

## **Differentiation and Diversity in practising public policy—hindrance or possibility?**

Agneta Hedblom, Professor of Social Work, Institution for Human sciences, Kalmar University/ Institution for Global political studies, Malmo University

### **Abstract**

Firstly, the impact of differentiation amongst clients in public policy is investigated. Focus is directed towards activation policy, which aims to include individuals into the labour market. In Sweden activation is used as a part of integration policy, and a large number of those involved are immigrants. Empirical examples from Sweden are analysed of how public policy administrators, when applying activation policy, differentiate among the clients based on presumptions about gender and `race`. The question of how the underlying construction of Swedish welfare policy makes this differentiation possible is also addressed.

Secondly, also drawing on empirical examples, the impact of diversity amongst administrators in relation to differentiation and discrimination of clients is discussed, with reference to the concepts of representation and recognition. Could one solution to problems with negative differentiation amongst immigrants be diversity amongst the administrators? Could administrators from a specific group be seen as representative for other individuals from the same group and thereby enhance this group's possibilities integration?

### **Introduction**

In 2006 a major investigation was conducted by the Swedish government into discrimination. This investigation included 15 reports by around 100 Swedish researchers and experts on the area called the "Black book on integration".<sup>1</sup> The aim of the research was to study structural discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity and religion in all areas of society. Results show that this type of discrimination exists in all the sections of society included in the study and that it is based on the "otherization" of immigrants, a phenomenon which is produced and reproduced as a feature of everyday racism. The discrimination is also based on a systematic subordination of the "other" and operates in intersections of power relations and in, racist stereotypes; furthermore, it is gendered and related to class and age. In the areas of work and employment, the report<sup>2</sup> shows that there is discrimination in all sectors of working life and in the labour market. Discrimination also exists in the welfare state, rooted in a selective policy for immigrants based on categorization and unequal treatment.<sup>3</sup>

The first aim of this paper is to discuss and analyze the impact of differentiation amongst clients in public policy. Focus is directed towards activation policy which aims to include individuals into the labour market. In Sweden activation is used as a part of integration policy, and a large number of those involved are immigrants. The paper analyses empirical examples from Sweden of how public policy administrators differentiate among the clients in activation policy based on presumptions of gender and `race` and are thereby at risk of discriminating against them. It also discusses how the underlying construction of Swedish welfare policy

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<sup>1</sup> SOU 2006:79

<sup>2</sup> SOU 2006:59

<sup>3</sup> SOU 2006:37

makes this differentiation possible as well as how differentiation could affect social rights for immigrants involved in activation policy.

The second aim, also drawing on empirical examples, is to discuss the impact of diversity amongst administrators in relation to differentiation and discrimination of clients, with reference to the concepts of representation and recognition. Could one solution to problems of negative differentiation amongst immigrants be diversity amongst the administrators? Could administrators from a specific group be seen as representative for other individuals from the same group and thereby enhance a particular group's possibilities of integration?

### **Integration policy as activation policy**

During the last decades the European welfare states have shifted focus from welfare to workfare or activation policy.<sup>4</sup> In Sweden activation policy is (as mentioned above) part of integration policy. The Swedish integration policy is based on a "universal" ideology, while the activation policy is tied to a selective, local and enforcing system, that is to say a social assistance system that enables large distinctions among districts, groups and individuals though it is locally distributed and transformed in this process.

Local administrators tend to redraft and transform policies as they implement them. This is done in ways that sometimes result in discrimination of certain groups and several studies have shown that presumptions and local discourses regarding immigrants have influenced administrators and furthermore, that discrimination of immigrants is not unusual in welfare distribution.<sup>5</sup> These observations are of course problematic although administrators can choose to interpret activation policy used as integration policy in an alternative manner.

By means of different examples the first part of this paper will demonstrate how the underlying construction of Swedish integration policy as activation policy makes possible a differentiation of immigrants that, depending on which category they are differentiated into, either strengthens their social rights or undermines them.

Swedish integration policy has a history that stretches back some decades. The activation policy in its present form is a somewhat newer phenomenon. Below I describe how these two forms of social policy are intertwined.

