslims know that (cf. Karlsson & Svanberg 1995: 31).

If it is true, as is often claimed (Karlsson 1994, 2002), that it is only a de-politicized, liberal and privatized Islam that can integrate in Sweden, and that the development of such an Islam presupposes economic and social integration of the Muslim community, then the Swedes way of relating to Islam and the Muslims in the country has so far not been the most conducive of integration.

From the point of view of many Swedes, this whole process of increased ethnic and religious mobilization was, of course, mainly looked upon as something politically destabilizing, as something dangerous to "the national unity" and the like. The Swedes did not want to accept people who do not, as it is called, "play by the rules", in the political game. The Swedes have very little understanding for the fact that these rules are their rules and that they might not be experienced as appropriate by other groups of people.

It is, as we see it, paradoxical that the basic cause behind this development of “the Muslim problem”, was not, as most Swedes tend to believe, primarily that the Muslims are different and behave differently from the rest of the Swedes, but rather quite the opposite: that the majority society did not to a sufficient extent allowed them to be, behave, organize themselves and live in a different way from the rest of the society. The “simple fact” that in a multicultural and multireligious society acceptance of diversity is the prerequisite for equality, not its antithesis was not understood by most Swedes.

The main cause of “the problem” as we see it was, in other words, that the Muslims subjectively, and we would say, experienced a threat towards their own identity (religion and ethnicity) and culture (way of constituting their life-world), and thereby a risk of religious, ethnic and cultural extinction. And if there is anything that can mobilize a religious, ethnic or cultural group and weld it together it is the threat of extinction. And this has to be understood: there is for most religious, ethnic and cultural groups in the world a strong metaphysical sentiment or value connected with the idea of a future existence of the group and its beliefs, language, norms, values, customs and ways of life.

This in a sense obvious fact is, we believe, a major reason why religious and ethnic groups in Sweden increasingly have been looking for protection and ways to defend themselves when they, right or wrong, felt the basis for their existence threatened. It is also in situations like this they start to ask for collective rights, as they experience the recognition of these rights to be the only way to preserve their ethnicity and religion and safeguard the reproduction of the group as a distinct entity with its own social organization and whatever else it deems necessary in terms of institutions (in the wide sense of the term) to survive. Let us now turn to one of the main sources of most Swedes views on Islam and Muslims: the Swedish media.

## **The role of the media**

The way immigrants in general and Islam and Muslims in particular are pictured in the media has been the focus of some research.<sup>58</sup> In terms of a short summary we believe it is accurate to say that the following characteristics are typical in much of the media of the way Islam, the Arab, the Muslim and the like has been portrayed.

The first characteristic is that they are described in stereotypical<sup>59</sup> and mythical<sup>60</sup> ways, which, of course, make the descriptions in many respects wrong and untrue.

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<sup>58</sup> For example: AbuKhalil, A. 2002, Andersson 1995, Aneer 1985, Asp 1998, Asp & Weibull 1996, Berg 1988, Berggren & Lindblad 1998, Brune 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, in press; Catomeris 1998, Fröberg 2000, Gardell 1985, Hafez 1997, Harrie 1999, Hultén 1993, Hvitfeldt 1998, 2002, Karim 2000, 2002, Karlsson 1994 (esp. pp. 11 - 50), Leth & Thurén 2002, Löwander 1997, 1998, Modh 1995, Morge & Modh 2002, Nordström 2002, Quraishy 2002, Said 1985, Shaheen 2001, Weibull & warnebring 1999, Wennergren 2002, Zelizer 2002

<sup>59</sup> According to Lippman (1922) a stereotype is “the picture in our heads” we have of a phenomenon, a picture that guides our feelings and actions. A stereotyped picture is on the one hand in many respects wrong (over- and underdetermined) and mythical and, on the other fixed and unchangeable despite the fact that the world it relates to is changing.

The Arab and the Muslim are, for example, often uncritically associated with the type of hostile, fanatic, and aggressive policies of certain Muslim states, which is to many Swedes very scaring. The Arab/Muslim in general is often and without nuances depicted as a representative of our own stereotype picture of figures like Khomeini or Khadaffi and their policies. It is descriptions that often give strong associations to hostility to the West, terrorism, religious fanaticism, repression of women, and the like, pictures of something for us totally different, impenetrable and foreign. They depict them as people driven by forces that we in our modern, civilized society neither can accept nor understand. This makes the picture even more menacing, threatening and scary.

A second characteristic is that the descriptions are very ethnocentric. Non Western-Christian cultures with their religions and thought- and life patterns are described from within our domestic Swedish perspective. Our own thought- and life pattern is uncritically presupposed as the only correct one and is as a matter of course used as normal and standard in all descriptions and judgments of other groups and individuals. This is, as we have argued, typically done in descriptions of other religions, which normally are described as "other kinds of Christianity" (Olsson 2000). The result of this is that other cultures and phenomenon associated with them become misunderstood and stand out as incomprehensible, impenetrable and unreachable.

A third characteristic, partly a consequence of the second, is that the descriptions uncritically presupposes the so-called theory of modernization in combination with the so-called theory of evolution. The basic tenet of the first of these can roughly be summarized as: to be able to achieve economic and social well being, the "backward" cultures and countries and their people must change their traditional institutions, norms and values as well as ways of thinking and conform to the modern, Western model of market relationship, urbanization, secularization, industrial production and political bureaucracy. They must also shift their loyalties from village and tribe and religious community and ethnic group to the nation and the State and its attendant institutions. One assumption or hypothesis connected with this "theory" is that ethnic and cultural differences, at least within the national state, will tend to lose importance and disappear over time; will be modernized and democratized away. Mainly for economical reasons and through modernization (centrally including modern education) and secularization we will get increasingly homogeneous national states, at least in the industrialized Western world, and at least in its public or official domain.

The other "theory" includes, among other things, the idea of history as a continuing qualitative process of change towards increasing civilization: from the simple to the complex, from the crude to the refined, from the primitive to the civilized, from darkness to enlightenment. This "theory" also includes the assumption that the Western world has reached higher levels of development than (most of) the rest of the world, and that people with other cultural backgrounds, if and when they come to the Western world, would soon realize this and want to adopt the Western ways as much and as fast as possible. These ideas, and particularly the second, are central elements in "Western thinking" since the Enlightenment.

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<sup>60</sup> The number of myths about immigrant groups, as for example that they have pigs on their balconies, grow vegetables in their living rooms, is legio.



A fourth characteristic is exoticism. Most of the media descriptions of Islam and Muslims it is the strange and different, the foreign, the unfamiliar and obscure, the exotic that is focused upon. Muslims are rarely presented as something we can (or ought to) identify with and understand, but as something we, mingled with terror, should be fascinated by (Berg 1998; Said 1978).

A fifth characteristic is that Muslims and other people from "foreign cultures" often are described from a third person perspective. It is a perspective that focus individuals not as individual, concrete, multifaceted living people, as you and I, but rather as general, anonymous, exchangeable and one-dimensional types, functions or roles; as for example a fanatic, a terrorist or a slave under Allah. It is a perspective that focus on and enlarges only specific characteristics of the individuals at the same time as it neglects or hides other.

Generally speaking it can be said that media to a large extent paints a picture of Islam and the Muslim, as well as of many other people from "foreign" cultures, which in many respects goes against the opinions and goals of the official Swedish immigration and integration policies. Rather than fostering an increased respectfulness and openness towards the immigrant and a will to listen to and learn about and from them – which are presuppositions for their integration into society – they create a strong *Verfremdungseffekt*.

According to Brune (2000, 2002) the "Muslim man" in the media is typically depicted as a "dupe of tradition and religion", a tradition/religion which is often blamed for encouraging and legitimating violence against women. Part of this picture is also that "he is unable to control his sexual as well as violent impulses towards women". He despises Swedish women, which he considers to be "whores", and which he, furthermore, is prone to rape. The descriptions of his relationship to "Muslim women" is that "his honor 'forces' him to batter his wife, sisters or daughters as a means of social or domestic control". And all of this is portrayed as legitimized, or at least excused by his religion (Brune 2002:380)

That this way of describing Islam and Muslims has not improved, rather the opposite, in the aftermath of 11 September 2001 is the general view of our informants. In a questionnaire survey we made in Göteborg after the event 43 percent answered "Yes, the they have been much more negative" and 47 percent answered "Yes, the they have been somewhat more negative" to the question "Do you experience the reports in media (radio, TV, newspapers) about Islam and Muslims to have changed after 11 September?" (Larsson 2003; Sander 2003). Many of our informants in conversations described the post-11 September reporting with terms like "black-and-white", "one eyed", "sensationalism", "stereotyping", and "factually shaky". They claim that the media in text, pictures and terminology painted a picture of Islam as barbaric, violence prone, fanatic and uncivilized. According to them sensationalism become a corner stone of the reporting which to an inappropriate and disproportionate degree focused on extremist and militant elements in Muslim communities. Such images and stereotypes seemed according to our sources to have become almost necessary in the media coverage after 11 September. As these views are supported in other sources as well (Ghersetti & Levin 2002), the consequences of negativity and Islamophobia in the media ought not to be underestimated. Many of our informants claim that stereotypic

images of fanaticism and violence are now so deeply embedded in the reporting of Islam and Muslims as to be considered almost necessary, unproblematic and natural parts of all such reporting. And there seems to be quite a lot of evidence that they are not totally victims of an illusion.

The general structure in the descriptions of “the other” in much of our media is, despite the fact that it is often implicit and not always easy to detect for the untrained reader, according to many media researchers (Hvitfelt, Brune, Berg, etc.) fairly simple: we represent the well-known, the rational, the orderly, the civilized, i.e. cosmos whereas they represent the deviant, the irrational, the unknown, the uncivilized, i.e. chaos. And who wants chaos? They are, according to this analysis, portrayed as representatives of evil (or in best of cases: misled and deceived), subversive and destructive chaos-forces that have to be regulated and controlled – if not combated. It is, in other words, a view that to a large extent maintains and transmits the pattern of the classical mythological picture of the foreigner: *us* against *them* (cf. Berg 1998; Said 1978). It is also a view that puts all the blame for the various problems they might experience and have in their new home countries squarely on them. It is their fault that they do not get jobs, etc. It is because they have too little knowledge in and of Swedish, Swedish cultural and social competence, etc. and too many properties from their culture of origin, for example religion (Islam), view of women, authority dependence, etc. (Sander 2001). The problem is, in short, that they have not become Swedish enough, i.e. not assimilated enough.

It is, as writers on racism (for example Martin Barker) argues, not hard to draw the conclusion that what we see in media is the emergence of a “new racism” where culturally acquired properties – for example being Muslim – have taken over from “biological properties” (Barker 1981, Gordon 1986, Ansell 1997, Merkl 1998). The “new racism” is not as easy to detect as the “old racism”, but as it is structurally and functionally analogous to the old one it is every bit as dangerous (Sander 1995).

Having said this, we must, to balance the picture somewhat, also say that the media in Europe in the post 11 September 2001 period, on the whole, displayed a much more balanced picture than seem to have been the case in the US where it seems that the general picture painted can be summarized something like this: the Muslim world is inherently irrational, violent, anti-western and anti-Semitic, “their” views of and actions towards “us” are governed by a primitive hatred of the infidel and a resentment that the infidel now dominates the true believer instead of the other way around, i.e. “that they hate us not for what we do but for what we are”, and that the only language “they” (the Muslims, particularly Arabs) therefore understand is force and that “they” will continue their global Islamic terrorism, *jihad*, towards “us” unless “they” are beaten mercilessly. This is a picture not even all scholars seem to be able to free themselves from.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> It seems, judging from some of the post 11 September literature, that the scholarly world is almost as polarized as society at large when it comes to the issue of what in many US publications goes under the heading of “Why they hate us”. Even though the majority of the scholars of the Middle Eastern and the Islamic world have insisted that there does exist a connection between US foreign policy and the event of 11 September, other known names have reiterated their anti-liberal stance by pointing an accusing finger at what they regard as their fellow academics’ failure to warn the public about the

## GENERAL PROBLEMS

### Political participation and representation

Sweden, as most European countries, has historically been characterized by attempting to prevent foreign nationals from becoming involved in its political life. This was true up to the 1960s when, despite opposition, the first proposal to extend the right to vote beyond that of Swedish nationals was made. When the Swedish parliament in 1976 legislated foreign nationals' right to vote in local elections the ideological climate had, however, changed radically. All political parties stood behind the decision. According to this reform, the suffrage and the right to run for public office - in municipal, county and church councils - was extended to include also non-Swedish nationals registered as residents of a municipality of 1 November, three years prior to the election year in question (prop. 1975/76:23, bet. 1996/97:KU16, rskr 1996/97:177).

The 3-year rule, however, was to provide a reasonable guarantee that the voter would have a satisfactory knowledge of Swedish, that he/she would be familiar with and have an understanding of Swedish conditions, and have a natural interest in municipal affairs, not only those relating directly to his/her immediate concerns, but also to long-term issues of municipal interests (Citizenship Committee (*Medborgarskapskommittén*) SOU 1999:34).

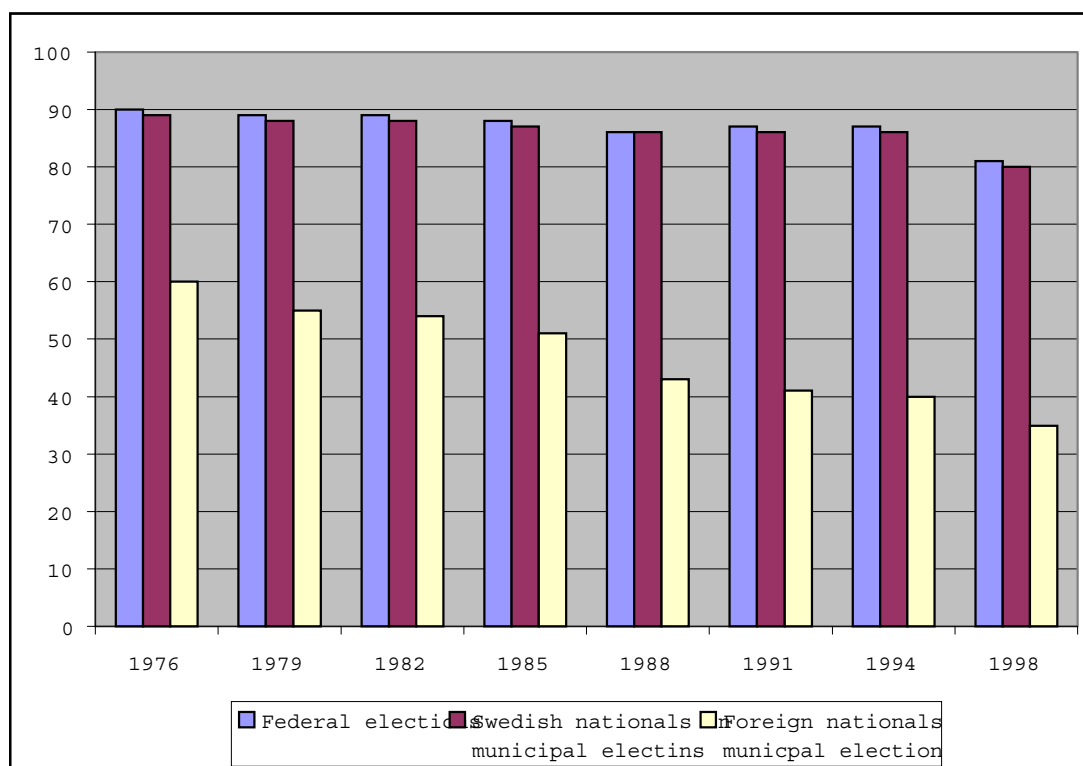
The first occasion for foreign nationals to vote was in the municipal elections of 1976. At this election the voting rate of the total Swedish national population was ninety percent. The corresponding figure for foreign nationals was sixty percent. This was by most commentators seen as surprisingly low and somewhat of a disappointment as there was expected to be a dammed up desire among immigrants to partake in the political process. The result, however, indicated that participation in politics is not simply synonymous with the formal right to vote. That it was not that simple has since then become even more clear as the participation rates, despite various efforts to the contrary, has kept on dropping election by election. In the election of 1998 the figure was down to thirty-five percent. For some areas and groups of voters the rates was even much lower. In the election of 2002 these figures did not, despite, at least in certain areas of the country, large efforts to improve them, change for the better. The general downward trend seem, however, to have been broken.

Dropping voting rates is, however, not only a immigrant phenomena. Voter participation in the rest of the population has also fallen, but while the curve for Swedish nationals points slowly downward, that of foreign nationals, as can be seen in the graph below, drops of sharply.

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inevitable threats that Islam and the Muslims are posing. Noteworthy among the latter are Martin Kramer, Daniel Pipes and their intellectual mentor Bernard Lewis (for example Kramer 2001, Pipes 1996, Lewis 1990). The main name in the other camp being, of course, John Esposito (for example 1992, 1997, 2000, 2001, 2002).

*Voter participation for Swedish nationals and Foreign nationals in Swedish Federal and Municipal elections 1976 – 1998* (source: Sahlberg 2001: 51).



To understand this development political scientists and others have tried to answer questions such as: what, if any, explanations are common to both voter categories? And, what if any, explanations may be specifically attributed to immigrants, and specifically to immigrants who continue to hold foreign citizenship? When it comes to the latter question, an important line of inquiry has been: are the main explanations to be sought in characteristics of the immigrant community or in characteristics of the majority society?

As can be expected, the explanations suggested are almost as many as the researchers providing them and they are reached by help of everything from large statistical surveys to deep interviews with focal groups and individual respondents. Here is not the place to review this research.<sup>62</sup> If any short conclusion can be drawn from this research it seem to us to be that the causes for this development are complex and manifold and that every attempt to reduce this complexity to a small number of causes do violence to reality. In this section of our report we will only bring up and comment on suggestions that are in line with what we have heard from our own informants.

The question of the voting rights of non-citizens has continued to be debated in Swedish politics. One result of these debates has been that all citizens of a European Union state who are registered residents of Sweden, as of 1998, have the right to vote in municipal and county elections with no time condition. The same extended voting

<sup>62</sup> For a summary of some of the relevant research see Sahlberg 2001.

rights was also applied to Nordic nationals, from non-EU countries residing in Sweden. Another important result was that the Swedish Citizenship Committee of 1997 (*Medborgarskapskommittén* 1997, SOU 1999:34) proposed that Sweden should accept dual citizenship without contention. The bill containing this proposal was accepted by the parliament and entered into effect 1 July 2001. From that date on persons seeking citizenship in Sweden are, in other words, not required to renounce their former citizenship. The effect this might have on the political participation and voting behavior of immigrants has not yet been researched.

