Abstract

Since the 1970s, Sweden has been renowned for its liberal immigration policy and its dedication to multiculturalism. In comparison to other European countries, Sweden seems to have made multiculturalism work, in the sense that the majority population has accepted the increase of ethno-cultural diversity, and anti-multiculturalist sentiment has not gained a strong foothold in public discourse and politics. This article hypothesises that the distinctive exceptionality of Sweden is, at least to a degree, the product of the Swedish policy and praxis on moulding attitudes and public discourse on ethnic diversity that was introduced in the 1960s and 1970s. The integration regime implemented in Sweden after the Swedish government accepted the fact that the country had become a multicultural society put an onus on »mutual integration«, i.e. the establishment of a positive attitude towards immigrants among the majority population. This policy included an aim to mould public discourse on immigration and ethnic diversity in order to make multiculturalism work, making the Swedes increasingly tolerant.

Mats Wickström (Turku):

Making multiculturalism work
Policy and Praxis on Moulding Attitudes and Public Discourse on Ethnic Diversity in Post-War Sweden

Zusammenfassung


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Introduction

Sweden is widely considered to be one of the most immigrant-friendly countries in the world. The country currently has the highest per capita immigration in Western Europe, with circa 15 per cent of the population being foreign born. Diversity, multiculturalism and tolerance are officially endorsed public ideals that, at least in principle, guide the exercise of public authority in Sweden. Until the 2010 parliamentary election the Swedish parliament was, with the exception of short parliamentary representation of New Democracy in 1991–1994, bereft of a right-wing populist party. The right-wing populist Sweden Democrats managed to enter parliament in 2010 with 5.7 per cent of the vote, but have been shunned by the other parties in parliament. The Sweden Democrats have not been able to influence immigration and integration policy in the same way that other right-wing populist parties in the rest of Europe, such as the Danish People’s Party, have been able to after electoral success.  

By and large, the Swedish media are negatively disposed towards the Sweden Democrats and have, as Hellström, Nilsson and Stoltz have shown, »provided an arena for mainstream antipathies towards the party«. This can be contrasted to the situation in Denmark, where parts of the Danish media, in particular the tabloid Ekstra Bladet, have provided an arena for antipathies towards immigration and multiculturalism since the 1990s. 

Large cross-national value surveys furthermore show that the Swedish population has the most positive attitude towards immigrants and other minorities out of the western countries surveyed.

Sweden’s pro-immigration and multiculturalist policies, and the positive attitudes to ethno-cultural diversity expressed by the Swedish population, make Sweden an outlier in Europe, where many countries today reject this approach. This brings up a question: why is Sweden so different, both policy- and attitude-wise, in comparison to the other old nation-states of Europe? I will in this article not seek to tackle this massive question head on, but rather to provide a historical piece to the puzzle that is Swedish divergence, by arguing that in the 1960s and 1970s the Swedish government, with the aid of the Swedish media, established a systematic practice of trying to control public discourse and to mould attitudes on immigration and multiculturalism. I will tentatively suggest that the path-dependent effects of these systematic efforts to make multiculturalism work might partially explain Sweden’s current divergence from most of the rest of Western Europe in regards to attitudes on ethnic diversity and the politicisation of diversity. I will end the article with a brief discussion on how the media landscape of the 21st century poses new challenges to the traditional ways of making multiculturalism work in Sweden.

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1 Akkerman 2012, p. 519.
2 Hellström, Nilsson & Stoltz 2012, p. 204.
3 Hervik 2012.
4 Santesson 2012. Formal affirmations of the benefits of diversity and the expression of positive attitudes in surveys have, however, not prevented Sweden from becoming an ethnically segregated country with concomitant social problems. Andersson, Brámå & Holmqvist 2010.
Aims of the article

The notion that Sweden might be different due to the systematic moulding of public discourse and attitudes is not a new one. Sociologist Elina Haavio-Mannila argued already in 1988 (though without offering any empirical evidence to support the argument) that the reason why Sweden, unlike Norway and Denmark, lacked xenophobic political parties could be explained by its generous immigration policy and by state indoctrination of the attitudes of the people.\(^5\) Haavio-Mannila’s use of the term ›indoctrination‹ is sociological, even if indoctrination is if often used in a pejorative sense. Haavio-Mannila makes the point that the Swedish state had succeeded in moulding the attitudes of the population of Sweden in the way the state had intended: to change negative attitudes towards immigration and immigrants into more positive ones. Haavio-Mannila is not the only researcher who has argued that the Swedish state has conducted some sort of large scale and longstanding educational effort to make the majority population of Sweden more »tolerant«\(^6\) of immigrants. The Swedish ethnologist Karl-Olov Arnstberg, who, like Haavio-Mannila, has personal experience with the times and processes he is commenting on, makes the following argument: »Researchers, politicians and public officials have had a common moral mission, to educate the Swedish people into accepting the immigrants, into cultural relativism.«\(^7\)

This article will revise and expand on these hypothetical and empirically unsubstantiated claims made by Haavio-Mannila and Arnstberg, as well as on present evidence, in support of the following argument: at the end of the 1960s the Swedish government decided to mould public opinion and to control public discourse on immigrants and immigration with the aim of making Swedish people’s attitudes towards immigrants in Sweden (ever) more positive and tolerant. Neither Arnstberg nor Haavio-Mannila include the media in their arguments. This article will include an analysis of the media, as they are, or at least were, the main upholder of public discourse and thus an important shaper of public opinion. All efforts to control public discourse and mould public opinion since the 19\(^{th}\) century have used, or tried to use, modern mass media.