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<sup>4</sup> I Lödemel & H Trickey *An offer you can't refuse – workfare in international perspective*, Bristol 2001

<sup>5</sup> see for example E Franzen *Socialbidrag bland invandrare*, Stockholm 1997, A Hedblom *Aktiveringspolitikens Janusansikte*, Lund 2004, F Hertzberg *Gräsrotsbyråkrati och normativ svenskhet*, Stockholm 2003, P de los Reyes et al *Maktens (o)lika förklädnader*, Stockholm 2002

*The change in integration policy during the last decades and its present essence:*

Borevi <sup>6</sup> divides integration policy into three phases: the establishment phase, the evaluation phase and the revaluation phase. The establishment phase, which occurred during the 1970s, can be seen as an extension of Swedish welfare policy, wherein the concepts of social equality and integration were intertwined. The immigrants were seen as a minority group, and as such they should be the objects of specific compensatory measures.

In the 1980s this “multicultural” endeavour was transformed during the evaluation phase into a policy wherein it seemed less important to preserve the immigrants’ own culture. While a special immigrant policy was left intact, the assimilation of immigrants became important and was seen as conflicting with the “multicultural” ideology.

The revaluation phase of the 1990s came to represent a setback to the multicultural ideology, though earlier decades of special immigration policy were seen as stigmatising for the immigrants because they were singled out as a special (problem) group. The new integration policy was therefore no longer only intended to encompass immigrants but the whole Swedish population: everybody should be integrated. In the future, immigrant needs should be a natural part of the general welfare policy; in other words, a universalistic approach should be adopted.

This latter approach is still at the core of current Swedish integration policy. One disassociate from the old particularistic immigration policy and the assimilation policy, while placing more focus on, for example, structural discrimination.<sup>7</sup> The goal of the current policy is an integrated society in which everyone is equal, irrespective of origin, and the stress on equal opportunity is obvious. After a short introductory period the immigrant should be included in the general policy.<sup>8</sup> This inclusion should be realised through the activation policy. However, this is where a paradox occurs.

*Activation policy:* During recent decades, welfare policy has shifted from a passive to an active orientation. In the European states, several models of activation policy have been created. The inspiration has come from the American “Workfare” model, but also from the Scandinavian “work for all strategy” and has resulted in something in-between, the “third way policy”.<sup>9</sup> What all these models have in common is that they are promoting “an offer you

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<sup>6</sup> K Borevi, *Välfärdsstaten I det mångkulturella samhället*, Stockholm 2002

<sup>7</sup> M Poopola *Integration en samtidsspeglning*, Stockholm 2002

<sup>8</sup> SOU 1996:55

<sup>9</sup> I Lödemel & H Trickey *An offer you can't refuse*, Bristol 2001

can't refuse",<sup>10</sup> namely that activation policy is a part of the social assistance system, and that they primarily focus on work or activation for individuals dependent on social assistance.<sup>11</sup>

The Nordic welfare model is characterized by generous income transfers for the unemployed, a heavy emphasis on activation, a low degree of unemployment and a limited number of individuals dependent on social assistance.<sup>12</sup> The Nordic model has also been described as a "dual-welfare" model.<sup>13</sup> The paradoxical relation between a generous income transfer for those on the labour market and reduced, needs-tested, stigmatising social assistance for those outside creates a system that in the first meaning is universal and in the second selective. The Nordic welfare states are therefore based on two parallel systems. A universal welfare model can only be realised when full participation in the welfare system can be achieved. Full participation in the Nordic welfare systems is income-related and therefore depends on the individual being part of the labour market.

The Nordic model that includes the "work for all" strategy has existed in the Nordic countries for many years. The "new" activation policy has partly continued the old "work line", but some changes are worth noting: the activation demand has been strengthened, which means that the applicant for social assistance must unconditionally accept the occupation offered, or be sanctioned. This changes the relation between rights and responsibilities for the individual, with more stress on the latter.<sup>14</sup> Other common characteristics are that the Nordic activation policy is regulated by framing laws and is locally based.<sup>15</sup>

The Swedish "work line" was continued until the 1990s, when the economic crisis that the country experienced, with increased unemployment as a consequence, gave rise to a change. Two different versions of labour market policy were established, one for "insiders" and one for "outsiders". The traditional labour market policy is still there for those that are actually in employment, while the "new" activation policy is directed towards specific target groups (mostly immigrants) that are already excluded from the labour market. While the former policy is national and based on rights, the latter is locally based and coercive. Both types are characterised by selective traits, but whereas the traditional "work line" is based on a positive selection directed towards groups, activation policy is based on a negative and individual selection.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Lödemel 1997 Established the expression in "Pisken i Arbetslinja"