### **Obstacles to voting participation**

The message that we have received most clearly in our interviews on why immigrants participate to such a low degree in elections is that the Swedish society, by excluding them from almost all bodies of political power, clearly show that it is not interested in sharing any political power with the immigrants – so why should they bother. And it is not hard to find figures to support their claim. It is, for example, repeatedly pointed out that of 349 members of Parliament only three are Muslims. The immigrant population in general does not have a much better relative representation. Similar examples can easily be multiplied across the political landscape from the government to boards of local associations and trade unions. Even in the political councils in the immigrant dense areas in Stockholm, Göteborg and Malmö earlier mentioned the immigrants themselves are very few and far apart. This is, according to them, the main reason why voter participation is much lower in the disadvantaged metropolitan areas than in other areas. In Bergsjön and Gunnared electoral district in Göteborg, voter participation by foreign nationals for example totaled 19.8 and 23.8 percent respectively in the 1998 election. As these averages hide marked differences regarding for example national and cultural origin, reason for migration, time of domicile in Sweden, status and standard of living area, gender, age, socio-economic status, and level of education, and as the composition of the different national groups varies along these dimensions, it is hard to draw any straight conclusions regarding voter participation and national back-ground only. Despite these problems, it seems, particularly given the “softer data” available, fairly safe to claim that there is a relation between (experienced) social, political, etc. exclusion and marginalization on the one hand and motivation to partake in the Swedish political process, including voting participation on the other. Even though we do not have access to any hard (statistical) data when it comes to voter participation, or to the level of political activity and participation in general, when it comes to Muslims specifically, we do not – given just mentioned relation between (experienced) marginalization and exclusion and political activity – believe it to be too daring to claim that immigrants with Muslim back ground in general most likely would be found in the low end of the participation scale and immigrants with Scandinavian and North-West European back grounds would be found in the other end of the scale.

This assumption is also in line with most research on political participation in Western democracies, most of which suggests that social factors play an important part in voter participation. People who find themselves in less favorable social positions tend to vote less than people in better positions. One reason for this is that elected bodies do

not only represent voters when it comes to opinions, but also in a wider social sense. If a group of voters feel that the people eligible for election do not represent them socially, ethnically, religiously, etc. they tend to use their vote to a lesser extent than if they feel they do. These assumptions are clearly in line with the fact that people in disadvantaged areas vote to a significantly lower extent than people from non-disadvantaged areas.

Before we speculate a bit further on why people in disadvantaged areas don't vote we would like to report some little more positive information.

People born abroad vote significantly less than the average Swede. But what happens to the political involvement of their children? Does the low political involvement of the parents get passed on to the next generation?

According to Adman & Strömblad (2000) the answer to this question is not what one might have expected. None of the forms of political involvement they measured for the children of immigrants indicated that they should be less active than the native Swedes. As a matter of fact, in several cases, as for instance when it comes to political contacts, political manifestations, political self-confidence and the power to appeal decisions, they seem to be more active. There is however one exception to this pattern – voting. Here the young immigrants show a lower degree of participation than children of native Swedes.

### **Why don't people in disadvantaged areas vote?**

First it must be said that studies that explicitly target the reasons non-voting people give for why they do not vote are rare, and therefore something we know very little about. From Dahlstedt's interviews with individuals and focus groups with people with foreign background who considered themselves politically active in a broad sense about their own and other immigrants they know experience of and attitudes towards political activity in Sweden we can, however, get some insights regarding this question (Dahlstedt 2000). That the people interviewed are not themselves representatives of the most marginalized of society should be clear.

One thing that stands out is that it does not seem to be a lack of political interest that is the main reason behind the non-voting behavior among immigrants. The following reasons given are the most prominent ones:

### **Nice words but a not-so-nice reality**

According to the experience of the interviewees there is in Sweden a strong discrepancy between the integration policies as they are formulated in theory and the way they are carried out in practice. This discrepancy is according to them made very clearly by the widespread exclusion and marginalization the immigrants are victims of from the side of the majority society. Most of them had personal experience of marginalization and discrimination from all spheres of society: the work place, the media, political parties, government authorities, schools and day cares, and the neighborhood where they lived. This exclusion has in turn given rise to strong

feelings of, to phrase it mildly, uncertainty about whether or not they *really* are welcome in society and whether they really has been invited to partake in it on equal terms, and to a skepticism of government authorities and politicians in general. In many respects the official policies regarding immigrants, if not the democratic society, is viewed as a rhetorical one – many nice words but a very different reality; as something meant for the realm of the abstract political rhetoric of the political platform rather than for the realm of practical politics in the social reality. A number of the informants even compared the Swedish democratic political system to the political systems of the dictatorships that they had earlier fled in terror. Many of our own informants have echoed those of Dahlstedt's.

### **Immigrants = problems**

If you are identified as an “immigrant” you are automatically considered as of less value, as, at best, a second-class citizen. One of our informants, who converted to Islam, expressed it as:

When I converted to Islam and visibly became a Muslim I also became an ‘immigrant’ which, in turn, ‘converted’ me from a middle class Swede to a fourth-class citizen. The latter conversion meant in many respects a much more dramatic change for me than the first. Even though I had long experience of immigrants I was chocked by my experience of becoming an ‘immigrant’ .

If you are an immigrant you are stamped as a “problem”. On the one hand in the general sense that most problems the Swedes associates with immigration and immigrants in the society are, as we have seen, squarely put on them: the causes of the problems are their culture, their religion, etc.; i.e. their inability to integrate. But this is also, as both Dahlstedt's and our own informants tells us, true in the more specific sense that many more specific problems, like crime and other social problems, in many media are associated with immigrants. They are said to be overrepresented in the crime statistics, etc., which gives the implicit message that if it would not be for them we would have less crime, etc. It is also true in an even more specific sense: they are responsible for having brought new types of crimes and social problems to Sweden: terrorism, honor killings, female circumcision, gang rape, wife bashing, and the like. Several informants claim to feel “branded as thugs and criminals” every time media brings out one of these stories. They feel that many Swede start to look at them as, at least potential, “honor killers”, etc., and that this is widening the gorge between them and the majority society. They feel that the acts of a very limited number of “bad individuals” constantly by the media get generalized to the whole collective of immigrants, Arabs, or Muslims. If a Swede commit a crime it is never because (s)he is a Swede or a Christian. The blame never gets generalized to the whole group. It is always explained in terms of individual oriented factors. When an Arab or a Muslim commits a crime it is always portrayed as being because (s)he is an Arab or a Muslim. Her/his culture or religion is described as the cause of the crime. This also, according to them, and especially for the marginalized young, has the danger of a self-fulfilling prophecy: if we, no matter how hard we try to integrate, constantly are made out as

problems and get treated as such, we might just as well live up to the stereotype. In the media there is a strong tendency to compare some kind of ideal picture of the Swedes, Christianity, etc. with the real behavior of a negative segment of Immigrants, Muslims, etc.

### **Integration - A question of power**

Many of the interviewees question whether the "theoretical" ideal of integration as a mutual process is true. Generally they do not believe that members of the majority society who are in power of its various institutions really are prepared to share that power, to relinquish some of their own privileges. Some of Dahlstedt's as well as our informants are fully convinced that "the Swedes" never will hand over any power to immigrants voluntarily. The only way such a power share can be brought about is by way of political action by the immigrants, and that has to be done outside the traditional Swedish channels for such action, as the immigrants are systematically excluded from power there too. It has, according to them, to be done through collective organization of various kinds by the immigrants themselves.

Another area of strong criticism of a similar nature, echoing our earlier mentioned "immigrant spokesmen", is directed against "the enormous multi-million machine" the Swedish state has created "to integrate those creatures (the immigrants) into Swedish society", a society which further is not rarely perceived as a bureaucratic, disciplinary and controlling society. This "huge machine" is often seen as having two main purposes. One is to control the immigrants. By making them dependent recipients of "the help-machine" they become both passive and grateful citizens. The other is to provide Swedes with employment in the "immigrant industry". This also, as icing on the cake, has the effect of perpetuating the image of "the good helping Swedish society" which spend so much time, money and efforts on helping "the poor, incompetent, disadvantaged, immigrants". According to them this Swedish system is more part of their problem than of a solution. Again, several informants claim it would be much better to spend these millions on "the Swedes" to help them integrate with the immigrants.

### **Politics too far from everyday life**

One common complaint among informants is that the interest of the national politicians in the immigrants seems to be limited to the time they want their votes - during the election campaigns. Then they say a lot of nice words. But again: they, according to Dalhsedt's and our informants, say one thing and do another. They, for example, talk about the importance of including the immigrants in politics, but they, on the one hand, always stay with the top down perspective - we should fix the problems for the immigrants, and, on the other, always see to it that the few immigrants on the ballot-papers are put way below electable positions.

Particularly flagrant example of this exclusion of the immigrants and their perspectives are, according to our informants, the various metropolitan regeneration programs that have been run in disadvantaged areas. In all of them there has been much talk of the importance of immigrant participation and of getting the projects



locally anchored. In reality, many interviewees claim, this has only been words. The projects has for all practical purposes been planed by Swedish civil servants and implemented by Swedes. If the “grassroots-immigrants” of the area in question, or any of their associations, take initiatives and come with suggestions they are only met by numbers of objections and the only immigrants that have been incorporated in them are so basically only to do “grunt work” the Swedes do not want to do, and they have normally only been engaged by way of various employment measure programs with almost no pay. From the point of view of many immigrants, the Urban regeneration programs (*Storstadsarbetet*) mainly seem to be there for the sake of the Swedish civil servants, not the area residents and local associations. Again: “the system” is experienced more as part of the problem than of the solution.

### **Who represents whom?**

We have argued that political representation is an important dimension with respect to power and thereby for integration. The political representation of persons of foreign decent, and particularly of persons of extra-European decent, is very poor in Sweden. And where it does exist, there is the thorny and much discussed problem of who represents whom. Can “one immigrant” represent the whole collective of immigrants? Can “one Muslim” represent the whole community of Muslims? Can a well-integrated (assimilated) member of some group who lived in Sweden for a long time represent new immigrants from the same group living segregated and marginalized lives in a disadvantaged area? The majority opinion of Dahlstedt’s and our own informants seem to be that these are very problematic questions, but that the answer to them is “No”. Besides the most obvious reasons given for this “No” – problems with categorization of groups, that all the groups are heterogeneous, etc. – many points to the fact that a person of foreign background, according to their opinion, to raise to power first have to become “more Swedish than the Swedes”, thereby making her/him unsuitable to represent the interests of *any* group of “real” immigrants.<sup>63</sup> To some extent we believe their criticism to reflect the political reality.

These and similar questions have given rise to a debate of what type of representation that is needed. One opinion brought forward with quite some force by several of our informants is that the type of representation used in the democratic Swedish system is not enough. It must, according to them, be complemented with some kind of presence of group representation. According to them such a system granting a political representation of Muslims would also increase the political interest and activity of the Muslims of Sweden. It would also serve the important function of giving young Muslims functioning role models for their own lives. It would also help offset at least

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<sup>63</sup> In our discussions of this problem with immigrants we see a very strong structural similarity to the similar discussion among feminist about women in power representing other women. In general we believe that many of the points raised in discussions by feminists of their situation, and of a life, in a patriarchic society, as well as the strategies to redeem it suggested in these discussions, are relevant in discussion of the in many respects similar positions of immigrants/ Muslims. If, for example, the Swedish state implemented only a small part of the legal and political measures taken in order to make the society more “equal” between the genders *vis a vis* immigrants and Muslims, their situation would, we believe, in many respects improve dramatically.

some of the negative perception of the majority population of Muslims as anti-democratic, etc. and help curb the stigmatization of them. At the same time most of our informants did not believe the willingness of the present political power structure, the political parties, to be too high to accept the idea of such representation. Here we believe them to be right.

### **Marginalization also within political parties?**

According to several of Dahlstedt's interviewees who were themselves active in politics, one serious problem for them is that they easily become "token immigrants". As it is "politically correct" to have "immigrant representation" in various political bodies, one or two are allowed in. But they are never allowed in a number, or on positions, so they can get any real influence. Furthermore, it is only immigrants – or other representatives of "deviant groups" – that are known to have ideas, etc. that are in line with the main stream ideas of the political body in question that are let in. They are, in other words, allowed to get in an act within political parties and the like only as long as they are deemed not to pose a threat to the existing order – and above all not to the party's power elite. And if they do, they find themselves out in the cold at the next election, if not sooner.

What has just been described is, of course, not a specific immigrant problem. The media all the time have reports of people in political parties who, by criticizing the party's policy, its leadership or whatever, get considered "awkward", "difficult" or "problem makers" and as a consequence at the next election find themselves in positions that hold little or no chance of getting them re-elected. But this "general principle" seem to work much more effective *vis a vis* immigrants than "normal Swedes", and within the community of immigrants more effective *vis a vis* extra-European immigrants than other. The opinion held by many Muslims that the further away from being a "normal Swede" you are considered to be, the more effective the described principles of "structural discrimination" works to your disadvantage, we find no evidence to disbelieve.

Another problem cited by informants is that if you as an immigrant succeed in getting into a political body of some kind, there seem to be only one role for you to take, that of dealing with "the immigrant problem". You never get considered "a politician" but always "an immigrant politician". And if you are not prepared to be that and to represent, and be spokes person for, the entire group, you end up in the cold. In some sense the marginalization, culturalization and ethnification of immigrants in the larger society is mirrored within the political sub-society. And this is not going unnoticed by the general immigrant voters.

Several interviewees also ascribe the falling voter participation among immigrants, especially in the disadvantaged areas, as a reaction of the seemingly permanentization of exclusion in society at large as well as in the political sub-society. Given this it is difficult to feel any kind of solidarity with the society and its political system, which, in turn, leads to distrust and passivity; in some cases even to versions of conspiracy theories.

Once this view on society – to our minds not totally irrational – is established, an obvious strategy is, of course, to isolate yourself and work from within your “own” associations and institutions. Why should people who have systematically been excluded from society and its political system identify and work with the system that is shutting them out? And this particularly so when “the system” seem to be completely without self-awareness of its own way of operating *vis a vis* “deviant” people. Instead of being self-critical when it comes to the question of why immigrants vote and participate less, its normal reaction, according to many of our informants, is to blame the victim. The reason why *they* do not succeed in society in general, as well as in the political sub-society, is because *they* are “deviant”, “lack what it takes” and in other respects have failed. They do not seem to realize, as one of our informants, quoting a famous management consultant, put it: “Every system is perfectly designed to give exactly the kind of results it gives”.

To the extent this is true – which we believe it is to quite some extent – what is needed is not primarily more projects in which civil servants and the like are going to help the immigrants to integrate, but a change of the system.

## Labor market and Employment

The labour market, employment and occupation are the main areas of complaints of discrimination common to all Member States. In addition to the number of complaints, the unemployment figures for immigrants and minorities can be indicators used to examine whether discrimination is occurring. The numbers of unemployment are in general much higher among immigrants and minorities than among nationals (EUMC *Diversity and equality for Europe. Annual Report 2000* p 13).

The situation for immigrants on the labor market is in the Swedish debate one of the more often used indicators of their integration in society. Labor market integration might even be claimed, at least from the point of view of the government, to be seen as the most important indicator. To reduce the unemployment among the immigrants has repeatedly been claimed to be the most important measure when it comes to combating segregation and increase integration. In a report from the *Swedish Integration Board* (Integrationsverket) 2001 it is for example stated that “The most important cause behind marginalization and outsidership is the lack of work and ability to support oneself ... The most important task for the policy of integration is to *create the necessary prerequisites for people to support themselves, ...* Employment is the principal lever for integration. *A place on the Swedish labor market is the key for each individual to be able to build their own life project*” (p. 17).

The idea behind this so-called *arbetslinje* (the line of work) can be said to be that increased labor market integration will lead to increased integration in all other areas, just as unemployment will lead to increased segregation. In this model, the high unemployment rates among the immigrants is seen mainly as caused by their lack of knowledge and competence – particularly when it comes to the Swedish language. We will return to a discussion of this assumption later. Here we will only point out the obvious fact that the model is very focused on properties of the minority members, or, if you want, on the supply side, rather than of the majority society and its labor

market, the demand side. The cause of the problem gets, in this model, put squarely on *them* and *their* lack of (relevant) knowledge and competence.<sup>64</sup>

A fairly large amount of research regarding the position of immigrants on the Swedish labor market has been carried out during the last decade (see for example Arai et al 1999, Behtoui 1999; Bevelander 1995, 2000; Bevelander et al 1997; Broomé et al 1996, 1998; Ekberg & Gustafsson 1995; Franzén 1998; Månsson & Ekberg 2000; SOU 1996:55 ch. 8). The main results from these and other studies can be summarized as: despite the political rhetoric and efforts to improve the situation of immigrants on the labor market, their situation has, with the possible exemption of the last few years, since the late 1970s become worse, during the 1990s dramatically worse. From the time of economic recession 1992/1993 many researchers have described their position as catastrophic. According to Bevelander et al (1997 ch. 2) Sweden has not only in general failed to integrate their immigrants on its labor market. International comparisons with other industrial nations show that Sweden – together with Denmark and Norway – stands in a class by itself.

One way to illustrate this is by way of quotients. The quotient for the rate of labor market participation<sup>65</sup> between Swedish citizens and citizens of non-European Union countries are for Sweden 1,28. The equivalent figures for Great Britain and Germany are 1.14 and 1.06 respectively. When it comes to unemployment we are speaking of a factor corresponding to almost twice as high rates for Nordic citizens, five times for non-Nordic citizens and up to ten times for certain non-European citizens. The average unemployment rate<sup>66</sup> was 1997 for individuals born in Sweden 5.7 percent to be compared with 17.5 percent for foreign-born individuals. There seem, furthermore, to be indications of a general pattern in the employment rates of immigrants: the more a person by the Swedes is associated with dark skin and with being a Muslim, the higher their unemployment rate and the lower their rate of participation on the labor market in general.<sup>67</sup> And this seems to be true independent of their level of education. The Swedish labor market is, in other words, to a large extent segregated between natives and foreign-born on the one hand and between different ethnic groups among the foreign-born on the other.

The weak position of the immigrants on the labor market is clearly seen in the following figures.

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<sup>64</sup> As we will see a little later, there have during the last years been clear signs of a shift in this focus from the point of view of the government.

<sup>65</sup> Individuals participating in the labor market, the labor force, are by definition those who have employment or are actively seeking employment. All others, for example housewife's, students, pensioners, many people in employment measures and others who for whatever reasons do not actively seek employment, are not part of the figures for labor market participation.

<sup>66</sup> To be counted as unemployed an individual first has to be counted as part of the labor force as defined above. Even though we do not have any "hard evidence", it seems from many sources clear that the "real" unemployment rates for many groups are much higher than the statistics indicate. Many individuals with African and Asian backgrounds simply seem to have "given up" when it comes to find a "real" job and are supporting themselves in various "gray" or "black" sectors of the labor market. Others have turned into "permanent" students or "permanent" members of employment measures.