Sweden has been a liberal democracy with concomitant freedom of the press since the beginning of the 20\(^{th}\) century, but the media, the political parties and the government have not existed independently of one another. The advent of the age of mass democracy went hand in hand with the emergence of a mass media able to reach large parts of the population. The concept of public opinion is historically intertwined with the phenomenon of mass media and any study concerned with public opinion during the 20\(^{th}\) century must include an analysis of the media and their agenda-setting powers.\(^8\) Public discourse is, in this article, defined as the opinions that circulate

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5 Haavio-Mannila 1988, p. 32.  
6 The political concept of tolerance, a product of sectarianism in early-modern Europe, was historically conceptualised as the non-interference with things one dislikes or disagrees with in order for societal peace to be upheld. However, the contemporary Swedish conceptualisation of tolerance usually means the (unconditional) acceptance and respect of someone or something »different«. For a discussion on the use of the concept of tolerance in Sweden see e.g. Johansson Heinö 2009.  
7 »Forskare, politiker och samhällsfunktionärer har haft ett gemensamt moraliskt uppdrag, att födra det svenska folket till att acceptera invandrarna, till kulturrelativism.« Arnstberg 2008, p. 57.  
and are considered legitimate in the public sphere, which in an industrialised mass society is the primary arena for public discourse. The public sphere has, since the late 18\textsuperscript{th} century, primarily been constituted of the mass media, first the press and later also radio and television. Public discourse is therefore not the same as the discourse of the people: what citizens think and discuss among themselves. Pollsters often present what people »think« and what attitudes they hold as public opinion, but this opinion is certainly informed and influenced by public discourse. Of course, the attitudes of the citizenry also inform and influence public discourse, but the public sphere, the traditional home of public discourse, is not democratic in the sense that every citizen has equal access to it. The media have traditionally not only upheld the public sphere; they have also functioned as its gatekeeper.

In a historical perspective, elite or governmental efforts to mould attitudes and control public discourse are nothing new: in the interwar period the makers of public discourse had tried, and apparently succeeded (which in the 1960s became a problem), to convince the Swedish population that it was of an especially pure and great race and that people of »inferior blood« did not possess the same excellent qualities as the Swedes. Newspapers, educators, politicians and scientists argued that the non-Swedish »Others« should not be allowed to immigrate to Sweden and that Swedes should not mate with those of »inferior racial stock« in order to maintain the superior biological inheritance of the Swedish race. After the Second World War the Swedes thus had to be re-educated on the question of race as Sweden (again) strived to follow international trends on the question of race. Re-education on matters related to race and ethnic diversity also became salient as the number of non-Swedes in Sweden started to grow due to post-war immigration. By the 1960s, large numbers of foreigners had settled in Sweden and lived next door to Swedes who had in their bookshelves encyclopaedias that hierarchically divided the population of the world into different populations with the Swedes occupying a top spot.\footnote{See, e.g. Broberg 1995; Catomeris 2004; Furuhagen 2007.}

The history of racism and xenophobia in Sweden has been relatively well covered by researchers from different fields, but the history of Swedish anti-racism and tolerance has not been explored to the extent that this unique, in a historical and comparative perspective, social and ideological phenomenon deserves. One explanation for this might be that the Swedes themselves are partially blind to how much more tolerant and generous Sweden is compared to the rest of Europe. Perhaps the political implications of asking questions connected to Swedish differentiation have deterred researchers unwilling to, even indirectly, substantiate the claims of, e.g. the Sweden Democrats as the party tries to gain legitimacy by claiming to be a »normal« party in a European context. The Sweden Democrats also claim that the mass immigration and the transformation of Sweden into a multicultural society has been an elite project which has never had the support of the Swedish majority, and it is therefore possible that investigations into how the Swedish government has tried to manage public opinion on immigration and multiculturalism are seen as politically inappropriate.

The topic of why Sweden differs, especially in comparison to Denmark, where the populist Danish People’s Party has been able to change Danish immigration and integration policies, has attracted a lot of research since the early...
No exhaustive account has, however, been published on why Swedish public discourse on multiculturalism has been so different from Danish public discourse, since the labour immigration period ended in both countries in the 1970s. We know that public discourse on immigration and multiculturalism in Denmark has been much »rougher« (or, depending on perspective »open«) than in Sweden, but we do not (yet) know why. This article will hopefully provide another piece to this puzzle by highlighting the gatekeeping functions of the makers of public discourse and opinion and by highlighting the efforts of the government to produce »toleration«.