<sup>11</sup>Lödemel & Trickey 2001

<sup>12</sup>Esping Andersen *The three worlds of welfare capitalism*, Cambridge 1990

<sup>13</sup>B Hvinden et al *Towards activation*, London 2001

<sup>14</sup>Hvinden et al 2001

<sup>15</sup>H Johansson *Activation in the Nordic countries*, Lund 2000

<sup>16</sup>T Salonen *Outsiders and insiders in Swedish labour market policy*, Lund 2000

*The use of activation policy as integration policy:* In integration policy it is of tremendous importance that immigrants are included into society via employment. Getting a foothold in the labour market is meant to automatically promote integration into other parts of society. Activation policy is the way chosen to realise this vision. One could say that Swedish integration policy actually *is* activation policy. The state has invested several million SEK into different kinds of project directed towards immigrants, especially in the suburbs of the big cities, where activation is central.<sup>17</sup>

The local character of activation policy and the possibilities of interpretation that a frame law allows for mean that in practice the policy is spelled through its administration. Several studies of “Work-fare” in the USA and UK<sup>18</sup> as well as one Swedish study<sup>19</sup> show that what happens in the administration of activation policy is important. The bureaucrats redraft the official policy in their meetings with the clients. Policy is not just implemented in this arena, but is subjected to redrafts and transformation.

### **Social rights for immigrants**

Citizenship can, and has been, interpreted in different ways. Although this paper focuses on the integration of immigrants into the welfare society, it seems reasonable to also discuss citizenship expressed as social rights, from the perspectives of citizenship as nationality, as access to welfare and as participation in social life.<sup>20</sup>

*Formal and substantial rights:* In Sweden, citizenship is built on “ethnos”, which means that it is inherited through kinship.<sup>21</sup> As an immigrant in Sweden you are not formally a citizen until you have stayed in the country for several years and have applied for citizenship. On the other hand, you are entitled to have access to a battery of welfare services without the need of formal citizenship, for example school, healthcare and assistance (e.g. social assistance). However, in order to make citizenship more substantial, you must be included in the social security schemes, which mainly depend on being part of the labour force. The activation policy that is meant to effect inclusion into the labour market is, as mentioned above, conditioned, and the partakers must be “active”.

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<sup>17</sup> for example “The big city investment” Proposition 1997/98: 165

<sup>18</sup> E Brodtkin “Inside the welfare contract”, *Social service review*, 71:1:33, 1997, M Meyers et al “On the front lines of welfare delivery”, *Journal of policy analysis and management*, Vol 17 no 1, 1998, S Wright “Activating the unemployed”, *What future for social policy*, Netherlands 2001

<sup>19</sup> Hedblom 2004

<sup>20</sup> see for example G Lewis *Citizenship, personal lives and social policy*, Bristol 2005

<sup>21</sup> Borevi 2002

*The active and conditioned citizen:* The concept “the active citizen” could principally be understood as a new, active relationship the citizen is expected to have towards the welfare state. Lewis<sup>22</sup> defines the active citizen as “the figure who has come to stand for the organisation of social welfare, less around a notion of universalism and need and more around worthiness, responsibility and residualization”. Alternatively, one could, as Jorgen Goul Andersen does, specify the relation between the state and the individual citizen or the unemployed. Active Citizenship could then be understood as “a new ideal” of citizenship or a new set of rights and duties based on the concept of the claimant (e.g. an unemployed person) as an active citizen. The active citizen is granted more autonomy and choice but in return is assumed to be responsible, flexible and mobile<sup>23</sup>

The concept is also intertwined with the discourse on conditionality mentioned above. It is in this context that activation policy should be understood. What decides the conditions for the citizen is, of course, the local administration of the policy. Decisions of this kind occur within the context of a concrete relationship with the individual citizen.

*The concrete citizen relation connected to social rights:* With regard to social rights there are two types of relation between the state and its citizens. The abstract or ideological relation defines principal and universal rights; the concrete relation takes place in the contact between the individual citizen and a special organisation in the national or local government<sup>24</sup>. In this paper the concrete citizen relationship is discussed.