<sup>67</sup> To take only one example: in 2000 only 38 percent of the Iraqi-born had occupation and 27 percent were unemployed.

*Level of gainfully employed in percentage of total population 16 - 64 year*

<i>Origin/year</i>	<b>1993</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>
<b>Africa</b>	16,1	15,5	16,6	16,2	15,5	18,5	21,0
<b>Asia</b>	18,0	18,4	18,6	18,2	18,4	19,6	21,4
<b>Europe excl. Nordic countries</b>	34,6	28,5	28,9	29,8	31,9	36,5	40,6
<b>Sweden born</b>	70,5	71,3	72,6	71,3	70,8	72,6	78,6

Source: SCB *Befolkningen 16+ år (RAMS) i riket efter sysselsättning, medborgarskapsland, ålder och kön. År 1993-1999*

It is also clear from these figures that the groups with origins in Africa and Asia have a disastrously low level of gainful employment.

Even though an immigrant's length of domicile in Sweden correlates positively with his/her level of participation on the labor market, it is still true that the level of labor market participation is considerably lower even for those who arrived in Sweden during the 1970s and 1980s than for the average Swedish born person.

This is remarkable for several reasons. One is that Sweden during the 1980s experienced a strong economic boom with a labor shortage in many sectors. Another one is, which we will return to, that many of the immigrants that arrived in Sweden from the 1980s on was relatively well educated.<sup>68</sup> A third one is that the Swedish economy since at least the 1970s has been going through a phase of internationalization and globalization, which ought to have had as a consequence that the (multi-) linguistic, cultural and other competences the immigrants possessed should have been a competitive advantage for them on the labor market. Despite this, their integration on the Swedish labor market has been very poor and declining. Since 2000 there has, however, been some signs that the trend has started to reverse and that the unemployment rates of immigrants has started to go down somewhat.

This situation of segregation is clearly shown in the case of the Iranians, a group that, on the one hand, has been in Sweden for quite some time now, and thus should have had time to establish themselves, and, on the other hand, has a relatively high level of education. In 1995 thirteen percentage of its members 25 to 64 years had a three years or more post-secondary education, as compared with twelve percent for the total Swedish born population. If you standardize the Iranian population for age this percentage increase from thirteen to fifteen percent. The situation is similar for Iraqis, although they at an average have been in Sweden a somewhat shorter time than the Iranians. On the other hand they have an even higher education level. Their average level of three years or more post-secondary education is twenty-one percent. Despite

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<sup>68</sup> For example: the proportion of males with a three years or longer post-secondary education was higher than the average for Swedish born males for immigrants from fifty-three different countries of origin. The equivalent figures for females were 44 nationalities.

this, the situation of these groups on the labor market is most serious, characterized as it is by an exceptionally high level of unemployment and low participation rate.<sup>69</sup> Other groups with similar patterns of high level of unemployment and low participation rate are Ethiopians, Turks, Syrians, Lebanese and Somalis. They, and particularly the Turks, do however not have the high levels of education as the Iranians and Iraqis. Among the Turks, for example, only around four percent have a three years or more post-secondary education, over sixty percent do not even have a high school education.

It is, however, not only the case that immigrants with Muslim background have much high level of unemployment and low participation rate, it is also the case that those that have succeeded in getting a job to a high extent work in positions way below their levels of education and skills. Of all immigrants in Sweden from countries outside the European Union with a three years or more academic education thirty-nine percent (of those that had a job) had a job that corresponded with their level of education as compared with eighty-five percent for Swedish born people (Berggren & Omarsson 2001). These averages hide significant differences between, on the one hand, kind of educations and, on the other hand, groups of immigrants regarding their background. Of those with educations in nursing and social service fifty-three percent had jobs corresponding with their education, the figure for those with education in natural sciences and technology was forty-four percent and the figure for those with educations and pedagogy it was thirty-two percent. When it comes to variations on cultural backgrounds the same principle we have already noticed applies here to: individuals that by Swedish employers are associated with black skin and with being Muslims have significantly lower rates than others. Of those who had employment below their level of education, a substantial number had their employment in their area of education and training. For individuals with education in natural sciences and technology this figure was thirty-three percent, and for those with education in nursing and social service it was fifty percent. Of those with an academic degree in humanistic or social science areas seventy percent (of those who had a job) were working in unskilled service jobs. A common way to summarize this situation is that:

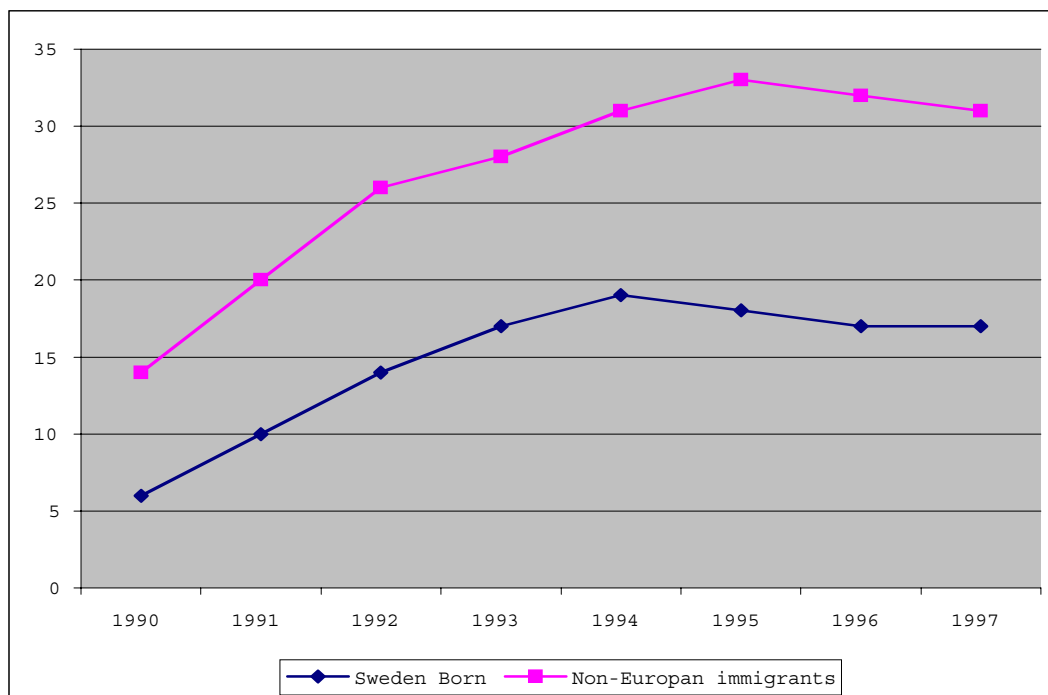
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<sup>69</sup> In the case of Iranians, their situation on the Swedish labor market is often compared to their situation in the USA. The groups in the two countries are in most respects comparable: they arrived at about the same times, they have about the same levels of education, their socio-economic backgrounds are very similar, etc. Despite this their integration differs remarkably. In the USA they have lower unemployment and higher participation rates on the labor market than the average USA born individual, they have jobs that correspond to their high level of education, they have a high rate of income development, etc. All in all, they have done much better than the average American born person. Their situation in Sweden is, as we have seen, the complete opposite. One conclusion drawn from this is that it is wrong to attribute their problems in Sweden to properties of the group itself. The cause of the problem ought rather to be sought in properties of the majority society, in the existence of more or less subtle mechanisms of exclusion. We believe the proponents of the latter diagnosis to be on the right track. The Swedish society has, in international comparison, been extreme when it comes to waste immigrated competence, and not only on the labor market. The same is, we will argue, true for the universities.

“Sweden has the best educated cleaners, taxi drivers and sub-way ticket collectors in the world”.<sup>70</sup>

To give this situation a little more graphic illustration the following diagrams can do:

**Unemployment among people born in Sweden and immigrants born outside of Europe, 1990 - 1997. Unemployed during some part of the year (SOU 2000:37, p. 32)**

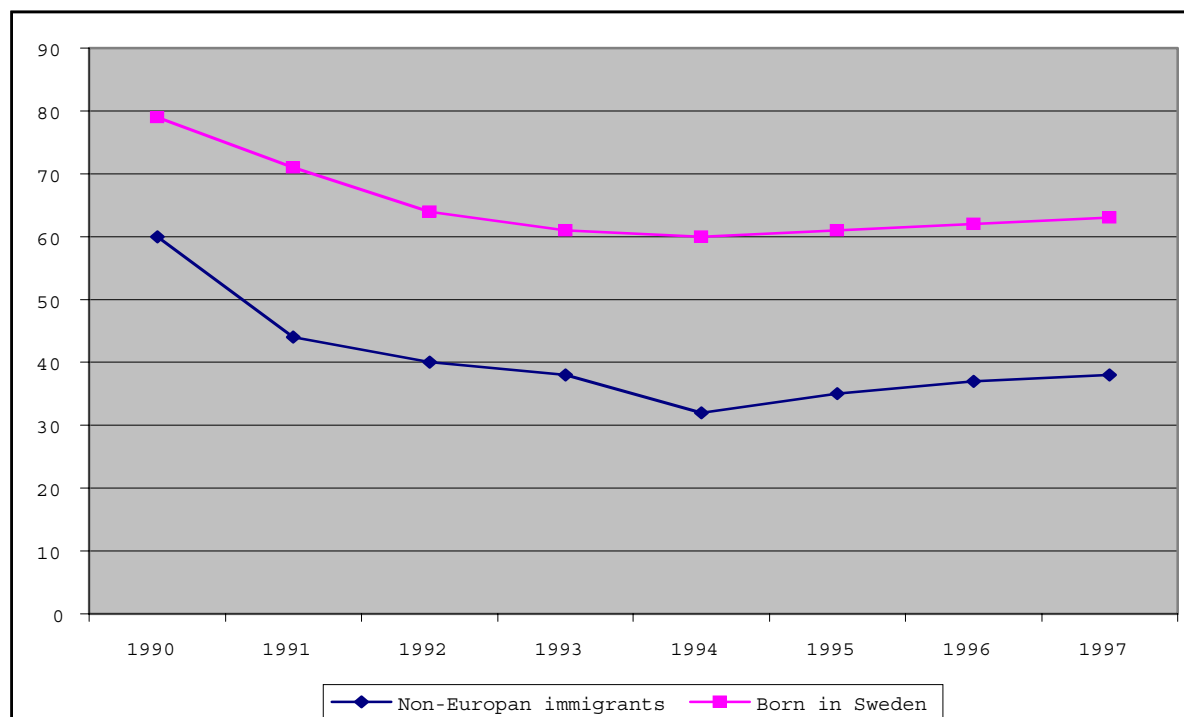


Although the unemployment did increase for all groups in Sweden during this period, it has done so much more for groups with a non-European origin.

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<sup>70</sup> For example: a study among taxi drivers in Malmö, Sweden’s third largest city, showed that 44 percent of the immigrants among them had academic degrees, some of them several exams. Furthermore, some of them had degrees in areas which according to the employment office were in great demands in Sweden (City of Malmö 2001).

**Permanently employed during a whole year, non-European immigrants and people born in Sweden 1990 - 1997 (SOU 2000:37 p. 33)**



There is no doubt that these data, at least to some extent, reflect forces of exclusion and discrimination operating in more or less subtle manner in the labor market. On the whole Nordic citizens appear to be accepted whereas non-European citizens, and particularly blacks and Muslims, encountering considerable difficulties in finding jobs. Generally it can be said that they are the last to get a job and, in times of economic recession, the first to lose them. One labor market researcher expressed it in a TV interview: "In times of economic boom 'they' get the jobs that the Swedes do not want to have, and in times of recession 'they' get the unemployment the Swedes do not want to have".

Even if the situation on the labor market for the second-generation immigrants, as one labor market researcher expressed it "is not completely dark" it is considerably worse than for children with two traditionally Swedish parents. Immigrant youth who arrived in Sweden before the age of six years, and have succeeded in getting a job, are further estimated to run a fifty percent higher risk of getting laid off than youth in their own age cohort with two traditionally Swedish parents. The equivalent figure for youth born in Sweden with at least one parent born abroad is thirty percent. These figures have been arrived at after standardizing for education level, grade average, competence in the Swedish language, the socio economic position of their families, and the status of their housing area. According to figures reported on TV (December 2002) these figures have turned for the worse during the last years.

According to, among other, Aria (1999) this situation is particularly problematic as it creates and reinforces attitudes of "it does not matter how hard I try and work in school, and how good grades I get, I will still not get a decent job because I am a black



or Muslim immigrant” in many Muslim youths (cf. also Rojas 1995). To see your, in many cases well-educated, father and mother getting their job applications constantly rejected and, if they succeed in finding a job, it is most likely to be in an unskilled position in a factory, in a cleaning service or in the retail trade,<sup>71</sup> is very demoralizing for your study and work ethics. It is a situation that convinces many children of immigrants that education for them is not an advantage for getting a better life. Many researches, like Aria (1999), see a direct link between educated parents that can not get a job or working in unskilled jobs and low school achievements and high unemployment levels for young immigrants. The young immigrants seem to “inherit” their parents (un)employment status. Aria (1999) conclude that there are indications that the existing exclusion mechanisms in the Swedish society are creating a vicious circle that traps immigrants in a chain of low education and unemployment.

These, largely structural, problems are, according to our informants, frequently reinforced by the fact that many employers of Muslim workers are insensitive to Muslim religious needs and demands, such as a proper place to practice *salat* and time off work to do so, a few hours off work on Fridays to go to the mosque for *salat al-Juma*, leave to celebrate *Eid al-Fitr* and *Eid al-Adha*, *halal* food in the canteen, their women wearing *hijab* at work, and other problems along these lines.

This situation is extra problematic, as it in turn tends to reinforce negative stereotypes and prejudiced views of immigrants as being unwilling to work and only wanting to benefit from the social welfare system (cf. *Jihad i folkhemet*).

You do not need to be a true believer in deprivation theory to realize that this kind of development, among the Muslims, speaks for a development of “ghetto-Islam” rather than for “Euro-Islam” (Karlsson 1994, 2002).

The situation described above, on the basis of research, is very clearly corroborated and strongly reinforced by our informants. There is in principle total agreement among our Muslim informants that Muslims are extremely victimized and excluded on the labor market. The very fact of being identified as Muslim is, according to them, a serious obstacle when it comes to finding employment. As one informant expressed it: “Many women say that a woman has to be twice as competent as a man to get a job. That might be true, but a Muslim has to be five times as competent to get that job.” They also agree that attitudes towards Muslims held by gatekeepers in the Swedish society, some of which has been discussed in other parts of this report, plays a major role for this situation. Most of our Muslim informants also underscores that their problems on the labor market is not confined to that of finding employment. As employees they keep facing a whole sting of problems, some of which has already been touched upon, including everything from receiving a lack of respect for their culture, religion and life style to being suspected of being anti-modern, reactionary, fundamentalist, or for supporting such ideas. Several informants have expressed their view of the matter in ways like: “Sometimes they run horror stories in the Swedish media about the situation of Muslims on the labor market. The normal reaction from most Swedes to those is ‘It can’t be this bad in Sweden, it must be some Muslim propaganda.’ Even if most Muslims recognize themselves in most of these reports,

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<sup>71</sup> Which, given the levels of the welfare benefits, is not even always an economically rational choice.

their normal reaction is more like 'Even if the depicted reality is bad, the *real* reality is much worse'. Let us here, again, repeat the perhaps obvious fact that the important factor determining attitudes, including behaviors, of people is not how a particular reality is (if such a thing there is) but how the participants in the reality in question believe and experience it to be (Thomas 1928:572).

The extent to which immigrants participate in the labor market and are employed/unemployed are important indicators of "labor market integration". They are, however, as we have seen not the only ones. Another important indicator is to what extent those who do find employment get jobs that correspond to their level of education and work experience, i.e. the quality of their labor market integration. In this respect their integration is also very poor: only 39% of the immigrants with an academic education have a job corresponding to their education (Berggren & Omarsson 2002). Yet another indicator is to what extent they receive equal outcome (incomes, influence over their work situation, chance for promotion, etc.) from their participation that are comparable with the rest of the population. Here the figures are also showing poor and decreasing integration.<sup>72</sup>

Another significant difference between Swedish-born and foreign-born is the working conditions. The foreign-born more often have more physically strenuous and monotonous jobs, which leads to higher absence due to illness. This can be illustrated by number of days of sickness benefit paid. In 1990 the figures for foreign born citizens were as much as seventy percent higher than for Swedish citizens, 42 days/year for Swedes versus 27 days for immigrants (SOU 1996:55:106). The sickness rate of women was higher than the rate for men. This difference stays basically the same even at a more detailed level of analysis. For example: Swedish-born women employed in the cleaning sector had 36 days of sick leave per year compared with 59 days for foreign-born women in the same sector. Work accidents and work related illnesses are also more common among men and women of foreign background. The foreign-born also to a much larger extent than Swedish-born have been granted an early retirement pension.<sup>73</sup> Differences between nationalities were also found. Women who were born in southern Europe had, for example, the highest sick leave figures per year, 82 days. Swedish women had only 28 days. Another study on migrants residing

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<sup>72</sup> In 1993 the average family income in households where both grown ups were born outside Sweden and at least the man outside of Europe was forty-two percent of the family income in families with both grown ups born in Sweden. After correction for various subsidies and benefits given to "the poor", this figure is fifty-five percent (SOU 1996:55 p 98). To put these figures in perspective it must also be said that this income difference has increased rather than decreased over the years. For example: in 1974 migrant men had three percent less income than men born in Sweden. In 1981 the difference had increased to eight percent and in 1991 the difference was 14 percent, and the development on the labor market during the 90s indicates this difference has continued, if not accelerated. This differences, furthermore, only measure the difference in income between people who have a job. If we include unemployed and people outside the work force, the differences become even higher. These differences is also striking concerning foreign-born academics, even when they hold Swedish diplomas (Skr. 2001/02:129). Again, these averages hide significant differences in terms of country of origin. And, again, they follow the same pattern we saw for labor market participation. In the bottom of the income list we have families with background in Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Somalia (SOU 2000:37, Ch. 7; Ds 2000:69; SOU 2001:54; Berggren & Omarsson 2001).

<sup>73</sup> Integrationsverket, Rapport Integration 2001, p.104

in the area of Stockholm shows a similar tendency. Approximately 75 percent of Greek women between 50-64 years of age were receiving disability pensions or sickness allowance. For Yugoslavian women the figures were 60 percent and 35 percent for women from Turkey, compared to only 15 percent for Swedish women.