Setting the scene: media coverage on immigrants in post-war Sweden

Sweden was a country of emigration from the middle of 19th century until the 1930s. The pre-war reverse of the migration pattern was mainly due to the decrease of emigration to the USA and return immigration from the USA. During and after the Second World War Sweden received a large number of war refugees. The demand for labour was strong in the Swedish post-war economy and labour immigration from Finland and southern Europe grew rapidly until 1970, when it peaked at ca. 80,000 immigrants. The cessation of labour immigration for non-Nordic immigrant workers in 1972 decreased immigration levels for a time, but subsequent refugee and family immigration has maintained Sweden’s status as a country of immigration. Immigration has made Sweden multicultural, or rather multiethnic, in a descriptive sense. The population growth of Sweden during the post-war period from around 6.6 million in 1945 to over 9 million after the turn of the millennium has largely been spurred by immigration.11

In the 1960s the integration of labour immigrants became regarded as a social problem that needed to be solved by the Swedish welfare state, and the Swedish government started preparing for the permanent settlement of them and their families. Sweden’s first general integration policy was introduced in 1968. This policy stated that all immigrants in Sweden had the same social rights as Swedish citizens and must be treated equally on the labour and housing market. In 1975, the Swedish parliament unanimously accepted a new immigrant and minority policy centred on three general policy aims: equality, freedom of choice, and co-operation. The term »multiculturalism«12 was not formally used to describe the new policy, but the policy goals embodied the meaning of the concept as it later has been defined: a policy that specifically recognises and promotes the unique cultural characteristics of all ethnic groups in a society and promotes the idea that the maintenance of ethnocultural groups enriches society as a whole. The core tenets of the political idea of multiculturalism were also inscribed into the Swedish constitution in 1976. The new public ideal of multiculturalism included a normative rejection of what was, and is, conceptualised as its opposite; the ideal of homogeneity and all the social and political ills that are perceived to stem from this ideal, e.g. assimilationist policies.13

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10 See e.g. Hedetoft, Petersson & Sturfelt 2006; Green-Pedersen & Krogstrup 2008.
11 Lundh 2005.
12 Mångkulturalism or multikulturalism in Swedish.
13 Wickström 2013a.
In post-war Sweden public opinion was in the hands of a clearly defined set of makers of public discourse. During the early 1960s, the primary movers of public opinion in Sweden were the political parties and the press themselves. The Swedish press were still to a relatively high extent directly or indirectly tied to the political machines of the parties, but by the turn of the 1970s the financial ties between the press and the parties had largely ceased to exist. After the demise of the traditional party presses, the press and the new mediums of radio and TV, both state-run, assumed a more independent position vis-à-vis the parties and thus a stronger independent opinion-shaping role. However, the loosening of the direct ties to the political parties did not make the media immune to political influence from the parties. In fact the demise of the party press, which hit the social democrats particularly hard, probably strengthened the political need of the social democrats to exercise some kind of control over the press.

In 1965 the Swedish press commonly denoted the immigrants in Sweden as foreigners (utlänningar) and/or according to their purported nationality, e.g. Finns or Yugoslavs, and it did not hesitate to mention the fact that a crime had been committed by one or several foreigners. Hultén’s analysis of the coverage of immigrant issues in four Swedish newspapers shows that the practice of emphasising non-Swedishness in relation to crime was standard practice in the middle of the 1960s. The local newspaper analysed by Slavnić, Folkbladet Östgöten, had no problem with explicitly connecting immigrants with negative phenomena like criminality and public health problems, e.g. the spread of venereal diseases, at least until 1968. Slavnić also notes that persons who viewed the immigrants negatively were free to air their views in the paper without critique, and that news articles often used an ironic and mocking tone when covering events related to immigrants.

The Finns were the largest foreign nationality in Sweden and they were also the nationality that was most often singled out by the Swedish press. The way the Swedish press covered crimes and other social problems related to the Finns, especially during the first half of the 1960s, has been called the »A Finn Again« campaign by both Finnish immigrants in Sweden and immigration scholars. What the Finn, stereotypically depicted as wild and often drunken, had done »again« was of course a criminal act. The Swedish press not only mentioned foreign nationality in passing when reporting on crime: at least until the mid-1960s non-Swedishness was commonly made explicit, by, for instance, referring to the nationality of a suspect in the headline. A typical headline in 1966 could thus read like the following one in Expressen, Sweden’s biggest evening paper at the time: »Jealous Spaniard threatened woman with a knife«. Since 1945, there had existed a directive in the publication rules of Publicistklubben (a journalistic association) that discouraged putting an emphasis on the nationality or race of an

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14 Weibull 2006, p. 185.
15 Hultén 2006a, p. 122.
16 Slavnić, 2008, pp. 373–375.
18 Svartsjuk spanjor knivhotade kvinna 1966.
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indicated person if these factors were not directly connected to the crime, but the semi-formal and at the time loosely-formulated directives of Publicistklubben did not hinder the common practice of naming or even emphasising the foreign nationality of a suspected or convicted criminal in the press, as earlier research has shown. As far as I know there has not been any study done on how Swedish public television (one channel) and radio (three channels) reported on immigrants and crime during the 1960s. Swedish public radio used the news telegraphs produced by the news agency Tidningarnas Telegrambyrå (The Newspapers’ Telegram Bureau), so we can assume that the foreign nationality of suspected and convicted criminals was also broadcasted.

The problem of Swedish attitudes in the new multicultural Sweden

As early as 1965 the Minister of Education Olof Palme, in a radio speech, urged Swedes to show more understanding towards the »new Swedes«, who, according to Palme, were the harbingers of progressive internationalism in Sweden. Palme also continued to use this kind of rhetoric after he became prime minister in 1969. The Working Group on Immigrant Issues (subsequently referred to as »the (Working) Group«), a government body set up to deal with the integration of immigrants in 1966, claimed from the start that the problem of integration was not only a problem for immigrants, but also for Swedes. The Working Group was of the opinion that Swedes needed to change their traditional habit of wariness around foreigners. Swedes also needed to start showing an active interest in immigrants in every sector of society and to accept their cultural differences. The need to inform immigrants about Swedish society and Swedes about immigration and the immigrants were the top priorities for the Working Group. The Working Group targeted Swedish public opinion and considered shifting public opinion towards a more immigrant-friendly position to be one of the keystones for the successful integration of immigrants. The group took selective measures to create more positive publicity of immigrants in the press. According to Kjell Öberg, the social democratic director of the Working Group, these measures were quite successful at the time.