In relating the administration of activation policy to social rights we should try to discern the components that define the concept. Social rights can be related to three elements of rights of citizenship: who has a legitimate claim to welfare rights? on what conditions? and which institutions should provide welfare services and benefits?<sup>25</sup>

If we relate these elements to Swedish activation policy, it can be concluded that it is local government organisations that administrate the policy and that participation on the part of the immigrants in the activities these organisations arrange is obligatory; otherwise, they will not receive social assistance. The fact that the activation claim has been accentuated, thereby making social assistance conditional, substantiates the use of the term “conditional citizenship” as applied to immigrants.

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<sup>22</sup> Lewis 2004

<sup>23</sup> J Goul-Andersen *The changing face of welfare*, Bristol 2005

<sup>24</sup> R Johansson *Vid byråkratins gränser*, Lund 1997

<sup>25</sup> P Dwyer *Welfare rights and responsibilities*, Bristol 2000

**Integration policy as activation policy dilemma I, II and III:**

The summary above should lead the reader to suspect that some problems or dilemmas characterize the Swedish model of integration policy as activation policy. The first dilemma is the dual welfare problem; the activation policy is connected to the selective social assistance system, which entails a negative and individually based selection of immigrants that is stigmatising. The second problem with this model is the redistribution – recognition dilemma.<sup>26</sup> How can one recognize the needs of different groups and at the same time redistribute welfare equally? Fraser identifies two different types of justice, namely social justice and symbolic justice, where the former is related to redistribution and the latter to recognition. Fraser argues that the ultimate model needed to create justice in both cases is a social policy that is both universal and transformative, in other words a social policy that in the broader perspective has a universal distribution and at the same time is capable of transformation in relation to the needs of different groups. The selective and conditional character of the activation policy that at the same time could offer resources for inclusion into the labour market makes it into a kind of quagmire when it comes to its relation to social rights. It could offer a way into the welfare society, via a certain recognition of the needs of particular individuals and groups. On the other hand the contrary is possible, and the outcome for an individual or for a group ultimately depends on the administration of the policy; it is at the immigrant's meeting with the local organisations that everything is decided.

The third dilemma is the belief that inclusion into the labour market should also mean inclusion in society, which is the pronounced goal for integration policy. Research into activation policy has concluded that this policy could lead both to inclusion in the labour market and exclusion from it.<sup>27</sup> Few, if any, studies have examined whether inclusion in the labour market means participation in other parts of society, and no study has been done on this aspect in Sweden, so this question remains empirical.

**Integration, differentiation and opposing categories**

Integration is in many aspects a complicated concept. It has been used with many different meanings and includes both a structural dimension and an actor's perspective. It is also often used to describe integration into society in general, whereupon one might ask: integration into what? And in relation to what?<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> N Fraser *Justice interruptus*, London 1997

<sup>27</sup> see for example Lödemel & Trickey 2001

<sup>28</sup> R van Berkel & I Horneman Möller *Active social policies in the EU*, Bristol 2002

The widespread use of the integration concept makes it hard to define its exact meaning. So instead I use the concept “inclusion”, which together with the term “exclusion” forms a contrasting pair. Inclusion concerns the integration of individuals or groups in relation to a special area of society.<sup>29</sup> Exclusion is a development of the poverty concept, from absolute poverty, over relative poverty and finally social exclusion. Poverty is not seen solely as a state of economic scarcity, but also as a question of citizenship rights and what relations affect them.<sup>30</sup>

*Differentiation:* In order to understand inclusion one must first discuss differentiation. Differentiation always precedes inclusion, though inclusion should not be necessary without a preceding differentiation. Differentiation can be structural, in terms of a functional, hierarchical or segmentary differentiation,<sup>31</sup> but also exists on other levels. This paper focuses on the differentiation that takes place in the organisations that administrate activation policy.

The relation between the welfare state and inclusion/exclusion is intricate. The essential problem concerning inclusion and exclusion is whether society produces processes of exclusion to a higher degree than the welfare state can produce solutions. At the same time, it is reasonable to expect that social welfare in itself comprises the effects of differentiation and exclusion, as empirical studies show.<sup>32</sup> The question is then which forms these processes can take and how they should be interpreted.

*Dichotomised categories in an intersectional perspective:* The categorisation of individuals and groups is a phenomenon that is closely tied to differentiation in the welfare state. Tilly<sup>33</sup> states that there is a durable inequality in societies, which is based on systematic differentiation between groups and individuals, and that this is maintained throughout separate historical periods. The categories we are referring to here are based on dichotomised pairs, for example man/woman or black/white.