The Swedish labor market is to a large and seemingly increasing extent segregated, not only between men and women but also between natives and foreign-born. There are even noticeable tendencies towards segregation between different ethnic groups, with the dark-skinned and the Muslims the most segregated. In SOU 1996:55:107 the situation of the immigrants on the labor market is summarized as being characterized by "high employment, overrepresentation in heavy, dirty and/or stressful jobs without career possibilities".

### **Self-employment**

Another factor that according to researchers can be seen as both a result and cause of segregation and exclusion on the labor market is self-employment. Self-employment is by many seen, not so much as a free choice as the only alternative to being unemployed or working in a low low-status, low-paid profession.

In his study of self-employed Iranians in Gothenburg, Abbasian (2000: 104 - 106), for example, claim that self-employment is increasing the segregation among migrants. Self-employment among migrants, according to Abbasian, both conceals, strengthens and justifies the already existing discrimination in the labor market. This discriminatory aspect in particular concerns the foreign-born academics, who do not obtain employment according to their skills and qualifications. Migrants rarely receive financial support from society compared to Swedish self-employed. They are also treated unfairly because of lack of references. Therefore, they have to establish in non-sheltered branches of businesses and their businesses remain small enterprises. They also pay a high price in proportion to the results, as they have to work hard for a low turn-over. This increases both physical and mental strain for the self-employed migrants.

There are, however, also positive arguments for self-employment, such as it is an opportunity for migrants who risk being unemployed to take part in society. Self-employment is a way to break isolation, social exclusion and marginalization for migrants. In addition, it is a cheap alternative for society to create employment for unemployed migrants, as self-employed migrants do not require financial support from society. The self-employed migrants also create employment for other people, that may be unemployed, mostly relatives. Migrant self-employment also opens up ethnic Swedes' eyes to other countries, thus contributing somewhat to the diversity of society.

Considering the pros and cons of self-employment, Abbasian concludes that self-employment is not a good measure of integration, but that it is rather increasing the ethnic segregation in the labor market.

This is a conclusion supported by Ålund (2002) who calls self-employment among migrants "neo-slavery", as it constitutes the new economy's insecure and low-paid

service-sector within a hierarchy of branches of professions. The main branches are restaurants, barbershops and dry-cleaners. According to Ålund, it is the fact that they are immigrants that forces them into self-employment within these low-paid sectors, which in its turn will add to the segregation of the economy. The ethnic self-employment is thus reflecting the advantages and disadvantages of the globalized world. In addition, Ålund states that we must realize that migrants do not automatically want to work in these branches of businesses, but that it is the only last alternative for many of them to avoid unemployment or being dependant on society for financial support. To run one's own business is mainly a way to escape unemployment.

Support for this opinion can be found in the fact that since the migrants' situation in the labor market greatly deteriorated in the beginning of the 1990s, the number of self-employed immigrants have been tripled.<sup>74</sup> In 1999, every fifth business was established by a person of migrant background. 13 percent of these were born abroad and the rest were born in Sweden by parents of foreign origin, to a great extent of a non-European background. Most of these self-employed businesses run by migrants are rather small, aiming at local markets and rarely profitable. The main branches are small convenience stores, restaurants, cleaning services and barbershops.

In summary: the general picture we have gotten from the research we have consulted, as well as from what we have heard from our informants, indicates that the labor market integration on all these accounts is not only disastrously poor but that it during the last decades has gone from bad to worse.

What can be the reasons for this?

Extremely simplified we believe that the various cultural and structural explanations suggested in the literature can be rephrased in terms of two different ways of looking at immigrants and other minorities on the labor market (as well as within other areas of society). One is in terms of difficulties and problems and one is in terms of assets, possibilities and resources.

According to the first (and in Sweden so far strongly dominating) perspective immigrants are lacking or have too little of certain properties – for example knowledge, skill and competence in the Swedish language and the Swedish culture. At the same time they are often also considered to have too much of other characteristics – mainly too many characteristics from their “culture of origin”, for example religion (mainly Islam), views on gender and dependence on authority.<sup>75</sup>

Upholders of this perspective take their point of departure in characteristics of the immigrants, the supply side of labor to the market. That's where the problem lies. As soon as the problem is so identified, identified as being with “them”, the way to solve it also becomes obvious: “we” have to integrate (read: adapt) “them” with the help of more courses, educations, social workers, etc.

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<sup>74</sup> Integrationsverket. Rapport Integration 2001, p.105

<sup>75</sup> For a little more complete list of characteristics and traits of Western cultures (which are the ones “we” believe they are lacking) and of Muslim cultures (which are the ones “we” experience “they” have too much of), see Sitaram & Cogdell 1976: 191.

According to the second (and in Sweden so far not particularly prominent) perspective, focus is on what “they” have that the majority population is lacking. They have, for example, language skills, cultural competences, and various knowledge of the political, judicial, economical and social situation of many markets of interest to Swedish businesses as well as knowledge and skills that make them suitable to deal with the increased market of consumers and clients with non-Swedish cultural backgrounds living in Sweden.

Advocators of this perspective take their point of departure in attitudinal and structural properties of the Swedish labor market and its various gatekeepers, i.e. of the demand side of the market. When the problem is so identified other solutions are the ones that looks the most promising.

Even though the first perspective, as far as we can judge, still is the dominating one among the various gatekeepers in Sweden, there has, as we have seen, during the last few years been a number of positive signs indicating that there is a change going on. There has, for example, come a series of initiatives, statements and documents from The Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications in connection with the, by the Ministry 1999 initiated, *Diversity project*.<sup>76</sup>

The project can be said to have been designed and carried out in the spirit of the so-called Managing Diversity Philosophy (Ansari 1995; Carr-Ruffino 1996; Cox 1993, 1997; Cross 2000; Kirton 2000; Kossek & Lobel 1996; Thomas 1991, 1996, 1999; Wong 2001). The Managing Diversity Philosophy can be said to have as one of its goals to make gatekeepers and others change – and not only in words – from, in our earlier terminology, a problem perspective to a possibility perspective in their view of diversity. It is in other words, as we have argued about integration – a strategy to increase – rather than decrease – diversity in the various areas and institutions of society as well as in society at large.

Let us – given this resemblance between the basic idea behind the Managing Diversity philosophy and the theory behind integration as we see it, and that we therefore believe such a discussion can have importance for many of the central issues regarding Muslims in Sweden – expand a bit on this comparison.<sup>77</sup>

One of the main arguments forwarded for such a policy is functional (in the wide sense): it is, among other things, believed to unleash and increase creativity, flexibility, learning, organizational and individual growth as well as the ability to adjust to new and changing circumstances in the areas of society that become pluralized. These arguments are often summed up by advocates for Managing Diversity policies by slogans such as: “The probability for intelligent and creative decisions stand in direct proportion to the number of different perspectives involved in the decision process” and “If two people in a deciding body are thinking in the same way, a least one of

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<sup>76</sup> Most of the written material from the project, including debate articles by the ministers and other in the newspapers, can be found at [www.naring.regeringen.se/mangfald/info.htm](http://www.naring.regeringen.se/mangfald/info.htm). The main results from the project are published in Ds 2000:69a and Ds 2000:69b.

<sup>77</sup> In the rest of this section we will speak about managing diversity, integration, and multiculturalism mainly on the institutional level, as for example day care centers, schools and work places. Similar considerations are, however, *mutatis mutandis*, relevant on the societal level, i.e. for whole nations.

them is superfluous”, and “The most important factor for the long term survival of any group is its level of knowledge and competence diversity”.<sup>78</sup>

Attempts to bring in people with different national, cultural, ethnical or religious backgrounds into an institution without being prepared to make significant changes in the organization of the institution and its "culture" will however most often backfire and only bring about heightening tensions, an increased number of problems and conflicts which result in various processes that will be hindering rather than increasing the performance of the institution.

Integration and multiculturalism, according to here sketched way of thinking, do, in other words, go beyond a mere increasing of the number of different national, ethnic, etc. groups in the institution. This is merely the first step. If not followed by a proper strategy for managing the new diversity it is, however, likely to backfire.

What a process of multiculturalization brings is not just individuals with "other" cultural, etc. backgrounds but a pluralization of perspectives, ways of thinking and doing things, norm and value systems, including approaches on how to look at and think about the function and goals of the institution itself as well as how you shall go about to reach its goals. The same is, *mutatis mutandis*, true on a societal level.

That is why these people often are experienced by the majority to challenge basic assumptions about how the organization (ought to) function, its goals and strategies, its operations, practices, priorities, and procedures.

In doing so they can, as we have argued, either be seen as creating problems and conflicts – a view that often set in motion a vicious circle – or (which is less common) be seen as providing fresh and interesting new approaches – a view that often can set in motion a virtuous circle.

They must realize that both Sweden and the world around us have changed - and is most likely going to continue changing even more - and that these changes demand that they have to give up many cherished ideas and opinion, that they have to be prepared to change and think in new ways if they are going to be able to cope with this new and changing reality in an effective and profitable way.

Our claim that Sweden, Swedish institutions and the Swedes will have to change in the direction of a true acceptance of integration and multiculturalism does not, however, include the claim that this will be easy or painless. It will not. It will, at least in the short term, bring with it costs in both social and economic terms. It is, however, our strong belief that these short-term costs will turn out to be a long-term investment.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> These, and equivalent slogans, are based on results from creativity research which claims, among other things, that adaptability and flexibility are among the main characteristics of long term survival for individuals as well as groups. This in turn follows from an often-employed definition of “creative thought” as “the process whereby one’s cognitive structures are changed towards greater flexibility and adaptation through greater differentiation and integration”. That similar thoughts can be used on the societal level should be argued later.

<sup>79</sup> This chapter has, although in a sketchy way, indicated and dealt with *some* aspects and problems of relevancy for a general theory of integration and multiculturalism. There are, of course, many more.

## The future of the Swedish labor market

During the next 15 years there are two major changes that will affect the immigrants position on the labor market. One is that the Swedish population is aging. The other one is, as we have seen, that the proportion of people with foreign background will increase. In 2015 approximately two million, or more than one in five, Swedes will be 65 years of age and above (Näringsdepartementet Ds 2000:69). This implies a decrease in the labor force with a start 2008. In 2030 it is estimated to be 200 000 fewer people of working age in the population (DS 2000:69:29). In the period up to 2015 the number of non immigrated Swedes will decrease in the work force. The estimated increase in the work force during this period of roughly 200 000 will almost totally be made up of men and women with foreign back ground. To safe guard the social security and welfare of the increasing number of pensioners, Sweden will, as it is more and more frequently argued (for example by Lindgren 2002, Ekberg & Wallen 2002) in the ongoing debate, need more, not fewer immigrants. The same arguments are, however, also coming from government sources (Ds 2000:69; Scocco 2002). Scocco argues that in order to stabilize the rate of economic growth Sweden has to increase the number of labor migrants to approximately 45.000 persons every year until 2050. This is the same number of migrants that Sweden had in the 1970's. If Sweden wants to do more than stabilize its economic growth, even larger numbers of immigrants are needed (Svenskt Näringsliv 2001). Since there will be a labor shortage within the whole industrialized world, Scocco states that the only areas that can provide Europe with labor force is North and Sub-Saharan Africa and South East Asia. However, since there are many unemployed migrants today in Sweden, he also suggests that it is necessary, to show social and political responsibility, that the employers already now starts to show that they can utilize the immigrated labor force already in existence in the country. At the recent conference *Labor supply and diversity – local to global* in Göteborg this fall (2002) these predictions were confirmed by every speaker.

## Housing

From the trivial fact that an individuals or a households ability to choose their place (where and how) to live is closely connected with their solvency, in combination with the facts that, as we shall see, most immigrants, and especially those with background in Africa and Asia, are worth off on the labor market than the average Swede and the connected fact that their incomes, as we will see below, are lower we can expect to find individuals and households from these groups over represented in areas of poorer living conditions, in so-called disadvantaged areas. The *Commission on Housing Policy* (Bostadspolitiska utredningen) defines this as:

Disadvantaged areas are areas in which a characteristically large portion of residents lack socioeconomic resources, are born abroad, and exhibit lower health standards than the average population as a whole. The areas concerned are for the most part those built during the time of the *Miljonprogram* [a housing program designed to create a million new homes] and are almost exclusively under the management of municipal housing corporations. ... The large-scale aspect, anonymity, lack of security, low quality standards, lack of services and transit, etc., that are often features of these disadvantaged areas, contribute to further impair the area's living conditions

and opportunities available to its inhabitants. Harsh living conditions combined with a sense of inability to influence one's own situation can lead to feelings of powerlessness and exclusion (SOU 1996:156).

If we look at how the immigrants are distributed in Stockholm, Göteborg and Malmö this prediction is also clearly brought out in reality. Stockholm is divided into 18 administrative areas, Göteborg 21 and Malmö 10. Of these three to four in each city have a large part of their housing in so-called "*miljonprogrammshus*", a kind of public housing projects built from the mid 1960s to the mid 1970s, normally huge houses built in pre-fabricated concrete elements in the city outskirts. Here is also where we find the immigrant households over represented. In 1990 around twenty-five percent of all the immigrant households lived in these areas, as compared with just over ten percent for Swedish households. From 1990 the social and economic situation of these specific areas deteriorated dramatically. Unemployment figures rose, employment in other programs fell, and dependence on public assistance increased sharply. An example of this development is Rosengården in Malmö, where the numbers of people in employment programs dropped from forty-eight percent to eight percent between 1990 and 1995. During the same period the number of welfare recipients increased to the extent that seventy-five percent were receiving public assistance. Similar developments were seen in other disadvantaged areas in Stockholm and Göteborg.

Parallel with this deterioration of the social and economic development in these areas the proportion of immigrants in them rose. Today close to a third of the immigrant households live in these areas. Just to give some examples: the immigrant population of the district of Rinkeby in Stockholm was in 1993 sixty percent. Today it is seventy-five percent, mainly from Turkey, Somalia and Iraq. The equivalent figures for Tensta is fifty-three percent (1993) and sixty-five percent (2000), and for Kista thirty-three percent (1993) and forty-seven percent (2000). In Göteborg the areas with highest proportion of immigrants are Bergsjön, Lärjedalen, Gunnared and Biskopsården with forty-eight percent, forty-five percent, forty-one percent and thirty-six percent respectively. As in Stockholm these figures have increased during the 1990s, despite many verbal assurances from the both local and national politicians to turn the situation around. A similar development can be seen in Malmö where the proportion immigrants in their most immigrant dense area, Rosengården, have increased from fifty percent in 1993 to eighty-four percent in 2000. As in the rest of the areas mentioned the groups with the highest geographical concentration/segregation patterns are the groups with background in Africa (above all Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea) and Asia (above all Turkey, Iran and Iraq), which is also the main backgrounds of the Swedish Muslim population. We think it can fairly safely be claimed that almost all of the above mentioned increase in the population of immigrants in these areas are from areas dominated by Muslim culture and religious traditions.

Another way of showing the same thing is by looking at how large a percentage of a particular group that is living in the three most immigrant dense parts of a city. If we start by Stockholm we get the following results: Somalia sixty-one percent, Turkey fifty-seven percent, Iraq fifty-one percent, Iran forty-nine percent, and Ethiopia forty-nine percent; and for Göteborg: Iraq fifty-five percent, Somalia fifty-four percent, Ethiopia thirty-eight percent, Iran thirty-one percent, and for the Turks, if we



substitute Gunnared for Biskopsgården, sixty-two percent; and for Malmö: Iraq eighty-two percent, Turkey and Somalia seventy-nine percent, and Ethiopia fifty-nine percent. These figures are from 1993. Today's figure would for most of the mentioned groups, with the exemption of the Turks, most likely be considerably higher.

The population of these areas is also very transient. Approximately half of the 1990 population had moved to a different area by 1995. This mobility is, however, to very high extent mobility within the social hierarchy of the immigrant dense, disadvantaged areas rather than away from them. As the Swedes moved out of the "better parts" of these areas, the older immigrants took their places, and new immigrants filled the spaces left vacant. The socio-economic status and lack of recourses of these areas was thereby intensified.

## Health care

Results from an investigation conducted by Socialstyrelsen 1997 showed that professional training in general does not prepare health care providers for intercultural encounters on an appropriate level. A volume *Mångkulturell sjukvård. En lärarhandledning för läkarutbildningen* (Multicultural Health Care. A Teachers' Guide for Medical Schools) was published in 1999, containing both a general orientation about relevant questions, primarily from a medical anthropological perspective, and some practical examples of cases where cultural differences play a role. The book offers a bibliography and addresses to institutions dealing with cultural diversity in health care, both in Sweden and abroad.

As in many other respects, Swedish authorities admit the cultural/ethnic diversity of patients within the national health care system as well as the necessity of taking such diversity into consideration, but the definition of different groups is seldom made in religious terms. References to "immigrants", "intercultural encounters" or even different nationalities are usual, albeit with the reservation that each patient is an individual, with specific background, experiences and needs. In this sense, all patients - both Swedes and immigrants - have to be approached in the same manner:

"Socio-cultural identity is not exclusively the attribute of patients of non-Swedish heritage. Also the Swedish-born population has many different attitudes to health and illness. A higher level of consciousness about human beings as the products of their culture (kulturella varelser) is valuable in communication with any patient" (SoS 1999:13:11).

Therefore, not easy to recognize measures addressing problems that are specifically related to Islam or Muslims. Nevertheless, the recognition of diversity of the patients' needs can be relevant for the Muslim minority whenever they have expectations from the health care system different from that of the majority. Some obvious examples are connected to food and to the gender of the health care providers.

There are basically two main areas where Muslim patients may have specific needs in their contact with health care intuitions. The first - mostly within the somatic part of health care - is related to the practical routines and rules of everyday life: food,

clothing, contact between men and women, religious practices. The second - primarily within the area psychiatry - is related to the presumptions of the role and functions of the individual and of the different social groups around him.

Let us start with the questions of practical routine and health care.

**Food:** According to our interviews, most hospitals in Sweden do take consideration to the patient's wishes concerning food - religious restrictions are not more problematic to follow than vegetarian and other diets. In extreme cases, e.g. when a patient refuses to eat food containing even a trace of forbidden ingredients, e.g. certain preservative agents (there is an official list at *Konsumentverket* about these), then relatives are allowed to provide food.

The doctor we interviewed claims that in general the staff have an understanding attitude towards these wishes. However, one cannot be sure that problems related to food restrictions are completely eliminated. Our informant pointed out that a patient's refusal to eat can be attributed to poor appetite when in reality it is due to the patient's insecurity about the ingredients. Better knowledge about religious food restrictions is required to eliminate such oversights.