In a book on the so-called »immigrant question«, published by the Working Group in 1968, the editor of the book, Arne Redemo, stated in the preface that the situation of the immigrants in Sweden was in many ways difficult and that one of the main reasons for this was lack of understanding among the »old« Swedes. In the same book, director Öberg emphasised the importance of Swedish adjustment to immigrants and argued that more tolerance education, both in Swedish homes and in schools, was needed to eradicate Swedish prejudice. Öberg was pleased with the positive way in which the editorial and cultural pages of the Swedish press wrote about immigrants, but unhappy about the way in which the newspapers mentioned foreign nationality in relation to crime. This habit

19 Publicistklubbens årsbok 1945, p. 8.
20 Wickström 2013b, p. 39.
21 Ny i Sverige 1965, p. 18–19.
22 Diskrimineringsutredningen 1984, p. 198.
23 »de gamla« svenskarna Redemo 1968, p. 5
was, according to Öberg, totally unnecessary and harmful. He argued that this negative inclination in the crime news reporting had contributed to reproducing the unproven notion prevalent among native Swedes that immigrants were more criminally inclined than Swedes.  

Öberg and the Working Group not only articulated a desire for a change in the way the Swedish press reported on immigrants and crime; they actively worked to influence the media. The Group even employed a journalist, Ulf Mannberg, who worked on ethical issues in the press. The efforts to influence the media were also continued in the successor to the Working Group, the National Board of Immigration (hereafter referred to as the Board), which was established in 1969 and given the status of a civil department. The Immigration Board made no secret of its aims to mould opinion and change attitudes. In an interview in 1969 Öberg, now general-director of the Board, openly stated the aims of the new public authority:

> Information is the main tool. Information on Sweden for the immigrants and for the Swedes on the immigrants. It is not pity campaigns we need but factual information and understanding of the situation of the immigrants. We seek the cooperation of mass media, the press and radio and TV, but also important is the informing and influencing of the authorities, institutions and organisations, also the labour movement. The aim is to create a positive attitude towards the immigrant.

Öberg’s words were in line with what Immigration Board set out to do in practice. In the years following the establishment of the National Immigration Board it conducted many campaigns to influence and educate municipal authorities on immigrants and integration policy. Conferences were another method used by the Board to influence integration policy at a local and regional level. The Board also arranged yearly seminars for journalists working in the press, the radio and television. The political scientist Maritta Soininen has consequently characterised the work of the Board in the 1970s as being missionising and propagandist.

According to the migration and ethnic relations scholar Charles Westin, who at the time was a young doctoral student who frequented the offices of the Working Group as a part of his dissertational work, the Working Group issued a recommendation to the media in which the Group urged the media to refrain from reporting the nationality of criminals. Westin claims, without going into detail or providing references, that this recommendation was the reason that the Swedish media changed their crime reporting. Erkki Tammenoksa, a

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29 Soininen 1992, p. 22.
leading figure in the Finnish community in Sweden, has also stated that Kjell Öberg personally stopped the so-called »A Finn Again« campaign in the Swedish press.\textsuperscript{31} However, in the book *Finnarnas historia i Sverige* \textsuperscript{3}, a work on the history of the Finns in Sweden during the post-war period, Risto Laakkonen claims that the Swedish press stopped reporting a criminal’s Finnish nationality after the Finnish embassy in Stockholm had contacted the chief editors of the larger newspapers and news agencies and told them to stop their depreciatory reporting. Laakkonen presents no evidence for this claim, besides the implicit evidence of speaking as an almost contemporary observer – Laakkonen worked at the embassy from 1972 to 1981. Laakkonen also claims that the Swedish newspapers commonly used the term *finnjävel* (»damn Finn« or »Finn bastard«) as late as the early 1970s, again without presenting any evidence for this claim.\textsuperscript{32} As far as I know, Laakkonen is the only person who has claimed that not only did the Swedish press publish the nationality of Finnish criminals, but that it also commonly referred to Finns as *finnjävlar*. We also know that the Swedish press had, at least somewhat, changed the way it reported on immigrants by 1970.\textsuperscript{33} It is of course possible that the Finnish embassy in Sweden at some point contacted the major Swedish newspapers and news agencies, but in light of Laakkonen’s unsubstantiated claims about the use of *finnjävel*, the fact that he was not a witness to this supposed effort by the embassy to influence the Swedish press, and the claims by other contemporary observers that it was Öberg and the Working Group who persuaded the press to refrain from mentioning nationality, Laakkonen’s account on why the press changed their ways must be considered speculative.

Then again, we also currently lack conclusive evidence in support of the claim that it was Öberg and the Working Group who made the press give up their practice of reporting the nationality of suspects and convicted criminals. Why would the free press of Sweden suddenly change it *modus operandi* in crime reporting when a small government agency without any formal power recommended they do so? In the 1960s the Swedish press was very candid, so candid in fact that the Social Democratic Party began to consider the freedom of the press, especially the manifestations of this freedom in the evening press, to be a problem.