The categorical and dichotomised pairs that Tilly identifies could be interpreted in an intersectional perspective. An intersectional perspective addresses questions concerning how power and inequality (which are intertwined in presumptions about, for example, whiteness and gender) constantly reproduce new markers that make the difference between “us” and “them” to social codes.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> van Berkel & Horneman Möller 2002, N Mortensen ”Differentieringer og integrationer” in *Kontinuitet og forandring*, Danmark 2000

<sup>30</sup> H Silver ”Social exclusion and social solidarity” *International labour review* vol 13, 1994

<sup>31</sup> Mortensen 2000

<sup>32</sup> Mortensen 2000, Hedblom 2004

<sup>33</sup> C Tilly *Durable inequality*, California 2000

<sup>34</sup> D Mulinari och P de los Reyes *Intersektionalitet*, Lund 2005



According to Dominelli, processes for defining the other are an essential dimension in establishing the parameters for social policy.<sup>35</sup> The power relations between the dominating group and other groups are characterised by the former's possibility to impose its definition of reality on the latter. These processes are also embedded and reproduced in the social welfare system. Lewis argues that in the organisations that administrate social policy there is a discursive production of "racialised" knowledge that places individuals into categories. The construction is material, discursive and central for the categorisation and for the right to benefits and assistance.<sup>36</sup> Several Swedish studies have also shown that "racialized" discourses contribute to a differentiation of clients and users of welfare that is unfavourable to immigrants.<sup>37</sup>

It is clear, then, that a categorisation of "us" and "them" is fairly usual in organisations that manage welfare. Yet how is this classification expressed in integration policy as activation policy? In order to understand this I shall refer to Fairclough's discursive analysis in my discussion of the empirical examples. There has often been a contradiction between those theorists who claim that an interpretation of power relations can only be based on material conditions (e.g. Tilly) or those who primarily advocate discursive constructions (e.g. Foucault).<sup>38</sup> This paper seeks to show how both dimensions are intertwined in Swedish social policy. The discourses produced in society strongly influence social policy and are reproduced in the construction and administration of the latter. The empirical examples presented and analysed below are therefore based on Fairclough's discursive analysis. Fairclough is a critical researcher and the method that is used connects social practice with discursive, where the latter is seen as being enclosed in the social and where each is enriched by the other.<sup>39</sup>

### **The empirical studies**

The examples used in this paper are taken from two different empirical studies, the first of which was finished in 2004, while the second is ongoing. The first study is based on a comparative case-study in four districts of a Swedish city characterized by high levels of unemployment and social assistance; in the four districts examined, a majority of the inhabitants are immigrants. The study covers eight organisations that administrate activation policy, and includes about one hundred qualitative interviews with administrators as well as

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<sup>35</sup> L Dominelli "Multiculturalism, anti racism and social work in Europe" *Social work and ethnic minorities*, London 1998

<sup>36</sup> G Lewis *Race, gender, social welfare, encounters in a postcolonial society*, Cambridge 2000

<sup>37</sup> Molina och de los Reyes 2002; Herzberg 2003; Franzen 1997; Hedblom 2004

<sup>38</sup> se exempelvis M Foucault *Diskursens ordning*, Stockholm 1993

<sup>39</sup> N Fairclough *Critical discourse analysis*, London 1995

men and women in immigrant families; it also incorporates a documentary study. The purpose of the second research project “Activation policy, social participation and quasi-democratic processes” is to investigate what significance activation policy connected to quasi-democratic processes has for the social participation of immigrant youths. The study is based on a comparative case study in a city and a smaller town of organisations administrating the policy, and of the young people they are in contact with. The case studies contain both documentary studies and (when finished) about 100 qualitative interviews with youths and administrators.

### **The empirical examples**

Even though the examples could be said to be representative of several of the cases investigated it cannot be said that the studies, which are mainly qualitative, would allow for a generalisation. On the other hand, an analytical generalisation is possible in view of the way that the patterns presented below together tend to unfold strategic varieties that can shed light on the essence of integration policy as activation policy. In the examples from the latter study (under the categorical pair Christian/Muslim) one cannot, of course, come to any conclusions about the pattern but merely raise the question of whether any patterns actually exist. (This point is raised here to indicate how this material could be interpreted by the reader.)

The examples described are based on three contradicting pairs, man/woman, black/white and Christian/ Muslim.

#### *Ex 1 Arabic man versus Arabic woman*

The first example chosen is about how administrators differentiate between men and women. In this example an Arabic woman is compared to an Arabic man.