**Clothing:** Physical investigation and certain treatments claim that Muslim women take off their head-scarf, which might, in some cases, be met by unwillingness or refusal. Again, a well informed staff can avoid controversy by simple means, e.g. avoiding to have male persons in the room, or replacing the scarf with e.g. a surgical cap used by doctors. The same applies for **gender relations:** if possible, physical investigation is to be conducted by someone of the same sex.

Times for prayer do not seem to cause problems for Muslim patients. Several hospitals have a specific room for prayer and meditation where people of any religious faith are welcome. If asked for, an imam is invited instead of the priest who is usually attached to larger hospitals.

Our interviews - and the literature - suggest that such demands by Muslim patients are not unknown within Swedish health care, although there is a need for further information in these matters.

These issues also lead to the question whether it would be advisable to organize health care institutions - polyclinics, hospitals - specializing for Muslim patients. The question is controversial. Some informants claim that the individualized approach to patients will by definition cover the needs of Muslim patients as well - it would be better to ensure that the staff is well informed about possible critical issues for different religions. At the same time, we have heard of ideas or plans to start Muslim health centers, e.g. attached to mosques.

There outlines of informal, ad hoc solutions are taking shape in our times, at least in the larger towns. The more doctors, dentists, etc of Muslim background are starting their professional life in Sweden, the more possibility there will be for Muslim patients to get medical help from persons who understand their specific claims. There are still some organisatory questions to address: from the doctors' part, being attached to the national health service, from the patient's part, the right to freely choose their doctors and hospitals.

Within the area of mental (psychiatric) health care, the issues are more complicated and more difficult to tackle. It is also more difficult for us, researchers within this project, to present the problems in their full complexity. The interviews and round table discussions have pointed to certain problems, but we have to make some reservations in reporting them, since we lack the professional knowledge within the area of psychiatry. Therefore, our discussion here does not intend to go deeper than a general outline of some main questions. (The discussion here is heavily relying on our interview with Dr. Al Baldawi.)

We have to emphasize - together with our informants - that the differences between patients from the Muslim minority and the Swedish majority are not related to Islam as a religion. The root of the problem of Muslim patients within the Swedish psychiatric health care is a basic difference in the view of the individual. Whereas the Western culture has adopted a very strong (and Sweden an extremely strong) individualistic view, most Muslim patients come from societies where an individual's identity is based on his/her belonging to a group. This group is primarily the family (often in a broader sense, i.e. not only the nuclear family), with further contacts into the ethnic and/or religious community. A person's identity is defined by his/her place, connections, rights and duties within the group.

As a consequence, the psychological difficulties of a person with an identity deeply rooted in a group cannot be treated on an individual basis. Not even if the problems - as sometimes is the case for Muslim youngsters who are torn between the two cultures they have to live with - are in a sense related to the group he/she is the member of. According to our informant, Swedish authorities, welfare and nursing staff are so deeply rooted in the Swedish (Western) individualistic ideals that they cannot offer adequate counseling in these cases. They attempt to help the patient by strengthening his/her autonomous individuality, often by cutting off their ties to their family and group. But for a person who is not equipped with the right strategies, independence leads to isolation and loneliness. At the same time the family (group) gets "mutilated" by losing a member and often turns against the individual. The treatment causes more harm than good.

The actual width of such problems are difficult to assess. Also, it is a question demanding deeper discussions whether the national health and social care of a country should or could be equipped with competence dealing with different Weltanschauungs, to adopt different views of what individual freedom and self-accomplishment should mean for persons from different backgrounds. In concrete cases, if it is realistic to expect from a professional to help some (preferably Swedish-born) patients to more individual freedom and independence and at the same time help some other (preferably immigrant) patients to reconcile with their family and religious/ethnic group. In an ideal world, an individualized health and social care could probably cope with the problem and provide help to both those with a more individualistic and to those with more group-oriented personal background. Again, special training and a greater diversity among the health care providers - i.e. more doctors, social workers, and counselors with minority background might be part of the solution.

Another question is whether some independence from Swedish institutions for such professionals would be advisable. Is there a realistic chance that a non-Swedish view of the individual could be applied within the frames of a Swedish institution. The issue is sometimes complicated by questions of feministic goals, women's rights, children's rights (strongly advocated by Swedish establishment and public opinion) on the one hand and the right of the family (strongly advocated by Muslim - and other religious - groups) on the other.

In our investigations, we met one example of an independent, private psychiatric institute, led by a psychiatrist with immigrant background who also works within the public sector. His idea has been to create a Swedish institution that provides treatment to patients of primarily of non-Western origin and to "be a bridge" between immigrant patients and Swedish authorities. The institution is not getting any help from the state or the municipality, their application to get attached to the National Health Service has been refused. Although religion is not a principle of selection for the clinic, many of the patients are Muslims, who hope to get more adequate help from a person who is familiar with their culture than from the regular Swedish institutions. Patients have to pay full price, which is a considerable hinder for the activity.

## **The Police and Criminal justice system**

To combat racism and discrimination the Swedish police have initiated a work to recruit people with foreign background into the police force. Even though this initiative so far has met with very moderate success, it is, at least according to the police themselves, going in the right direction. During the last years the number of people with a foreign background who have applied to the police academy have been 14-16 percent. How many of those that have had "Muslim background" we have not been able to determine. These low numbers is a problem as it, accord to the academy, is important for the force to represent the whole population and not only the "Swedes". According to the available statistical figures it is not possible to calculate the number of people with Muslim background working in the police force at the moment. According to spokespersons for the police the number is, however, very low.<sup>80</sup>

Like in so many other countries in the European union, there is often a strong distrust between the police and the Muslim community. To bridge this gap the police and the Swedish Muslim council (*Sveriges Muslimska Råd*) has tried to educate and inform both policemen and Muslims. To do so they had a formal gathering in the central Mosque in Stockholm in 2001. Even though this is not enough, it was an important manifestation while it showed that both sides are willing to combat distrust and bad attitudes against Muslims and policemen. According to Mahmoud Aldebe many Muslims distrust the police force, not so much because their experiences in Sweden, but because they have a background in countries and regions in which the police to a large extent are doing the errands of a corrupt regime rather than working for its people. This is an important issue that must be understood and addressed by the police if they want to improve there image and status among Muslims. At the same

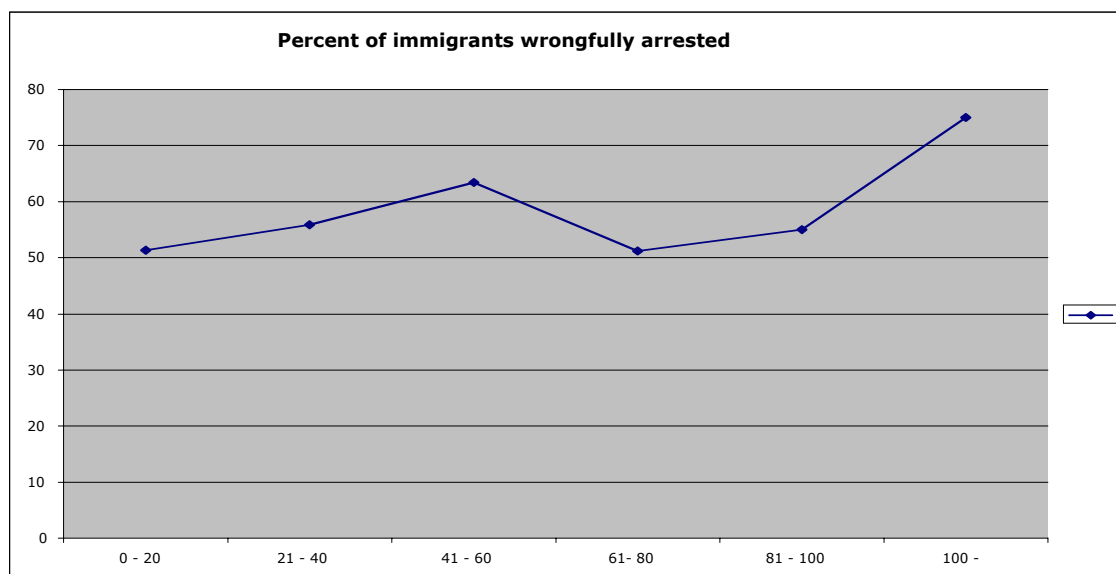
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<sup>80</sup> Telephone interview with Staffan Kellerberg at the Rikspolisstyrelsen (informationsdirektör), 4/4 2002.

time many young Muslims born and raised in Sweden seem to be very sensitive to discrimination and racism. Unlike some times their parents, they are not willing to accept a secondary and inferior status or different treatment as compared to "Swedes". From this point of view it is essential for the police force to combat racism and discrimination within the force by, among other things, educate themselves in the areas race-relation, intercultural communications, etc. as well as to employ more Muslims. According to our informants this problem is acknowledged at the police academy, but much work remains to be done before the goal is reached.

At the same time, during the three round table meetings our discussions with both Muslims and educators from the police academy showed that the police had a fairly low level of multicultural knowledge and competence as well as of acceptance for Muslim demands. This was clearly illustrated by their reactions to the Muslim demand to be able to, for example, wear a headscarf in the field. According to the police this question has never even been raised at the academy. But if a person would like to become a police officer and use a headscarf this is, of course, an issue that has to be taken in to consideration. At the moment the problem is made impossible by the present regulations for the police uniform, which is not considered to easy to change. According to the police this is, however, at the moment not a major issue, the real issue is to recruit new policemen and women from the Muslim community at all.

We have recently (2002) been given some preliminary data from ongoing research which indicates that the claims of Muslims, as well as by other "visible" minority groups, to be victims of "special" negative treatment by the police, as well as other instances of the judicial system, should be taken with some seriousness. An investigation made by the National Council for Crime Prevention (*Brottsförebyggande Rådet*) shows, for example, that individuals from immigrant groups to a high extent are overrepresented among people who are taken into custody or detained without being prosecuted or without being found guilty at their trials. Among the 1 850 individuals that since 2000 has been granted compensation payment for being wrongfully put into custody or detained fifty three percent had immigrant background. Among these of those who had spent more than 100 days in custody before being released seventy five percent had immigrant background.



Given that the relative size of this group in the population as a whole is around 20 percent, these are high figures. This figures indicate, according to Jerzy Sarnecki, professor of criminology, clearly that this group is victim of discrimination.<sup>81</sup>

Preliminary results from another ongoing research project at the department of law of Stockholm university indicates that this negative special treatment seems to apply to the whole "judicial process". Individuals from visible minorities seems to, everything else being equal, run a higher risk of being arrested and of being prosecuted and sentenced than non immigrants. It also seems that they run the risk of being sentenced on less strong evidence than non immigrants and to receive a more severe sanction or punishment in relation to a give crime than non immigrants.

### Prison service

Compared to for example Great Britain it is not possible to count the number of prisoners who have a Muslim background. This kind of statistical information is against the Swedish law. Thus it is only possible to get a figure on citizenship.

Examples for the need for Imams in public social areas have been mentioned in our interviews in connection with prisons and hospitals. Both of these institutions have traditionally employed priests (chaplains). To employ imams on similar conditions, as far as we know, has not come into question. The Muslim clientele is not large enough for such a solution. Besides, due to the heterogeneity of the Muslim population in Sweden, it is more suitable to, whenever necessary, invite imams matching the clients' ethnic and linguistic background. The common language is a problematic point, especially when the imam not being a permanent resident in Sweden and does not speak Swedish.

Immigrants, among them many from Muslim countries, are doing time in Swedish prisons. We have no data about how many of them are "religious" or "ethnic" Muslims

<sup>81</sup> Interview in the Swedish radio 17.10.2002.

respectively, but among these prisoners "there is a great need of mental support (själavård), conversation about both existential and practical questions", says a representative from Caritas, Nino von Reisen. In his opinion, prison chaplains are not always appropriate for these contacts. Imams, preferably from the prisoners' home country should be available, with whom they share a common frame of reference. Expressions from a Christian discourse, like the crusade against drugs, for instance, can meet with strong disapproval.

During the last decade the Prison and Probation Service has increased their knowledge about discrimination and issues related to multiculturalism. Due to the fact that the number of prisoners with a non-Swedish cultural or ethnic background has increased it has become necessary to focus these issue. To combat discrimination active steps has been taken to make the staff more multicultural. At most prison institutions in Sweden it is today possible to practice a religious life. Thus it is possible for Muslims to pray five times a day and halal food do no normally present a problem if that is wanted. However, it is often problematic to celebrate Ramadan because of the fact that the food is served at fixed hours. This, according to prison officials, is difficult to change because an alteration could have an impact on the security in the prison. Even though it is important to include imams in the pastoral care at Swedish prisons this is difficult according to the Prison and Probation Service, because it is difficult to get in contact with imams.

The material from the interviews and discussions suggest that groups working with social services within Christian congregations, (Swedish Church as well as Free Churches), who already have well functioning routines and contacts with prisons, hospitals, schools and other institutions should develop better cooperation with Muslim communities in these matters. Such cooperation could open channels between Swedish institutions and imams.

## **The military**

Sweden has a compulsory military service that means that all Swedish males are drafted if they are physically and mentally fit. Due to the general economical situation and changes in the local and international political climate the number of drafted males is falling. This is the general trend for the last ten years.

The military sector is to our knowledge seldom, if ever, discussed in relation to the Muslim community and its male population even though the military service is often described as a rites de passage for a boy to become a man. To do ones service in the military could also be seen as an important aspect of the individual's loyalty for the so-called Swedish identity and nationalism. Thus the military service seems to fulfill an important function when it comes to the integration into society as it form young men into Swedes.

In Jörgen Kalmendal research on the Swedish compulsory military service it is however showed that males with a "foreign background" or a "foreign" name is unlikely to be drafted at all. If your name is Larsson or Svensson, two typical Swedish last names, you are more likely to be drafted than if your last name is Anwar or Khan. Only every fourth male with a so-called "foreign background" is drafted as compared

to every second young male born in Sweden with Swedish parents (Karmendal 2000: 38). According to Karmendal this result must be understood as a form of institutionalized discrimination. The negative process of selection and picking is from this perspective to the idea that the Swedish society should be open to all peoples no matter of ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious background. To our knowledge the Swedish Muslim community has so far not addressed this issue as a problem. Irrespective of that Karmendal's research illustrates the general impression that "foreigners" have more difficulties to find their place in the social system and its structures. According to Karmendal the military system is not open to diversity and to be able to adapt to the modern multicultural society the military system must change its conception of the "Swedish soldier". This critic goes as well for women taken part in the military system. Even though women have been accepted as officers for the last fifteen years only 350 women's are officers today. A figure that is low compared to the number of male officers. To Karmendal this figure could be explained by the fact that the military system holds strong mechanisms of exclusion and discrimination. People not following the unwritten norms of the military system, for example, women's and young males with a foreign background, are therefore more likely to be targeted by discrimination (Karmendal 2000: 38).

### ***Specific Problems***

Let us now move on to some of the problems individual Muslims report facing in their day-to-day life in Sweden.<sup>82</sup> We limit these to a list of problems mentioned by a majority of our informants.

The problem almost always mentioned first is the lack of prayer halls (mosques and *musallas*). Particularly mentioned is the fact that many places with larger Muslim communities, like Göteborg, still do not have a "real" mosque. It is also fairly common that all, or at least most of, the blame for this shortcoming is placed on Sweden, its bureaucracy and its negative attitudes toward Islam. For anyone with insight into the now decade-long attempts to create "real" mosques in the Stockholm and Göteborg areas and others, it is obvious, however, that this is not the whole truth (Sander 1991, Karlsson & Svanberg 1995).

### **Cultural transmission of Islam between generations**

To be able to "survive" as Muslims in the long term in a non-Muslim environment it is of absolute necessity to guarantee the transmission of Islamic knowledge and Muslim culture via mosques and other institutions. All in all this seems to be the most important question for all Muslims interviewed for this project, independent of their ideological or theological preferences. Despite this fact the Swedish Muslims are much lacking mosques and other platforms enabling the transmission of Islamic knowledge to the next generation of Muslims growing up in Sweden. Even though negative opinions of the majority society are one important explanation for the intellectual

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<sup>82</sup> As these problems are, to a very high extent, the same as the problems faced by Muslims in other Western European countries, and fairly well discussed by now, we do not go into any detail here.



milieu this development must also include the Muslim side. On several levels the Muslim community in Sweden, as we have seen, is divided along ethnic, cultural and theological lines, which makes it more difficult to mobilize support for the building of mosques and other vital institutions. Even though this problem most likely will be solved by time it is necessary to guarantee a "safe" and "sound" transmission of the essential Islamic foundation for the next generation.

During both interviews and round table meetings Muslims from all groups and factions have expressed a concern for this issue. One way of solving this problem, according to several voices articulated in this project, is to create facilities for education of Swedish Imams. This is for example the single most important goal for the Swedish Islamic Academy, and they have started to develop a curriculum for such an education. The most direct problem is to find a balance between Swedish academic norms and standards on the one hand and Islamic norms and values on the other. Without recognition and support from the Swedish State<sup>83</sup> it will also be very difficult, but not impossible, to realize a Swedish educational program for Imams. But, as one of our informants expressed it: "if the Swedish state will not help finance it then, less acceptable countries, like Iran or Saudi Arabia will finance it instead and the Swedish Muslims should not need to turn to other countries" (K Baksi) The danger of "undesirable" influence via temporarily invited imams has been mentioned by several informants:

We more or less know that several imams who arrived here e.g. via Jordan have been trained to not only to propagate for (*dawua*) Islam. but also to recruit members for Islamic *Jihad* and Hamas ... that's why the education of Imams in Sweden has met with opposition, not only for Swedes but even by Islamic groups who are afraid that it would threaten their own activities ... it is a delicate question which shows that we in the long run really need qualified "home grown" imams in Sweden ... (von Reisen)

On the other hand, some of our Muslim informants are skeptical to imams trained within the Swedish system for higher education. Some Muslims, according to our informants, are suspicious that they would "represent the Swedish state", instead of representing the Muslim groups.

Nevertheless, the necessity of educating Swedish imams is obvious. There is also some competence in the country to start and run courses, and there are young Muslims who are interested. *Integrationsverket* (Integration Board) is interested in cooperation with *Högskoleverket* (National Agency for Higher Education) and with *Kulturrådet* (National Council for Cultural Affairs) to support the plans for starting higher education for imams.

Completing such a Swedish based education abroad, in a Islamic *madrasha*, is an idea that have comes up in the interviews.<sup>84</sup> Although some informants claim that there are young Muslims who show interest for studying to become an imam, representatives of the SST report that there is a "problem of recruitment in the communities for higher

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<sup>83</sup> So that the students can receive official university credits and degrees, can be eligible for student loans and grants, etc.

<sup>84</sup> This is in parallel with the education of priests for the Swedish Church, who spend their first four years of study in the "normal" state university but have to go through an additional year of confessional education which is run by the church itself.

education abroad". Only a handful has so far applied for grants for studies abroad, although there are financial resources for this purpose. There might be a number of reasons for this lack of interest. The situation may very well change if an accepted Swedish academic education was to be completed by a shorter study sojourn abroad.