In the middle of the 1960s the social democratic Prime Minister Tage Erlander expressed concern over the state of the Swedish press and warned about the political dangers of the growth and eventual monopoly of the liberal evening paper *Expressen*. Erlander’s concerns were also brought on by the financial troubles of the social democratic press; in 1966 Sweden’s largest social democratic newspaper *Stockholms-Tidningen* went under. The sensationalist journalism of *Expressen* continued to be a thorn in the side of the social democratic party, but the publishing of names and other unconventional practices of *Expressen*, such as conducting their own investigations into a supposed network of armed Swedish Nazis, also concerned the other political parties and

\textsuperscript{31} Tammenoksa 2012.

\textsuperscript{32} Laakkonen 1995, p. 127. It seems probable that Laakkonen bases his claims on hearsay and that he was told by people at the embassy that it was the embassy that put an end to the naming of nationality in the Swedish press when he started working there in 1972.

\textsuperscript{33} Slavnić 2008.
Swedish lawyers. In 1967 the patience of the social democrats ran out and two motions were submitted in both chambers of the Swedish parliament titled »om upprätthållandet av pressetiska krav« (»on the upholding of press ethical requirements«). This was the beginning of a social democratic offensive against the press that, after fierce resistance, especially from Expressen, culminated in an ultimatum from the social democrats in 1969: either the press did something substantial to ensure that press ethical standards were upheld or the social democrats would use legislative power to rein the press back in. The press caved in, and in 1969 the self-regulating body The Swedish Press Council was established.  

There can be no denying that the Working Group wanted to change the habit of naming foreign nationality in Swedish crime reporting, but at the same time the powerful social democratic party machine also wanted to reign in the press, and it seems probable that this drive worked in concurrence with the aim of the Working Group. When new rules and regulations were implemented by the Swedish media on the indirect order of the social democratic party at the turn of the 1970s, it in all likelihood facilitated the inclusion of press ethical rules that could have been written by the Working Group, for instance the following rules that came into force on 1st May 1970:

> Depreciatory publicity on ethnic groups [...] might be insulting to the individual members of that group. 
> [...] Do not, in headlines, rack cards or in any other way, accentuate the race or nationality of suspects or convicted persons if this is irrelevant to the matter.

To be sure, paragraphs like these might have been included in the rules even without the efforts of the Working Group and the social democratic government, but the circumstantial evidence strongly suggests that the rule came about as result of the efforts of the Working Group and its successor the National Board of Immigration to see the implementation of such a rule combined with the establishment of formal media regulations after political pressure from the social democrats. More importantly, the establishment of a system of media self-regulation paved the way for a stricter and more unified implementation of press ethical rules in general, including already established rules that discouraged an emphasis on ethnicity in connection with negative social phenomena such as crime.

Other important contemporary factors that might directly or indirectly have contributed to the inclusion of the rule must also be mentioned, such as the impact of the radical and anti-racist 1968 generation in the media and the Swedish ratification of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 1972. For instance, paragraph 7 of the convention states the following:

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34 Bergling, von Krogh & Nejman 2009, pp. 16–43.
State Parties undertake to adopt immediate and effective measures, particularly in the fields of teaching, education, culture and information, with a view to combating prejudices which lead to racial discrimination and to promoting understanding, tolerance and friendship among nations and racial or ethnical groups […] 36

When the Working Group, in effect the government, asked the Swedish media to refrain from negative reporting in connection to immigrants it asked them to do something progressive and good. The Working Group did not ask publishers and journalists to refrain from critically scrutinising big business or corrupt politicians, only a group of (supposedly) vulnerable and powerless people in the interest of the whole of Swedish society. With the leftist, anti-racist and social crusader mentality of 1968 running strong, especially in the new up-and-coming generation of baby-boomer journalists, it was perhaps not a hard request to accept. 37

Another significant feature working in favour of more favourable press coverage of immigrants was the fact that by the turn of the 1970s a party political consensus on not politicising the immigrant question had been established in Swedish politics. 38 There was no party political opinion maker, e.g. a member of parliament or even a party leader, who tried to capitalise on the fact that Sweden had become a country of immigration in a manner critical of immigrants. In fact, by the beginning of the 1970s the parties almost competed in rhetorical immigrant-friendliness in their manifestos and other statements. The formulation of integration policy was left to the experts in the National Board of Immigration and the Commission on Immigration (hereafter referred to as the Commission). The details of immigration and integration policy in Sweden were largely apolitical and plotted out by experts and civil servants well into the 1980s. 39

The Commission on Immigration and the moulding of attitudes and public discourse

In 1968 the social democratic government set up the Commission on Immigration to deal more thoroughly with the problem of immigrant integration in Sweden. The name of the commission is misleading in English; the commission was not to deal with immigration policy, only settlement policy or integration policy. Sweden has a tradition of establishing commissions when a social problem emerges or is conceptualised as such in the public sphere. The mission of a commission is to study the problem on the basis of evidence and to achieve political consensus on the proposed solutions to the problem. The commission system has been an important arena for interaction between the interest groups of Swedish society. The commissions have been appointed to deal with specific issues and they have had an important consensus-building role in Swedish politics, at least up until the