Case 1 is a 35-year-old Arabic woman who holds a college degree and who has been working as a secretary for nine years in her native country. She has no activation condition and has never been offered any resources.; however, she wishes to be working, if possible in the same profession as before. The administrators that have been in contact with the family have never personally met the woman or talked to her by phone and are unaware of her competence. She is of the opinion that Arabic women generally have a low level of education, are ignorant, and prefer to be housewives, and have therefore never given the woman any activation condition or help.

In this example, it is the administrator that decides what conditions and what resources this Arabic woman should receive. Despite a generally strong activation condition the woman has been given no help on the grounds that she is a poorly educated housewife. No resources

have been forthcoming in her case. In a country where the mere part of the women are in the labour market, it might seem strange that this administrator is affected by this reason and refuses to give a woman resources that could lead to her inclusion. However, there appears to be a partly pragmatic reason for this. In the district from which the above example was taken, a decision has been made to concentrate on men, since they are considered to have better chances of getting a job. "We even had a meeting where our manager told us to in the first instance to concentrate on the men", says an administrator. The decision also appears partly to depend on a romantic conception of the housewife/ family supporter model that existed in Sweden until the end of the 1970s. As one administrator said, "In Sweden the women are forced to work; we cannot be at home and take care of the family as we once did. Like us, I think a lot of these women (the "Muslim" women) have negative feelings about the pressure to work". Contrary to this statement, the majority of the Arabic and Somali women that I interviewed said that they did not want to be housewives. The following citation from a Somali woman elucidates their position.

All Somali women are not the same. There are some that like to be at home, but they are dissatisfied. They are dissatisfied because they can't get a job. The AUC don't want to help,\*. They don't want to help a woman in this district. For example, I didn't like being a housewife. And I was looking for a job. I cannot say that Somali women like to stay at home. I am a Somali woman, but I was looking for a job for ten years. And I didn't get any.

(\* The local activation policy agency)

It is quite evident that the administrators' interpretation is based on a construction that is partly pragmatic and partly the result of an earlier romantic ideal. This becomes even clearer if one compares it with how the woman's (from case 1) husband that has less education and work experience receives remarkably more support from the administrator.

Case 2 is a 40-year-old Arabic man, trained and subsequently serving as a soldier in his homeland for about five years and then placed in a prison camp for about six years. When he was finally released from the camp the family escaped to Sweden, where he has studied for several years and now has Swedish, elementary school, and college degrees and also vocational training. The administrator thinks the man is ambitious and also has a large family to support so she encourages his studies.

Despite the fact that this man has less work experience than his wife, he has been encouraged to participate in several educational programmes since he arrived in Sweden. The discrimination of the woman in this example is based on a construction of the woman as a housewife and the man as a supporter of the family.

*Example 2 “Muslim white woman” versus “Muslim black woman”*

The second example chosen concerns a woman from Bosnia-Herzegovina and a woman from Somalia. Both escaped war in their native countries and arrived in Sweden in the middle of the 1990s.

Case 3 is a 40-year-old Muslim woman from Bosnia-Herzegovina. She has worked in a factory in her native country for most of her life. In Sweden she has studied Swedish, elementary school and is now studying for college competence. She receives active support from her administrator.

Case 4 is a 33-year-old Muslim woman from Somalia. In her native country she worked as a teacher. Since she came to Sweden she has only studied Swedish. She would like to study for a college degree, and perhaps at an even higher level, because this is necessary in order to get a job in the future. She has not been given any support from her administrator.

At first sight the only difference between these women is that they have different coloured skin. However, this is not sufficient to explain their dissimilar treatment on behalf of the administrators. The woman from Bosnia-Herzegovina comes from a European, western country, and is in many ways like a typical Swedish woman in appearance. The woman from Somalia, apart from having different coloured skin, comes from a “poor”, African, “Muslim” country on another continent. Consequently there is a “racified” discourse built on black/white, but also stereotypical presumptions about the “western” versus the “Muslim”. For the administrator in case 3, it is considerably easier to identify with the “western” woman who looks so much like her, while the administrator in case 4 builds her conception of the Somali woman on the construction of her as “black” and “Muslim”.