Some practical questions in this connection that have been raised in the interviews are if there would be enough jobs for Swedish imams; how would they be financed; would the Swedish rules and regulations for higher education be observed in the admission procedures, e.g. would women have the right to take the same courses and qualify for being imams. (Some are against the thought of female imams of "traditional" reasons, others could easily accept it.)

To day the status of the Imams are very complicated or even depressing according to most informants. The major part of the Imams working in Sweden has a low level of theological and pastoral education, which make them poor producers of Islamic knowledge. In stead of helping the next generation to develop a platform for a so-called Swedish Islam - founded on both Islamic and Swedish norms and values - they creates often both tensions between Muslims and the Swedish society on the one hand and tensions within the Muslim community on the other. Instead of importing persons transmitting an Islamic knowledge from the "traditional" Muslim world it seems that many Muslims are looking for Islamic leaders who could give answers suitable for a Swedish context.

We Muslims in Sweden cannot live on answers to problems one has in Saudi Arabia or Cairo - we have our problems here that are not faced ... if an imam does not speak the language, if he is not familiar with the political construction of the country, then he probably cannot in his speech (sermon) address the problems we have ... it can impress the older generation, but the Muslims born here, for example my own daughter - for her I wish a modern Imam. (Al-Baldawi)

This is of course a difficult process for the Muslim community, similar trends could be found among all Muslim communities living in the Western Diaspora in Europe and USA. In this light a few Muslims in Sweden are talking about the necessity of developing a so-called Blue- and yellow Islam (an adjective alluding to the colors found in the Swedish flag). As already indicated the Muslim community in Sweden is much divided on this issue (cf. Larsson 2002).

Even though the differences between the first and second generation of Muslims living in Sweden should not be overtly exaggerated, there are vital differences. Generally it seems that the first generation who kept there religious way of life is more willing to accepting Islamic norms while the second generation of Muslims are questioning the same key norms and values. The reason for this development is complicated and manifold. First of all the second generation is born and raised in Sweden and they have been educated in accordance with the Swedish school system, which pays attention to critical thinking. Secondly, they are children of their own time. Typical for the young generation is that they seem to put the individual more in the center, not the collective norms and value systems. Thirdly, it seems that young Muslims are less willing to accept to live as second-class citizens as compared to Swedes. As a result they find it necessary to question some of the basic tenets held by the first generation. They could drop Islam as a suitable way of life or develop a method of interpretation that they find more suitable for achieving their goals

(Ramadan 1999, 2001). This development shows clearly that the prevailing interpretations of Islam that could be found in Sweden must be viewed in the light of the Swedish context (Sander 2002).

Even though the Swedish school system has improved their education and teaching on Islam and Muslim issues there are still many problems to solve. Schoolbooks for example still contain negative images and poor representation of Islamic faith and Muslim culture according to many Muslim pupils (Härenstam 1993). Muslims often due to this fact experience that they are presented as stereotypes and different from the Swedish society. Practical problems in relation to sexual education, sports, food and healthcare in the school are still difficult according to several Muslim leaders. One way of solving these problems argued by many Muslims is to start so-called Islamic free-schools. According to the Swedish State anybody is allowed to start free-schools as long as it follows and accepts the curriculum for the Swedish School system. During the last few years the number of free-schools have increased dramatically in Sweden.<sup>85</sup> As compared to the rest of Europe Sweden have generally more free-schools than any other country in the European Union. This difference could be explained by the fact that the Swedish State has a generous economical system supporting the establishment of free-schools. As compared to the rest of Europe the Swedish free-schools are economically sponsored by the State, but the school staff runs the organization and pedagogical models. But this policy also is in line with the politics of the Swedish State while it puts the individual and his/her choice in focus. At the moment there is no higher education founded on an Islamic or ethnic (Arabic) curriculum. But regarding pre-schools there are approximately ten or at most fifteen schools started on an Islamic or Arabic curriculum.<sup>86</sup> There are several more schools that have been accepted but they have so far not started their activities.

That the question of cultural transmission between the generations is important for most Muslims was clearly indicated to us by two surveys in the Muslim communities, one made in 1991/92 and one in 1994.<sup>87</sup> One of the questions asked were: "How important is it for you that your children, here in Sweden, receives a proper Muslim upbringing – that they acquire, retain and live according to traditional Muslim rules, norms and values – and becomes and continue to be good Muslims?" The results of the first investigation (n=385) was as follows:

Answer	Number	Percentage
No answer	22	5,7
Very important	206	53,5
Rather important	38	9,9
Not very important, as long as the become happy	17	4,4
It does not matter at all, as long as the become happy	40	10,4

<sup>85</sup> In 2000 the total number of so-called free schools in Sweden were around 350. A bit over 70 were so-called confessional schools, i.e. religious free schools. Of those around 20 were Islamic. None of them gave education beyond ninth grade (junior high level).

<sup>86</sup> Cf. [http://www3.skolverket.se/FRI\\_CACHE/GO0E.htm](http://www3.skolverket.se/FRI_CACHE/GO0E.htm)

<sup>87</sup> Sander 1993, Sheikmous 1994.

<b>It is important that they do not receive a Muslim upbringing</b>	58	15,1
<b>Do not know</b>	4	1,0
<b>Total</b>	385	100,0

If we subtract the Iranians – for whom it was “very important” for only 9,4 percent and “Important that they did not receive a Muslim upbringing” for 39,2 percent – from the statistics, we get an average of 77,9 percent who believe it is “very important”, with the Iraqis at the low end with 26,4 percent. There is also a small gender difference. Not surprisingly women deem it more important (62,2 percent) than men (49,4 percent). Another expected result was that people that had children of their own deemed it significantly more important than those without. Among parents 69,8 percent considered it “very important” compared to 31,3 percent for non-parents. Even though there is an age-factor involved, it seems that the fact of acquiring a family of ones own strongly determinate attitudes towards the importance of Muslim norms and values and Muslim socialization. This fact is also brought out in our interviews; many people admit to having changed their opinions and attitudes towards Islam as a cultural and religious tradition in connection with family building.

In the second survey (n=200) the results was as follows:<sup>88</sup>

<b>Answer</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
No answer	19	9,5
Very important	138	69,0
Rather important	33	16,5
Not very important, as long as the become happy	4	2,0
It does not matter at all, as long as the become happy	2	1,0
It is important that they do not receive a Muslim upbringing	2	1,0
Do not know	2	1,0
<b>Total</b>	200	100,0

It is in this connection it is also worth mentioning that a combination of the growing exposure to, and participation in, Swedish society in combination with a growing number of Muslim and Islamic organizations forced the Muslim immigrants in general to become (more) aware of their identity as Muslims. This is true both on the individual and the collective level. We have, for example, been told by many informants that it was during this time in Sweden they became really aware of themselves as Muslims for the first time, and that Islam (both as a culture and a religion) during this time was more or less forced on them as a topic of conversation – and this was true independent of whether or not they were religious (in the conventional sense), and independent of their attitudes to Islam. They had to take a

<sup>88</sup> Here we do not have access to the data broken down on gender, parenthood and age. Conversations with Sheikmous, however confirms that what is said above about our own investigations would also hold true for his data.

position *vis a vis* Islam.<sup>89</sup> They were made increasingly conscious of their identity as Muslims from two sides. First, from "the outside", from the Swedes and Swedish society. This was to a large extent done by defining them as "them", as distinct and different from "us", and, in the light of the Swedish ideal of homogeneity, attributing all the "problems" that arise when people from different cultures, with different norms and customs, have to share the same institutions (preschools, schools, working places, hospitals) with "them". Islam and the Muslims were socially defined as "problems" – as, as we have seen, problem peoples from a problem culture – and were subsequently made the "objects" of political discussions by the experts as well as by laymen, in the media as well as on "the street". As they were defined and experienced as the culturally inferior people, it was they who were supposed to change, adapt, integrate, and almost never the institutions of Sweden. Racism and xenophobia became integrated parts of their social reality. Added to this they were at the bottom of society in terms of economic, and social status and standards in a society they did not understand very well, and also to some extent experienced as both hostile and decadent. That this is not an (experienced) situation which is conducive to integration should be clear.

All in all, it is clear that the issue of cultural transmission is of high importance to the Swedish Muslims. From the point of view of most Muslims, the question do not seem to be so much "should we try to give our children a Muslim/Islamic upbringing" as "which type of Muslim/Islamic upbringing should we give them?". Here it seems like different groups of Muslims give different answers. For some, like to a large extent for the Turkish Muslims, it seems important that their children get brought up in their specific Turkish form of Islamic cultural and religious tradition, whether this seem to be less important for many other groups. Especially among the better educated segments of the Muslim population, there seem to be an increasing openness toward the idea that their children must develop and acquire a form of Islamic cultural and religious tradition which can be "functional" the Swedish society and which makes it possible for the Muslims to approach the goal of many of them to become more of one *umma* in Sweden.

## Special problems for young Muslim women

Even though the major bulk of the Muslim community takes a strong stance against violence towards women and children, Muslims and Islam have in much of the public debate, not the least in the media, often been associated with, and described as a religious and cultural phenomenon.<sup>90</sup> This way of describing Islamic/Muslim culture and the Muslim community in Sweden was high lightened after the killing of Fatima Sahindal. She was a young woman of Kurdish origin who was murdered on 21

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<sup>89</sup> This is a phenomenon which, according to our informants, have been much more pronounced after 11 September 2001 (Sander 2003).

<sup>90</sup> *Expressen* 2000-03-08; *Expressen* 2000-04-06; *Expressen* 2000-11-04 *Expressen* 2000-11-05; *Expressen* 2000-11-06; *Expressen* 2000-11-07 Other examples of making culture and religion the cause of crimes can be found in *Dagens Nyheter* 2000-02-11, 2000-02-18, 2000-02-21, *Lunchkot*, *Sveriges Radio* 2002-02-12, *Dagens Eko*, *SR* 2002-02-14; *TV 4 Nyheterna* 2002-02-05 (see <http://www.quickresponse.nu/articklar> 2000-02-23) In the article data base collected by Quick Response many more examples can be found).

January 2002 by her own father in her sister's flat in Uppsala, north from Stockholm. The murder touched the whole Swedish nation – perhaps extra much as it happened only a few months after the terror attacks in New York and Washington 9 September 2001. She was in the media described as a “martyr of our time” (*Expressen* 2002-02-04). For weeks after her death her story was the single leading story in all Swedish media. The amount of articles published about her, her family situation, her fathers background, interviews with her sisters and friends, etc. were enormous. Newspapers and TV-stations even sent reporters to visit and interview her relatives and other inhabitants of her families Kurdistan home village. In the weeks that followed major Swedish newspapers, *Dagens Nyheter*, *Svenska Dagbladet*, *Aftonbladet* and *Expressen*, followed up with article series of the more general question of migrant girls subject to patriarchal oppression. A general trend in most of these articles was that they made culture, and specifically Islamic culture, the cause of the crime. Phrases like “she was the victim of the cruel tradition, hard as iron, which regulates the position of women all over the Muslim world” were a dime a dozen.

The killing of Fadime was, however, not the first case of its kind in Sweden. Prior to Fadime, at least two other cases are known. In 1999 another Kurdish girl living in Sweden, Pela Atroshi, was killed by her father and uncles when she visited her family in the Iraqi part of Kurdistan. Prior to Pela, a 15-year-old girl, Sara, was strangled by her brother and father in Umeå in 1996. All three murders were, after the Fadime case, labeled as “honor killing” and the girls were all described as “subject girls living in patriarchal families”. Even though the real reasons or motives behind these murders are only partly known, it seems that all three girls were killed, at least partly, because their male relatives wanted to control their lives. Their male family members wanted to prevent the girls from choosing a “Swedish lifestyle”, that is, a lifestyle not controlled by religion, culture or family values.

Despite the fact that nobody, according to *The National Council for Crime Prevention*, know more exactly how many of all the (young) women with back grounds in Muslim cultures that have problems with choosing their own life style, or worse problems, and that the only study we know about (*Låt oss tala om flickor*. Integrationsverket. Rapport 2000:6) claims that women with immigrant back grounds generally does not “feel worse” than girls with Swedish back grounds, it was by the media portrayed as general problem for girls with back ground in Muslim cultures. The opinion that ninety percent of the girls with Middle Eastern origin living in Sweden have problems with their parents, voiced in several debate programs by the lawyer and debater Elisabeth Fritz, was, for example, frequently quoted.

Another debate that started after the murder of Fadime concerned the question: What can we as Swedes accept in the name of multiculturalism? To right wing and populist parties, as well as to many debaters not obviously associated with such parties,<sup>91</sup> the Fadime case showed that the Swedish policy of integration and multiculturalists was a failure. The murder case also, according to many of them, showed that it was necessary to draw the line, put down the foot and say no to all “foreign cultures” not congruent with “Swedish values”. Even more moderate voices were noted for sending

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<sup>91</sup> For example the spokesperson for the organization *Glöm inte Pela och Fadime*, Sara Mohammad, lawyer Elisabeth Fritz, author Dilsa Demirbag-Sten and Dr. Mikael Kurkiala.

out a similar message. Even six months before the murder of Fadime, Mona Sahlin, at that moment, minister of Integration, said in an article:

In Sweden it is some values that you can either like or dislike, but they are prevailing here. I do not tolerate racists or homophobes, and I do not tolerate that multiculturalism is used as an argument for subjecting girls.<sup>92</sup>

The discussion about the “honor crimes” that followed the killing of Fadime triggered, on the one hand, more or less racist and xenophobic opinions against all foreigners, but especially against Muslims and people from the Middle East. On the other hand, voices that stressed that it was important to look beyond “cultural explanations” and improve the integration processes and protect innocent young girls were also heard. A main line of argument among the latter was that the root of the problem was not the Kurdish or Muslim culture, but a general oppression of women – the patriarchal system – which exists basically all over the world, including Sweden, but which finds different expressions in different cultural traditions. According to them, it is structural and personal male violence against women that is the problem – not culturally specific expressions of this violence. In “reality” young Swedish girls in Sweden, according to many of them, have as little freedom of choice not to become “traditional Swedish girls” as young Kurdish girls in Kurdistan to become “traditional Kurdish girls”.

The whole integration debate after the Trade Centre attack and the Fadime murder increasingly focused on the Muslim migrant group and many debaters voiced the idea that Sweden had to increase the “demands” on them to submit to Swedish cultural norms and values.

In a TV-debate on honor killings only a few days after the murder of Fadime Sahindal, for example, the author and media worker Dilsa Demirbag-Sten voiced the opinion which, on the one hand, is difficult to place on the xenophobic – liberal dimension and which, on the other, became very important in the election campaign in the fall of 2002, that an immigrant should have to pass different tests in the Swedish language and Swedish norms and values before they could be granted Swedish citizenship. Others, like Elisabeth Fritz, wanted to go even further and suggested that it should be possible to withdraw Swedish citizenship for already naturalized immigrants if they committed serious crimes, such as honor killings and deprivation of liberty.

During the election campaign in the fall 2002 several parties latched on to the argument that it was a good idea with such tests for citizenship applicants to show that they were “real” Swedes before they could receive a Swedish citizenship. This idea of “testing the foreigners” was especially argued by the Liberal Party (Folkpartiet) and in the election the party experienced a landslide success. In the prior election 1988 they received 4,7 percents of the votes and in the 2002 election they received 13,3 percent. From this point of view it seems as if many Swedes must have approved of this idea. It should, however, be noted that the Liberal Party generally is pro immigration and integration and that they tried to set themselves strongly apart from the various xenophobic parties in Sweden.

For the Muslim leaders who took part in our research project it was hard to understand why they were associated with “honor crimes”. First of all they declared

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<sup>92</sup> Quoted in Expressen, 22 August 2001.

that this way of behaving against ones offspring or women had nothing to do with a "true" understanding of Islam or Muslim culture. Secondly, they tried to do what was in their power to change and stop this kind of "culture of origin" behaviors. Thirdly, most "honor crimes" were not even committed by believing/practicing Muslims, but by atheists, secularists or Christians. Despite this, they experienced that all "honor crimes" were seen, by the Swedes, as a Muslim problem. If the Muslims became more like "normal" Swedes this problem could easily be solved, according to the critics. Even though this way of putting or analyzing the problem, i.e. that some cultures must parish or change before they can be accepted, is hard to combine with the general and basic ideas of the multicultural society, it seems that most Swedes accepted this way of putting the argument. This is a theoretical problem, but a practical problem is also present in the debate. That is the fact that Muslim leaders have repeatedly claimed that they do not accept fathers, husbands or relatives who kill or maltreat their children or women, as this is against the will of Allah, and therefore forbidden for all Muslims. From this point of view, it seems that the media debate that followed the murder of Fadime was not solving the problem, on the contrary, as most media stories did not voice the opinions of the Muslim leaders but rather repeated and reinforced the "cultural explanation" thereby creating and widening the gap between "them" and "us". This generalized and stereotypical picture does not contribute or foster integration and co-existence.

Many Muslim leaders also argued, echoing Swedish debaters like Åsa Eldén (2002) and Jan Guillou (Svenska Dagbladet 2002-03-09), that also Swedish women are killed, raped, maltreated, restricted in their freedom, etc. for similar reasons as Fadime and the other "subject girls living in patriarchal families", so why should the latter but not the former be explained with cultural explanations?

Against the back ground of the Swedish debate about what has become known as the problem of "subject girls living in patriarchal families" it is obvious that we are dealing with a theoretically as well as practically and politically very difficult, multifaceted and emotionally hot problem were the debaters, which is very usual in this kind of cases, most often ends up in a black and white war of trenches.

We can, of course, not discuss all the aspects of the problem here. We would, however, like to point to the simple fact that when it come to explaining human behavior most social scientist use to claim that you have to bring in at least three different levels of explanation: the cultural, the societal/group, and the individual "intra-psychic" level.<sup>93</sup> To explain a specific action or behavior of a specific individual in a specific situation you have to look at all these levels. First the religio-cultural tradition that the individual received his/her socialization, and thereby his/her "cognitive structures", "life- and world view", "pattern of interpretation" or "*Weltanschauung*" in. Secondly in which specific sub-culture or group (s)he was socialized. Thirdly her general intra-psychic "make up" at the time. Did (s)he, for example, due to whatever causes or reasons, suffer from some psychological or psychic illness, stress, abnormality or the like (which many immigrants, due to their pre- as well as post-migration experiences, often do (Apitzsch 1986; Arenas 1997; Söderlind 1984). To that should be added the various properties of the specific makro-, meso-, and micro

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<sup>93</sup> Or in somewhat other terms: makro-, meso-, and micro level.



level of the context in which the behavior to be explained were taking place. Given the complexity just hinted at, it should be rather obvious that, in a mono causal way, making "honor killings" into a question of religion (Islam) is in almost all cases not only objectively wrong, but also very inappropriate. One reason for this is that the demonizing of Islam that follows from it will not cure the problem. On the contrary. It will most likely rather aggravate the already considerable marginalization of Muslim men in the society which, in its turn, most likely will make those of "their" women who find ways into the Swedish society even more threatening to them.