36 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.
37 For the leftist turn among Swedish journalists see Asp 2012. Öberg also notes a sea change in Swedish journalism and denotes 1968 as the turning point. Öberg 1982, p. 204.
38 Dahlström & Esaiasson 2011.
39 Hammar 1985, p. 45.
late 1970s. The government commissions have also functioned as important knowledge-producing institutions, as
the commissions in the spirit of social engineering tradition were supposed to base their proposals on scientific
research.\footnote{Helander & Johansson 1998, pp. 14–18.}

It was the Commission on Immigration that in 1974 put forward the proposal for a new multiculturalist\footnote{Ethnically or religiously diverse societies should protect and promote diversity and should be based on both individual and group
rights.} integration policy based on the concepts of equality, freedom of choice and co-operation. The new policy was
unanimously passed by the Swedish parliament on 14 May 1975. According to this new policy, native-born
Swedes should also be integrated into the new multicultural Sweden. In its final report the Commission outlined
how public opinion should be moulded and the attitudes of the native-born Swedes changed. The Commission
stated matter-of-factly that the primary purpose of all government information on immigrants directed at Swedes
was to influence the public’s opinion »in a way favourable to the immigrants and further understanding of people
with values, traditions, customs and patterns of behaviour that are different from one’s own«\footnote{»i för
invandrarna gynnsam riktning och skapa ökad förståelse för människor med värderingar, traditioner, seder och
beteendemönster som skiljer sig från de egna«, Invandrarutredningen 1974, p. 385.}. The Commission
did not see ad-campaigns like the one tried by the National Immigration Board in 1971 as fruitful; the most
efficient way to influence attitudes was through the educational system. According to the Commission, prejudiced
parents could not be trusted with their children in matters of tolerance:

There can be no doubting the fact that the attitudes of little children towards comrades of another ethnic
origin are marked by the attitude of the parents towards immigration and immigrants. Because it [the
attitude of the parents] is to such a high degree the result of ignorance it becomes imperative to counteract
it in and through pre-school.\footnote{»Det råder knappast någon tvivel om att småbarnens inställning till kamrater av annat etniskt ursprung präglas av föräldrarnas inställning till invandring och invandrare. Eftersom den i så stor utsträckning ofta präglas av okunnighet blir det angeläget att motverka den i och genom förskolan.« Ibid.}

The positive attitude towards immigration that should be established in pre-school was then to be built upon in
comprehensive school and high school, the Commission proposed. The personnel of the educational system
should therefore be a target group for the authorities responsible for immigrant matters.\footnote{Ibid., p. 386.} The long-term goal of the Commission was very ambitious: future generations of Swedes should have a much more positive attitude on
ethnic diversity than contemporary adult Swedes.

The Commission argued that the media played a very important role in influencing the public’s knowledge and
attitudes on migration and immigrants, but that this influence was not always positive. Even news stories that
were produced with the good intention of improving public understanding of immigration and the situation of
immigrants in Sweden could have the opposite effect. It was therefore, according to the Commission, in the
interest of Sweden that the information about immigrants provided by the media should be guided by the government and be »as objective, correct and positive attitude producing as possible«. The Commission did not discuss the apparent contradictions in these objectives; it only stated that the National Immigration Board, the public authority tasked with managing information on immigrants in the media, had a difficult task at hand for which it needed additional resources. According to the Commission, the Board should be able to react quickly if need be to correct news coverage that could be harmful to immigrants. The Board should also be given the necessary resources for the long term influence of media personnel. The Commission noted that public authorities in Sweden should not, in principle, seek to shape public opinion, but argued that this principle should not apply in this case: the Board should pursue the shaping of public opinion due to its special societal task.

The stance of the Commission on Immigration on controlling public discourse and changing the attitudes of the native Swedish population was clear: in the long term the majority population’s attitudes should and could be changed, mainly through the educational system. Control over public discourse was also important in the short term: the way in which immigrants were portrayed in the media should also change. Media coverage on immigration and news related to immigrants should not lead to an increase in negative attitudes. How, then, did the government and the Swedish parliament react to these proposals from the Commission? Were they included in the proposition on the new integration policy that was unanimously accepted in parliament? The short answer is that government and parliament reacted with unanimous approval and the Commission was included in the proposition.

The proposition for a new integration policy was in line with the Commission’s position on the need for opinion-moulding activities, both in the educational system in the media. The budget of the National Board of Immigration was also increased in order to facilitate its opinion-shaping capacity. The different referral bodies (organisations and institutions with an interest in the matter) to which the proposition had been circulated for comment, an established practice of the corporatist system, were also in favour of the proposals of the Commission. In the parliamentary debate preceding the vote on the proposition, no one questioned its opinion-shaping proposals, but statements in clear support of the objective of changing the attitudes of Swedes were heard, both from the social democrats and members of the opposition. For example, the following is a statement from a liberal MP:

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45 »så objektiv, korrekt och positivt attitydskapande som möjligt«, Ibid.
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid., p. 387.
48 Prop. 1975:26, Regeringens proposition om riktlinjer för invandrar- och minoritets- politiken m.m., pp. 79–80.
Here it is really important to work to permeate the whole of our society with a positive attitude towards other nationalities and ethnic groups. It is therefore not enough to just dissociate oneself from demeaning attitudes against immigrants and minority groups; we must also actively work against such expressions.49