In this connection it might also be important to keep in mind that we are dealing with a generation as well as a gender problem. To come to Sweden from a Muslim culture normally means two different things for men and women. The loss of status, position, power, freedom, etc. is, for one thing, normally (experienced as) much larger for men than for women, who thereby not rarely become threatened, backwards looking and dependent on more or less "culture-of-origin" oriented, conservative and male oriented exile groups organized around mosques or cultural associations. Women can, on the other hand, normally easier see the new situation as a possibility to gain in power, etc., which, of course, make them even more threatening. But living as an immigrated Muslim family in Sweden also means different things for different generations. Generally speaking, it seems like "the Swedish way of life" is experienced as much more palatable from the perspective of the young than from their parents. If this is correct, it seems like the most important measure we can take to prevent the children from ending up in their fathers boat would be to break down their barriers when it comes to equal access to education, labor market, housing market, etc. To demonize them by "cultural explanations" because they are Muslims is to take quite the opposite road. Instead of breaking old thought- and life patterns, exclusionist attitudes from the majority society risks forcing them into a search for ethnically based identities and thereby re-creating and strengthening old life- and thought patterns.

Even though much of the media, as we have seen, in this case more seem to be part of the problem than its solution, they have not been the only voice. Attempts to give a more nuanced picture of the situation of first- and second generation migrant girls and their situation can be found in a report from the Department for peace and conflict resolution, Göteborg University, *Bilden av "den andra" - invandrarkvinnan i svensk dagspress 970701 - 980630* (The "picture of the other" - the immigrant woman in Swedish daily press 970701 - 980630), in Åsa Eldéns article "Hedersmord i jämställdhetens paradiset" ("Honor killings in the paradise of equality), in Cecilia Englund's article "Medias ansvar i mångfaldsfrågor" (The responsibility of media in diversity issues), in the report from the Kurdish National association's project *the Generation conflict, Vår röst är framtiden*. (Our voice is the future), in the report from the Swedish Save the Children *Överlevnadshanbok för flickor om frihet och heder* (Survival handbook for girls on freedom and honor), in the report from the Integration Board *Låt oss tala om flickor* (Let's talk about girls), in the report from the Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communication *The governments' work for subject girls in patriarchal families*, and in the report *Våld mot kvinnor i nära relationer. En kartläggning*. (Violence towards women in close relationships. A mapping.) published by the

Council for Crime Prevention (Rapport 2002:4). To this could be added numerous projects of various size organized by various NGO's on the subject.

## ***Halal slaughter***

Since 1937 the Muslim *halal* and Jewish *kosher* slaughter is forbidden according to the law of Sweden. Slaughter methods based on the prerequisite that the animal should be conscious when killed with a sharp object cutting the throat is forbidden according to this law. The only exceptions are for hunting, and slaughter of poultry and rabbits. The following criteria's are raised in connection with the *halal* slaughter.

- The animal should be in good health and not injured.
- The animal should be treated with kindness and humanity.
- The slaughter should be performed by a trained Muslim.
- Both the animal and the person performing the slaughter should be turned towards qibla (i.e. in the direction of Mecca).
- Before the slaughter the *Bismillah, Allahu Akbar* should be recited.
- A sharp object – for example a knife – should be carried across the throat in a single motion.
- The gullet (esophagus), windpipe (trachea) and the jugular veins should be cut open with out damages to the spinal marrow.
- All blood should be drained.
- An animal should not see another animal die.<sup>94</sup>

In relation to the jurisprudence it is important to notice that the law of 1937 was introduced during a period in European and Swedish history heavily influenced by anti-Semitic movements, a fact often raised by the Jewish community. After the end of the Second World War and the defeat of the Nazi regime in Germany all European countries, except Sweden, Norway and Switzerland, has given up this prohibition (Gunner 1999: 40–42). The law of 1937 was however abolished, but replaced by a new law in 1988, which also indirectly stresses that animals should not be slaughter in accordance with rabbinical or Islamic laws.<sup>95</sup> The guiding principle is that animals should be protected from unnecessary suffering, pain and sickness. According to Swedish jurisprudence the question of how to slaughter animals are not a religious issue but a matter for laws dealing with animal rights and protection. This interpretation illustrates in many ways the general view on religion discussed above dominating in Sweden and guiding the Swedish State. The matter of how to slaughter an animal has nothing to do with religion according to the opinion of the State. However, according to both the Jewish and Muslim community, how to slaughter an animal is very much a question of religion. To Muslims it is a question of how to live your life in accordance with the law of God. Thus it is necessary to make a separation between things and activities described as *halal* (prescribed or allowed) and *haram* (the

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<sup>94</sup> Gunner 1999: 33.

<sup>95</sup> Djurskyddslagen (SFS 1988: 534).

prohibited). To eat meat not slaughtered with accordance to the law of God is to most Muslims clearly a case of *haram*. The boundary between the forbidden and lawful is often discussed in the Koran (cf. for example sura 7: 30–34).<sup>96</sup> The Koran is also very clear on the issue that Muslims are not allowed to eat carrion, blood outpoured or the flesh of swine (cf. sura 2: 165–169; 6: 145–149 and 16: 115–119).<sup>97</sup> The importance of “right” slaughter methods is also illustrated in the Koran.

Forbidden to you are carrion, blood, the flesh of swine, what has been hallowed to other than God, the beast strangled, the beast beaten down, the beast fallen to death, the beast gored, and that devoured by beasts of prey – excepting that you have sacrificed duly – as also things sacrificed to idols, and partition by the divining arrows; that is ungodliness (sura 5: 3).<sup>98</sup>

A problem with the prohibition against the above described slaughter methods is the fact that the Swedish State seem to argue indirectly that the rabbinical and Islamic laws are cruel and that Jews and Muslims treat animals badly. But according to Jews and Muslims their religions require strongly that they should treat animals with respect. The Koran gives for example abundant examples of the fact that shows that Muslims are obliged to treat animals rightly since they are a part of Gods creation (cf. sura 6: 38).<sup>99</sup> The fact that man is put to rule earth does not give him or her the right to exploit or treat animals or the nature contrary to the will of God.<sup>100</sup> Man is responsible to God since he has accepted this responsibility by becoming Gods *khalifa* on earth.

From a Muslim point of view it is also hard to see why the Islamic laws on slaughter should be grimmer to animals than “normal” western methods. According to Muslim and Jewish laws “their” slaughter methods are more human to animals than the western methods because it is not built on an idea of large industrial slaughterhouses (cf. Gunner 1999: 39 and 63–65).

In 1992 the Swedish State decided that the department of agriculture should investigate the problem and present alternatives on how to solve the question of how to slaughter animals in accordance with rabbinical and Islamic laws. The results from this project was published in the report, “*Slaughter with out anaesthesia*” (“*Slakt av obedövade djur*”). This report was severely criticized because it did not take the religious aspects of the question into consideration. Neither the Jewish nor the Muslim community was invited to give their opinion on the matter of how to slaughter animals (Gunner 1999: 57–58). As a result the report came to the conclusion that it was not possible to accept the slaughter methods prescribed by Jews or Muslims because these methods were held to be inhuman while it cause great stress to the animal.<sup>101</sup> A second problem according to the report was the fact that if *halal* and kosher slaughter was accepted as legal there was a great danger that meat from animal’s slaughter in accordance to Rabbinical and Islamic laws were sold on the “regular” market. If so it was possible that non-Muslims and non-Jews by mistake bought *halal* or *kosher* meat

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<sup>96</sup> English translation by Arberry 1964: 146.

<sup>97</sup> Arberry 1964: 21–22; 138–139 and 271–272.

<sup>98</sup> Arberry 1964: 99.

<sup>99</sup> Arberry 1964: 125.

<sup>100</sup> According to both the numbers of articles dealing with the nature published in the Swedish Islamic journal *Salaam* and the research conducted by Pernilla Ouis it seems that nature plays an important rule among Swedish Muslims. Cf. for example Ouis 1999: 235–248 and Otterbeck 2000a: 148–149.

<sup>101</sup> *Slakt av obedövade djur* 1992: 5.

even if they did not want to accept this kind of slaughter.<sup>102</sup> This way of putting the argument is problematic for several reasons, for example, if we compare it to the “risk” that Jews and Muslims confront on an everyday basis. Jews and Muslims who want to follow the Rabbinical or Islamic laws by the book must today import their meat or become vegetarians. Another problem is the fact that a lot of food product today encloses gelatin produced from swine and other meat products.<sup>103</sup>

Today the Swedish prohibition against *halal* and kosher seems to be a rather small practical problem to most Jews and Muslims but still it is a symbolically important question (cf. Larsson and Sander 2001: 22–23). To paraphrase two of our participants at one of our Round Tables:

The problems concerning *halal* and circumcision<sup>104</sup> are very important. The Swedes must understand this. Islam and Judaism, Muslims and Jews, will never feel integrated if those questions do not get a proper solution. We realize that it will take political will, leadership and courage to tackle and solve them, and that does not seem to be present today. All serious dialogue is, however, hopeless as long as so fundamental issues as our food and circumcision are being questioned. All real communication is cut off even before it has begun if one part takes as their point of departure that it is a the non-negotiable condition that we should be denied these rights.

and

the problem with *halal*-butchering and circumcision must be solved! As long as they remain unsolved Muslims and Jews will never feel welcomed in Sweden. And it is unthinkable that they will change their minds on these issues. If they are not made legal, we are forced to be criminal, and that is something that neither Muslims nor Jews like.

To many Muslims the prohibition is also an illustration of the fact that the 1951 Religious Liberty Act is not full filled or put in action. Even though it is easy and cheap to import *halal* meat it is a problem to many Muslims that the Swedish State does not accept the Islamic ways of slaughtering. The most obvious problem is of course the Swedish school system since all pupils have the right to get a full meal every day. Jonas Otterbeck who has dealt with several questions related to Muslims and the Swedish school system give abundant examples of misconceptions and problems related to food. A general problem is that members of the school staff is often unaware of the Islamic laws and they think that they could serve any kind of meat irrespective of pork to Muslims. As illustrated above the problem is not that simple, if Muslims want to follow the rules for *halal* it is necessary that the meat also is slaughter according to the norms of the Islamic laws (Otterbeck 2000b: 51–53). It is also a structural problem since Muslims – as the rest of the Swedish population – is bound to end up in hospitals, in jails or in other institutions run by the State. This problem is most likely going to grow in the near future since the Muslim population becomes older and older in Sweden. This fact makes it important to solve this problem as soon as possible if we want to avoid the discrimination and cultural confrontations.

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<sup>102</sup> Slakt av obedövade djur 1992: 6.

<sup>103</sup> To help Muslims to avoid products containing gelatin and swine products the Swedish food and health institute produced an information leaflet (Statens livsmedelsverk1993). This service is also given on many Swedish Muslim homepages.

<sup>104</sup> Which we will return to.

## Burial facilities

One thing that virtually all practising Muslims in Europe fear is that they might become absorbed into a secular culture. However, when living in diaspora, religious rites often become all the more important. Rites, including death-related ones, serve a variety of functions. For example, they inform children of the collective customs from their religious and cultural background, rather than the sentiments of the host society (Andrews and Wolfe 2000: 15).

Burials and death-related rites are central in all cultures because they play both religious and secular functions. From the perspective of Émile Durkheim, death has an effect on the whole society or community. Rites related to death, creates among other things a feeling of community and solidarity among the members in the community. But death is also something that threatens the unity and because of that it is of great importance to be able to handle death and burial rites according to the prescribed norms of the community. To be able to follow a certain practice is therefore of great importance for upholding and confirming the community and its values. It is not only important for the religious practice but also for the social stability and the continuity of the community.

The establishment of Muslim burial sites in Sweden, as for the rest of Europe, could be viewed as one of the indicators for measuring the success or failure of the integration of Muslims. If Muslims living in Sweden still choose to bury their family members and loved ones in their “original country” this is a clear indication that the process of integration has failed. For most Muslims who arrived to Sweden during the early faces of migration this was commonly the case. However, during the last decades it has become easier to bury Muslims according to Muslim traditions and customs.<sup>105</sup> In 1997, the thirteen dioceses belonging to the Church of Sweden counted forty-two cities that facilitated special Muslim burial sites (*Muslimska grannar* 1997: 107). Since 1997 the number has increased and today it is not that difficult to be able to bury a person according to Muslim prescribed rules. Even though the number of burial sites have gone up (approximately the number of Muslim burial sites is today around fifty) it is impossible to give an exact number because neither the Church of Sweden, nor the Swedish State collect this kind of statistics on a regular basis. It should also be stressed that the Muslim burial sites mentioned above are all located within the area or land of the “traditional” Christian cemeteries attached to the Church of Sweden. According to the office that deals with questions related to burials and cemeteries (“*Kyrkogårdsförvaltningen*”) this is not a problem for Muslims and no

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<sup>105</sup> Irrespective of local traditions and variations among Muslim groups it is possible to find a basic consensus among most Muslims. An introduction and overview of Muslim “good practice” in relation to death and burial is for example found in al-Kaysi 1986: 175-184. According to guidelines given by the Swedish Muslim funeral committee a Muslim burial site in Sweden should be located in the direction of *qibla*, which is 148° South East. The burial site should also be separated from other burial sites (i.e. Christians) by a wall or a hedge. The grave should be located in a peaceful and calm place. The body should rest on its right side and the face should be turned towards *qibla*. It is recommended that the grave should be visible and therefore it should be elevated approximately 2,5 centimeter above ground to prevent people from accidentally stepping on the grave. These recommendations are given by Imam Abd al-Haqq Kielan, printed in *Svenska kyrkan* 3/2000. *Information från svenska kyrkans centralstyrelse och svenska kyrkans församlingsförbund*, appendix 3.

Muslim congregation has so far complained about this practice.<sup>106</sup> But it could be a problem for non-Muslims, i.e. those who want to bury their relatives and loved ones within the realm of the "traditional" cemetery attached to the Church. On the basis of the previous discussion on secularization in Sweden, this seems to be a problem that has nothing or little to do with religion.<sup>107</sup>

Since 1 January 2000 the law stipulates that it is the office that deals with questions related to burials and cemeteries ("*Kyrkogårdsförvaltningen*") that is responsible for the planning and preparation for all burial sites no matter of religious belonging.<sup>108</sup> Municipals lacking special burial sites for Muslims should according to the law prepare and plan for Muslim cemeteries. According to the statistics given by the Church of Sweden in the year 2000, a Muslim congregation could be found in approximately 111 municipals in Sweden. For the rest of the municipals (178) it is recommended that one should prepare for special Muslim burial sites.<sup>109</sup>

Irrespective of the fact that the number of Muslim burial sites has increased during the last decades there are more practical problems to be solved. A first problem is the fact that it is not possible, due to the bureaucracy of the Swedish State, to bury a person within the stipulated time, most often 24 hours after the individual has died, according to Islamic and Muslim norms. A second problem is, as we have seen, the low number of Imams working in Sweden. For Muslims who are living outside the three major cities of Sweden (Stockholm, Göteborg and Malmö) this is important and practical problem. Because of the relatively low number of Imams and their economically poor situation it is very hard for the Imams who are living in the major cities to conduct funeral sermons in the countryside. Travel cost and other expenses are very high for the Imams. This problem is seldom understood or even accepted by fellow Muslims who are expecting that the Imam should conduct this service or even pay for the funeral (especially for the shroud).<sup>110</sup> A third problem is the fact that most Swedish cemeteries are not prepared for Muslim funerals and therefore they are often lacking washing rooms or multi-faith rooms. To our knowledge there are no *janazgah* (funeral mosques) in Sweden. A fourth problem is the fact that according to the law of Sweden all people must be buried in a coffin. Although most Muslims living in Sweden seem to accept this fact it is a problem since the law of Islam stipulates that all believers should be wrapped in a shroud.<sup>111</sup> Similar problems are also related to the prohibition against autopsies and cremation. The reason for this is the Muslim belief that the whole body is going to be resurrected on the final day. A coffin, or even more

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<sup>106</sup> Svenska kyrkan 3/2000. *Information från svenska kyrkans centralstyrelse och svenska kyrkans församlingsförbund*, p. 3.

<sup>107</sup> This information was given by a spokesperson from *Församlingsförbundet* in Stockholm. (Telephone, 26/3 2002).

<sup>108</sup> *Begravningslagen*, 2 kap. 2 §. Cf. *begravningsförordningen*, printed in SFS 1999: 882.

<sup>109</sup> Svenska kyrkan 3/2000. *Information från svenska kyrkans centralstyrelse och svenska kyrkans församlingsförbund*, appendix 2.

<sup>110</sup> This problem was for example addressed by one of the Imams in Göteborg interviewed for this project.

<sup>111</sup> Leif Stenberg gives an example of how Muslims have questioned this law. To find a suitable answer to this problem the *shia* Muslim community in Trollhättan outside Göteborg asked a *mujtahid* in Iran if it was acceptable to bury a Muslim in a coffin. According to Aytatollah Khoi this custom was accepted if one accept the principle of *ijtihad*. Stenberg 1999: 124.

an autopsy or a cremation will hinder or prevent the individual to be resurrected. (Aneer 1994:142-143; Stenberg 1999:123-124).

According to Ahmed Andrews and Michele Wolfe, Muslim graves in Sweden and the United Kingdom reflects how Muslims living in Diaspora are effected by a pick up of non-Muslim traditions. For example, most Muslim graves in Sweden are designed in accordance with Swedish design. But many graves are also designed according to traditions and norms found outside Sweden. They are for example decorated with Arabic script or include pictures of the dead person. Interestingly, Andrews and Wolfes work shows that Muslims living in Sweden are influenced by the celebration of the "All Satins Day". Even though this is not a Muslim rite, Muslims living in Sweden are decorating their graves with flowers and light candles during this day. This is a clear illustration that Muslims are influenced by local traditions and habits, but it should not automatically be seen as a religious rite. Participation in the celebration of "All Saints Day" could also be viewed as a secular rite performed by "all Swedes". Andrew and Wolfe says:

...by participation in "All Saints Day" rituals, it may be argued that Muslims in Sweden are also seeking ways to make statements regarding their sense of being Swedish as well as being a Bosnian or Turkish Muslim, and are hence participating in what might be termed "Civil Religion (Andrew and Wolfe 2000: 15).