The minister presenting the proposition on behalf of the social democratic government in parliament, Anna-Greta Leijon, praised the unity of the Riksdag in the acceptance of the new policy:

It is gratifying that already from the beginning, in the work of the Commission of Immigration and now also in the parliament, there is agreement on the aims [of the policy]. This guarantees success for the ambition to, step by step, make Sweden something of a leading country in the field of immigrant policy.50

The goals and measures aimed at changing attitudes and patrolling public discourse that the Working Group on Immigration, and later the National Board on Immigration, had pursued and put into practice had now gained an official seal of approval from the Swedish parliament. The strategy to transform the attitudes of the Swedish population and to control public discourse on immigration and ethnic diversity that, from the late 1960s onwards, had been devised and pursued by civil servants in the field of immigration policy had become the formal policy of the Kingdom of Sweden by the mid-1970s.

The media and multiculturalism in the 1970s

There was a significant change in the portrayal of immigrants and immigration between 1965 and 1975. In 1975, the newspapers analysed by Hultén consequently used the inclusive concept »immigrant«, and terms derived from it, like »immigrant culture«. The term »immigrant« had not been used in 1965, at least in the material analysed by Hultén. The content of the articles had also changed: the message in the articles from 1975 followed, according to Hultén, the new multiculturalist policy of Sweden. The articles stressed the rich culture of the immigrants and generally described immigrants in positive terms.51 There was also a substantial reduction in the number of articles connecting immigrants to crime in 1975, compared to 1965 and 1955. Hultén has only found six articles on non-Swedes and crime in the material from 1975 and two of these articles covered two Japanese citizens suspected of terrorism who were later deported.52 Hultén gives no explanation for this remarkable drop in articles that connected crime and non-Swedes, but it seems probable that an important factor was the new press ethical rules and the system for upholding them that had been introduced in the 1970s. Swedish journalists did not mention nationality in relation to crime in the same way in the 1970s as they did in the 1960s. Swedish
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criminologists Hofer, Sarnecki and Tham, who were all young academics in the 1970s, have written that the issue of immigrants and crime had become a kind of taboo in public discourse in the 1970s. They exemplify this by recounting how the Minister for Justice publicly attacked an article published in the journal of the Swedish police which had suggested that the Roma in Sweden were more criminally inclined than the general population. In light of the results of the media researchers and the political consensus on multiculturalism that was established in Sweden in the 1970s, it seems that issue of crime and ethnicity had, in fact, become a taboo in Swedish public discourse.

Slavnić also observes what he characterises as »a radical U-turn« in the reporting of Folkbladet Östgöten from 1970 onwards: the negative descriptions of immigrants are replaced by positive reports on new integration measures and friendship between Swedes and immigrants. Brune’s research also evidences the change in Swedish journalism on immigration and immigrants; media coverage in the 1970s was different both from earlier and later time periods. The news coverage on Syrian refugees in the mid-1970s was, for instance, characterised by social pathos, earnest concern and care for the refugees, according to Brune. In television and radio, the practice of promoting good ethnic relations in Sweden and combatting racism and prejudice that had been established in the late 1960s continued in the 1970s. The series »Living in Sweden«, which ran both on TV and radio, and which also included printed educational material, was a joint multimedia project between the state broadcaster and the National Board of Immigration. One of the main objectives of the series was to educate the Swedes on immigrants.

Media coverage of immigration and immigrants changed radically from the 1960s to the 1970s. A profound shift occurred in public discourse, as well as an equally profound one in Swedish integration policy. Multiculturalism was now an officially endorsed idea and no opinion maker, big or small, advocated assimilation, even though as late as the mid-1960s the pro-assimilationist position had been hegemonic. What is striking about the multiculturalist turn in Swedish public discourse is how all-embracing it was: no opinion-maker of note criticised the idea of multiculturalism in public after it had made its political breakthrough in the early 1970s.

Gatekeeping then and now

In the 1960s Kjell Öberg and the Working Group on Immigration had expressed a desire to see a change in the way in which immigrants were portrayed in the media, and in the following years a change most definitely took place. This invites a question: was this change the direct outcome of the desire to see such a change by Kjell Öberg and other influential actors in the Swedish political system? It would be impossible to argue that the

56 Runcis 2001, p. 91.
57 Wickström 2013a.
change was a direct result of government pressure. Many things changed in Sweden from the early 1960s to mid-1970s, and the cultural shift that occurred during these years was probably one the most profound in the history of Sweden. Sweden in 1975 was a different country culturally, ideologically and even mentally compared to the Sweden of 1965. Still, whatever the zeitgeist might be, changes in praxis and ideas need to be performed and articulated by actors. With respect to the shifts in emphasising the national identity of alleged criminals or suspects, it seems probable that the move to withholding this information was the result of the actions of the government. Specifically, the public authorities the Working Group on Immigration, and its successor the National Immigration Board, are likely to be directly responsible for this change. The zeitgeist provided ideological ammunition, but spirits (of the times) cannot pull triggers.

The argument of this article, which is that in the 1960s and 1970s the Swedish government, in co-operation with the Swedish mass media, tried to change the attitude of the population and to control public discourse on immigrants and immigration, has, in view of the evidence presented above, been empirically supported. Haavio-Mannila’s argument from 1988 has been substantiated in at least one regard: the Swedish government tried, from the end of the 1960s onwards, to indoctrinate the Swedish population with the aim of increasing positive attitudes towards immigrants. What, then, was the motivation for this indoctrination effort? It is impossible to give an exhaustive answer to this question within the scope of this article, but some contemporary ideas and processes that induced and sustained the effort are still evident.

Once immigration was deemed to be of a permanent nature the administrative and ideological mechanisms of the post-war Swedish welfare state kicked in. Labour immigrants were included in the Swedish welfare state regime as a vulnerable group and a new policy field was constituted in which immigrants became the objects of supportive and protective policy measures. As immigrants were conceptualised as vulnerable, it was not enough to grant them the same social rights as the native-born Swedes: immigrants should also be accepted by the Swedes as new members of Swedish society. The protection of vulnerable immigrants was, however, not the only reason to facilitate acceptance. Immigrants were also conceptualised as socially dangerous in the sense that their presence, the reactions their presence could give rise to, could endanger the socially integrated, and harmonious, society that many Swedes believed had been constructed in Sweden during the 20th century.

By the mid-1960s, the idea of a progressive and modern Sweden had given rise to a nationalistic self-image of Swedes as one of the most, if not the most, enlightened people in the world. As expressions of intolerance or even racism came to be seen as marks of un-progressiveness during the post-war period, it would have tarnished the self-image of Sweden, and the image of Sweden as one of the leading countries in the world that the Swedish elites wanted to project unto the world, if such expressions could be connected to Sweden. Swedish post-war nationalism, which included the notion of Sweden as the least nationalistic (in a traditional sense) country in the

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58 See e.g. Östberg 2002; Arvidsson 1999; Cronqvist, Sturfelt & Wiklund (eds.) 2008.
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world and thus the »best« country in the world, was probably a necessary condition for the all-encompassing project of trying to eradicate expressions and attitudes that could be interpreted as intolerant. The Swedish government and the makers of public discourse knew, e.g. through the first survey on Swedish prejudice that had been undertaken in 1969, that the Swedish public harboured intolerant attitudes, and the public was therefore to be denied affirmation of these negative attitudes in the public sphere.  

A consensus not to treat immigration and multiculturalism like other, normal, fields of political contestation was seemingly established and upheld by all the relevant opinion-makers in Sweden: the government, the political parties, the media and most of the public intellectuals (i.e. persons with access to the public sphere).

In 1985, after he had retired as director-general of the National Board of Immigration, Kjell Öberg, wrote, not without satisfaction, that he was convinced that the Swedish media regarded itself as a watch dog against xenophobia. Öberg believed that political success for what he called »the haters« (hatarna) was dependent not only on deep-seated hostility in the populace and skilful leaders, but most importantly on facilitation by the media. According to Öberg, hostility towards immigrants still existed in Sweden, but there were no skilful political leaders that could channel this animosity, nor could it access or be affirmed by the media, »Thank heavens!«  

Maybe Öberg should also have thanked himself – he was, after all, one of the principal architects behind the strategy to shift public attitudes and maintain a positive public discourse on immigration and multiculturalism in the public sphere.

It seems that the Swedish media has, in general, not strayed from the path laid out in the 1960s and that Öberg was so pleased about in 1985. The Swedish educational system has also continued its mission to foster more tolerant citizens.  

There was, however, a break in the media coverage on immigration and integration in the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s which culminated with Expressen’s article series »In black and white!« in September 1993.  

The great public stir and condemnation of the article series in general and of the »Drive them out!« placard in particular lead to the resignation of Expressen’s editor-in-chief Erik Månsson on the 15th of September.  

Around the same time, the internally unstable populist party New Democracy, which had been massively covered by the Swedish media,
became openly racist in its rhetoric and the media coverage of the party decreased and turned uniformly negative. In the parliamentary elections of 1994 the New Democracy received only 1 per cent of the votes cast and dropped out of parliament.\footnote{Häger 2012, pp. 43–45.} After the turbulent early 1990s, the Swedish media seem to have returned to their role as watch dogs, the position praised by Öberg in the mid-1980s. This turn of events can be compared to developments in Denmark, where immigration and multiculturalism also became negatively framed and politicised by the media in the 1990s without a subsequent return to a »tolerant« position.\footnote{Hervik 2012.}

Still, the right-wing populist party the Sweden Democrats, »haters« in Öberg’s terminology, received 5.7 per cent of the votes in the 2010 parliamentary elections – without particularly skilful leaders and without access to or assistance from the media.\footnote{Häger 2012.} There are of course many reasons to why right-wing populism finally broke through into the mainstream of Swedish politics, but one reason must be highlighted in the context of this article: the decline of traditional opinion-making power. For most of the post-war period the principal opinion makers, the media, the government and the political parties, could form a kind of consensus on what was legitimate to discuss in the public sphere. This probably accounts, at least to some degree, for the divergence of Sweden from other countries. Due to the internet, this is no longer possible – »the haters« can no longer be denied access to this newly formed part of the public sphere. »The haters« can now, e.g. through blogs and social media, reach the public without the permission of the gatekeepers: traditional media, the established political parties or the government. The gatekeepers have lost at least some of their former gatekeeping power and cannot control public discourse and opinion in the same way that they used to. The full cultural and political effects of the internet revolution will be assessed by future historians, but one thing seems certain: the post-war method of shaping attitudes and controlling public discourse on immigration and multiculturalism no longer works, not even in Sweden.

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