Even though practices related to death and mourning are often high lightened in the multicultural society (for example it is often said that non-Swedes are mourning more openly and more "dramatic" than Swedes), death and dying is a universal phenomena. All humans share this experience. From this point of view, death and dying could also bring people together no matter of religious, ethnic or cultural background. This was clearly illustrated after the fire catastrophe in Göteborg (October 1998) in which 62 young persons died. The majority of the victims who died had a foreign background and several were Muslims. No matter of this difference the whole Swedish society mourned with the parents, relatives and friends to the victims. The fire catastrophe became even more horrible since the police investigation showed that it was arson. To pay homage to the dead kids and show participation with the survivals the funerals were covered by the media. From this perspective the tragic death of 62 kids seem to have bridged some of the gaps between the Muslim and Swedish community so clearly illustrated in this report. Both ministers in the Swedish government and archbishops from the Church of Sweden participated in these funerals and memorial services held after the catastrophe (Andreasson and Sjögren 1999: 22-23).

## **Islam and Christianity**

From the perspective of the Church of Sweden there were few reasons to take part in the international debate between Muslims and Christians while almost no Muslims lived in Sweden. With the 1960s and 1970s the situation changes dramatically due to the growing number of Muslims arriving to Sweden. One of the earliest examples of a growing interest within the Church of Sweden for dialog and issues related to multiculturalism is a synod thesis dealing with the meeting of religions in 1986. The

archbishop Olof Sundby asked for the book and assistant professor Gudmar Aneer who also was ordained as a priest in the Church of Sweden wrote it (Aneer 1986: 5). When published by Verbum, a publishing house closely associated with the Church of Sweden, it was one in a kind.

In the middle of the 1990s the situation changed dramatically. At the 1995 synod it was decided that the Church of Sweden should initiate a project dealing with issues of how to educate the staff of the church and its members to make it easier for Muslims and Christians to meet. As a start the central administration in Uppsala sent out a survey to its 266 parishes and to 304 representatives working with questions dealing with mission. The goal was to cover the present situation in the parishes and to map how the Church of Sweden co-operated with its Muslim neighbors. On the basis of this survey it was possible to see what kind of education the staff of the church and its members asked for. More importantly the survey showed that the local parishes were interested in Muslim Christian dialog. From the response the survey got (approximately 60% of the surveys were answered and returned to Uppsala) it was clear that the Church of Sweden were interested in this issue. The parishes that returned the survey asked for more knowledge about Islamic dogma and theology (61%), Islam values on mankind and society (68%), Islamic piety and popular beliefs (69%), the diversity within Islam (61%), the Koran (59%), Islam on ethics, law and right (73%) and, finally, on Islam and gender issues (69%). The need for more and better knowledge was very clear. Interfaith marriages between Muslims and Christians, a growing need for pastoral care and kindergarten activities have all showed that it has become more important to know something about Islam. But the project argues also that a growing number of Muslims are seeking knowledge or even conversion to Christianity and thus it is necessary for the Church of Sweden to be prepared for new demands (Ahlbäck 1997:13-16). The need for more and better knowledge seems primarily to be strong among parishes located in the major cities and especially for lay and social workers that work within the church.<sup>112</sup> This development is however not restricted or particular for Muslims alone.

Irrespective that the Church of Sweden has taken a stand for the development of the multicultural society and the possibility to express religious points of view it is also possible to find strong anti-Islamic feelings within the church. For example in the prolonged planning of a mosque in Gothenburg, the second city of Sweden, one of the vicars in the Church of Sweden played a vital role in stopping the building. The negative attitudes are also frequent among so-called Free-Churches and Oriental Churches (cf. Karlsson and Svanberg 1995: 78-80). Negative attitudes towards Islam and Muslims are however not typical for the Church of Sweden in general. The present archbishop, K. G. Hammar, has for example taken a strong stand for the Muslim community and its rights. In 1997 he declared that the growing number of Muslims in Sweden was a positive challenge and an opportunity for Christians to develop and express their belief. As compared to many Christians in Sweden the Muslims are not afraid to say "I am Muslim". This is not a threat but a positive challenge for all Christians according to K. G. Hammar. Thus it is necessary to combat anti-Islamic opinions and defend the 1951 Act of Religious Liberty (Hammar 1997).

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<sup>112</sup> This development is for example illustrated in the publication "...inte längre gäster och främlingar..."



But the Church of Sweden should not be too over protective to the Muslim community and it is necessary to discuss essential differences (cf. Kronholm 1988).

Negative attitudes towards Muslims and Islam, as we have seen, have primarily flourished among followers of Pentecostal traditions. One of the most outspoken voices in relation to negative attitudes belongs to pastor Stanley Sjöberg who among many things has debated with Muslim leaders and contested them as being dangerous for the Swedish society. He is also used in media debates when Islamic issues are debated. As compared to the Church of Sweden the so-called free-churches seem generally to be more hostile towards Islam and Muslims. After the 11 of September the bishops in the Church of Sweden published a note supporting the Muslim community in Sweden. This letter was foremost written to protect the Muslim community from being attacked by hostile Swedes who hold negative attitudes towards Islam and Muslims. As compared to this action the free-churches has so far not taken any stand for the Muslim community what so ever.

Irrespective that the Church of Sweden has supported and developed their contacts with the Muslim community the project described above was put to an end and has not continued. In the near future the Church of Sweden is going to inaugurate a new job primarily focused on how to develop and nourish the contact between the church and the Muslim community.

## THE FUTURE

Given what has been said above about Islam and Muslims in Sweden, what can be said, or rather speculated, about the future?

Given the complexity of this task – predicting the future is, as we all know, associated with many difficulties and uncertainties – we believe that, given the space to our disposal, we have but two options: either to simplify or to oversimplify. Let us begin by the latter, and only indicate a process not any substance.

As we see it today, the most likely development among the Muslims in Sweden in the foreseeable future – presuming that nothing extremely dramatic and unexpected is going to happen in the Muslim (domestic or international) world – is not that we are going to witness the gradual erosion and disappearance of Islam and the Muslim/Islamic identity, but rather (only) a transformation of them.

Our prediction that Islam and the Muslim identity/identities will change as a result of being re-planted in Sweden is not especially daring.<sup>113</sup> It is how it is going to change that is the though question. Before speculating a little about the latter, let us say something about our reasons for why we believe it has to change.

One reason is the historical “fact” that we do not seem to be able to find any human cultural phenomena – and religions are, independently of whatever they in addition

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<sup>113</sup> It is, of course, not only Islam that will change as a result of this re-plantation. Sweden will as a result of this also change in many respects (Sander 2002).

to that might be, human cultural phenomenon<sup>114</sup> – that does not change over time. A second reason is that no human phenomenon exists in a cultural, societal, political, economic, etc. vacuum, but always in dynamic interplays with such environmental factors. This mean, among other things, that when the cultural, political, social, economical, etc. borders of a religious tradition are redrawn, when the interface between a religious tradition and its cultural, etc. boundaries environment changes, the religious tradition changes too.

Even though the first reason might seem too self-evident to even state, at least to a social scientist,<sup>115</sup> we still believe it is worth doing in this context. One reason for this is that there seem to be a rather strong trend, outside the circle of social scientist, towards reification of many social phenomena, not the least culture, ethnicity and religion. Religious traditions, for example, are not rarely from within themselves viewed as in time fixed and objective entities, as once and for all definable and defined systems, and therefore as something that can be talked about in the singular.

To avoid this reified notion of “religion”, which we do not believe scientifically useful, we prefer to use Cantwell Smith’s (1963) idea of religions as cumulative traditions, or in the terminology of Hjärpe (1997), the religious basket. According to this view religions are seen as human constructs offered as means of making the dynamic flow of human history intelligible, and the terms refers to all the observable contents – temples, rituals, scriptures, myths, moral codes, social institutions, and so on – that are accumulated over time and then passed on to succeeding generations (Smith 1963 pp 156-157). Unlike “religion”, which misleadingly suggests an unchanging essence, cumulative tradition and its specific variants – for example the Islamic tradition – make explicit the changing historical context that form and sustain the content of the carriers of the tradition personal faith as well as the myriad of forms in which it is outwardly expressed.

Religious traditions do not only change over time, they also adapt to and change in response to their local contexts. As it is a different, sometimes a very different, things to be Muslim in, for example, Indonesia, Pakistan, Iran, Algeria, Sweden and the USA as well as to be Muslim in rural or urban areas, etc., Islam can, and normally do, receive different interpretations and forms of expressions as response to these different locations/contexts. Given what is relevant for the individuals and their lives in these different contexts – and different social realities always actualizes different needs and questions – different elements are picked out of “the Islamic basket” to constitute an Islam which is deemed useful and practical for the individuals and their needs and purposes at hand. New realities always demand new ideas, concepts and strategies that reflect the reality in question. Therefore, religions are dynamic, changeable and situational social phenomena, constantly created and recreated.

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<sup>114</sup> A more detailed account of how we see religion as a human phenomena can be found in Sander 1985 and 1988.

<sup>115</sup> At least to those of us who are not too wrapped up in, for example, Geertz (1963) descriptions of culture and ethnicity as something “essential” and “primordial”; as “simply given”, as “ipso facto”, as “unaccountable”, and as having an overpowering force on the individual “in and of themselves” (p 109).

Historically this has occurred in each of the worlds "great religious traditions". There is, in other words, nothing new in modifying meanings of, and within, Islam in relation to the socio-cultural, political and economic contexts in which Muslims have found themselves. One important mode of this kind of modification of meanings has always occurred through the particular kind of self-consciousness, which the condition of "borderland", "Diaspora" or minority status has stimulated. Clifford Geertz has, as we have already noticed, described one important part of this modification as that "the primary question has shifted from 'What shall I believe' to 'How shall I believe it?'" . According to Geertz, this shift is normally followed by another shift that can be characterized by "a distinction between 'religiousness' and 'religious-mindedness', between being held by religious convictions and holding them" (1968, p. 61). Religion in other words changes from being an external, compelling force to being an internal, voluntary "interest". That the Swedish context most certainly will stimulate such new modes of religious self-consciousness seem to us obvious.

The question or problem of religious change and innovation becomes, of course, particularly pertinent in situations of rapid change, as in the case of migration. This is especially the case when the migration can be characterized as being from "traditional" to "modern" societies and from religious majority to minority situation. This situation makes especially fertile ground for individuals to engage in a process of "reassembling" components from the "Islamic basket" together with components arising out of the migration and re-settling experience into a new complex whole which is deemed to function more successfully in the new Swedish modern, industrial and urban life. The fact that Islam is a universal religious tradition which, through a long history has proved itself very successful when it comes to integrating into new cultures would, to our minds, make it extremely surprising if it were not to follow the same path in Sweden.

If such immigrated individuals or groups wish to seek answers to their basic questions of, and strategies for "how to live their lives" (or, to revert to Geertz, for "how to be religious") in their religious tradition within the new context of a modern, secularized society, in which an institutional structure of their religious tradition has never existed, in which direction should they turn? Where does religious innovation come from? According to many today, the most important answer to this can be found in one of the salient socio-cultural processes of the contemporary world: globalization (Robertson and Garret 1991; Robertson 1992; Beyer 1994).

Of course, cultural elements have always been transported across geographical distances, and incorporated among different groups than those who created them. The transformation in our time is therefore one of degree rather than kind. Yet, given the scope of contact and the rapidity with which influences are exerted, it is reasonable to see our own time as one of unprecedented globalization. The emergence of mass culture, the development of electronic media, the emergence of more efficient systems of distribution and the increased movement of people across national borders have resulted in larger-scale interaction between cultures than ever before.

Globalization, however, is not a single, well-defined entity but a common term for a set of processes. As Hammer points out (2000:24f.), useful distinctions in talking about

globalization entail distinguishing between the production, consumption and distribution of, in this case, religious elements.

The element of global distribution is linked to the objective transnational processes that constitute one of the central elements of the paradigm of globalization. Thus the rather successful marketing of Islamic literature, audio and videocassettes and home pages by some international Islamic organizations are salient facets of the global distribution of religious products. This is clearly seen among Muslim groups in Sweden.

The global consumption of cultural elements is partly related to a shift in *communitas*. Whereas older imagined communities (Andersen 1991) were defined by geographical borders – the nation state would be a prime example – newer ones have become increasingly divorced from such geographically definable contexts. Thus young Muslim immigrants in Sweden might feel a much stronger bond of sympathy with the young of another minority group among, for example, Farrakhan's Black Muslims than with older members of his fathers' Muslim congregation in Göteborg.

Here, however, we will focus on the production element in the facet of globalization, that is, on the global religious production of ideas and belief systems, including behavioral codes, whether written or expressed in another way. The globalization of religious production concerns the fact that today, religious ideas and belief systems make use of materials from a variety of historical epochs ("accumulated tradition") and cultural, religious, theological and political traditions (cf. Hjärpe 1977; Swidler 1986). All these sources, singly or in combination, can, depending on what is deemed most useful in the situation, become "significant others" for individuals and groups in their identity construction. The awareness and availability of the global varieties of "Islam's", as well as the awareness that Islam is a dynamic, multifaceted, changing and adapting phenomenon, are central elements of globalization.

It should be noted that the appropriation of – relative to a given context – "foreign" Islamic elements (as well as of cultural elements in general) is a highly selective process of dis-embedding and re-embedding. It is selective mainly in that only those elements that are perceived as functionally significant, helpful or useful for an individual or group for their purposes at hand, including identity construction, are borrowed and trans-formed. Islam and what it is to be a Muslim is under constant negotiation and re-negotiation in the globalized world. When the cultural, political, social, etc. borders of Islam are redrawn, when the interface between Islam and its cultural, etc. environment changes, then Islam and what it is to be a Muslim changes too. These "hybridization processes" (Bhabha 1996) that we see following in the wake of globalization are, in other words, normally driven by very pragmatic motives, which of course the various individuals involved in the process may be more or less conscious of. Moreover, elements lifted out of the context of a "foreign" culture and tradition are always to varying degrees colored (or, if one will, environmentally polluted) by, or reinterpreted to be functionally significant in, the local context into which they are being transplanted (Hjärpe 1997; Robertson 1992; 1995; Schmidt 1998). Thus, it is not uncommon, especially among the young, for dis-embedding and re-embedding to produce an entire spectrum of creative and dynamic new cultural processes as well as "new ethnicities" (Hall 1992). If, in a given context, the

"traditional" or existing interpretation(s) of Islam and of what it is to be Muslim by Muslims is not experienced to be sufficient or functional enough to satisfy the individual's various needs, then Muslims, especially young Muslims, will start searching for new and alternative ways to interpret Islam and what it is to be Muslim. Islam obtains new forms of expression and new functions when it has to legitimize and confirm new identities in the context of new social and societal situations and positions. From this point of view it is, as we have claimed, likely that Muslims living in Sweden, especially the young who are born and raised in Sweden, will be "polluted" in several ways by, among other things, Swedish norms, values and customs. They have, for instance, unlike their parents, been educated and socialized by the Swedish school system. Due to this fact and others it is plausible to argue, as is done in Svanberg and Westerlund (1999), that a "blue and yellow" way<sup>116</sup> of being Muslim is slowly developing in Sweden, or even, as Westerlund argue (2001), that this way in the long run will become the principal way. By this we mean that especially the young Muslims are developing a more "modern", critical, individual, democratic and relativistic-skeptical approach to Islam, as to life in general, compared with the first generation. However, if Muslims perceive that their opinions and "ways of life" are not accepted or supported by the society at large, and that they continue to be targets of exclusion, discrimination and xenophobia, it is, we will argue, likely that alternative and more aggressive ways of being Muslim are developed instead. Thus it is likely that a so-called ghetto-Islam will emerge in Sweden too (Karlsson 1994, 2002). That Islam is changing by being planted in Swedish soil is, however clear. Which trend will be the dominant one is, however, as yet an open question.

These reinterpretations can, of course, take different forms. A rough analysis of the spectrum within which these various forms can manifest themselves can be illustrated by a "structure - content" dichotomy. At one end of this spectrum we have content adaptation and structural preservation. Here the "contents" of the imported tradition, such as the meaning of various parts of the ideational and belief systems, verbal expressions, dress codes, body language and social norms accepted by the actor, might be adapted to local conditions, whereas at least some of the fundamental structures in which they are held and expressed are retained. An extreme version of this might be what Hargreaves describes as "affective identification with doctrinal detachment" (1995:121). At the other end of the spectrum we have structural adaptation and content preservation. Here the content characteristics of the dis-embedded cultural/religious product are retained while the fundamental structures, such as the religious, ethnic, and gender codes, are adapted. An example is the way Islam in Sweden is considered by many to be becoming "structurally Christianized", in the sense that Muslims in Sweden are apparently increasingly becoming religious, manifesting their religiosity and organizing their religious life in similar ways to those Christians manifest and organize their religiosity and religious life.

To sum up, it is standard procedure today to claim that "we", and particularly young people, are living in an environment characterized by secularization, globalization, hybridization and post-modernity, phenomena that can be characterized by the rapidity of social change along several parameters, for example, institutional

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<sup>116</sup> Blue and yellow are the colors of the Swedish flag.

differentiation, changing patterns of legitimization and authority, rationalization, privatization and individuation. That the re-contextualization of many varieties of “local”, “traditional” Islams to a multicultural and multireligious but secular modern welfare state like Sweden, which, due to, among other things, globalization in itself is caught up in a process of serious social changes, some of which was mentioned above, should not also affect Islam and the ways Muslim interpret and live their Islam does not seem very likely. And this, we will underscore, is true independently of how well they will succeed in solving all the various problems we have listed earlier in this report, including the problems of transformation of culture and creating institutional completeness.

The identity of the second and following generations of Muslims will be formed in contrast, and sometimes in opposition, to the surrounding majority society with its norms and values, manners and customs on the one side and the various local Islamic sub-societies of their parents on the other. And this goes for anyone that becomes identified “as Muslim” by either of the two sides, independent of the individuals own personal relation to Islam as a cultural and/or religious system and her/his wishes to be so identified or not.<sup>117</sup> Whatever their personal attitude to Islam as culture and religion they to quite some extent get forced to be conscious of, and take some kind of conscious position vis a vis Islam as culture and religion and thereby to their identity as Muslims. Independently of what position Swedish Muslims take as response to this pressure, it seems, to the extent what has been argued above is reasonably correct, clear that they will be carriers of a new and different type of Islam than any which is dominant in the countries of origin of the Swedish Muslims. Again: that Islam and the Muslim identities will change in Sweden is not the question, how it is going to change is the question.

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<sup>117</sup> This “impossibility” of being able to avoid being identified as “a Muslim” by the way they look alone is something that many of our secularized informants, not the least with Iranian background, who want to disassociate themselves from most matters to do with Islam, frequently report and complain about.