To clarify the point, I will mention one more example of how administrators categorise and discriminate against women that they define as Arabic or Somali “Muslims” or “veils”. This is illustrated by the woman cited below:

And then we have veils from Macedonia, the Albanians and...But otherwise it is mostly Afghans, Arabs and Somalis. But they are alike.... I wouldn't even consider accepting them here. It depends of course on what kind of veil you have. If you have a little light veil....but if you are covered with long veils around the arms and legs, then you can forget about getting into the labour market.

This administrator differentiates between the women on the basis of which country the women came from, but also what kind of veil they wear. From her point of view, there is a wider acceptance of those women who come from European countries and just wear a “lighter veil”.

*Example 3 Muslim Arabic man versus Christian African man versus Christian Arabic woman.*

In my next example where I explain about the categorical pair “Muslim”/Christian I shall take a step back from activation policy per se, though I aim to discuss what inclusion into the labour market may mean in relation to inclusion into other parts of society.

Case 5 is a 23-year-old Arabic woman. She came to Sweden as a teenager and has therefore not had the opportunity to study at college in her native country. She now studies Swedish combined with college competence. She says she has a very active leisure time. She also has a lot of friends and family. In particular, fellowship with members of the church is important for her and her family; the majority of their friends are Swedes they have met in this context, or Swedish neighbours.

Case 6 is a 24-year-old African man. He was separated from his family in an African country as a teenager, fled to a neighbouring country and was included into a Christian community there. They also helped him come to Sweden. In Sweden he studies Swedish together with college studies. He does not think he speaks Swedish very well, so he prefers English. In his spare time he associates with all the friends he has made through the church in his new hometown, the majority of whom are Swedish.

Case 7 is a 25-year-old, Muslim, Arabic man who has lived in Sweden since he was a teenager. He holds a Swedish college degree and has been on work placement twice. He also has advanced knowledge of IT and wants to work in that field. He has no friends, in the family he is in conflict with his father, and he feels very isolated.

What exactly is meant by inclusion into the labour market is open to discussion. In the cases above the interviewees are young, but still on their way into the labour market – given their age and unemployment figures for young people in Sweden.<sup>40</sup> One could also discuss what inclusion into other parts of society means. In this case I have chosen a simple way out, namely to consider the matter of fellowship with others in the local society, something which is also the ultimate aim of integration policy. The examples above clearly demonstrate that it is possible for immigrants to become part of the fellowship in the majority society. However, there seems to be a differentiation between those who can be part of the fellowship no matter what their native country (or the colour of their skin) and those who cannot. The dividing line seems to be drawn at religious belief.

### **Intersections of power relations shape lingering discourses**

The examples above are intended to make it explicit that Swedish integration policy as activation policy is problematic not only because of the dual-welfare dilemma but also, and most importantly, because local variations in the administration are often based on what could be called lingering discourses. Three of the most fundamental discourses have been identified in the examples above. We shall now examine these more closely:

*The genderized social policy discourse:* an old discourse connected with the construction of the Swedish “Peoples’ Home” (or the Swedish Model) that in Hirdman’s words “was built on

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<sup>40</sup> According to a government investigation “Välfärd vid vägskäl” 2000, young people have tremendous problems entering the labour market in Sweden.

the iron-hard law of separation”<sup>41</sup> In the social engineers Sweden, men and women had explicit roles, whereby the women were housewives who took care of the children and the elderly at home, while the men undertook paid work to support the family. This model, still common in many European countries,<sup>42</sup> was predominant in Sweden until the late 1970s when Swedish women began to enter the labour market. Even in the following decades there has been and still is a very stringent distinction between the women’s labour market (they are often employed in public state or community based organisations and they are overrepresented in the care professions) and that of the men (who are often employed in the private sector). The same distinction has been evident when it comes to the division of non-paid work of which women have done the most.<sup>43</sup>

*Racialized discourse:* Racialized discourse, as previously shown, is not uncommon in the administration of welfare. It is produced in a national context and is reproduced in the local majority society and in the administration of social policy. This discourse also has its roots in the construction of the “Peoples Home”, which as well as reflecting a diversity between man and woman was also connected to a strong belief in the superiority of the Swedish race<sup>44</sup>. The origin of this belief can be sought in the notion of race biology, which typified Social democratic social planning aspirations during the 1930s.]One could say that from the beginning there was a racialized discourse embedded in the social policy. When race biology lost its importance after the Second World War, it was replaced by what is termed “ethnic absolutism”, which means that ethnicity is seen as comprising stable and fixed categories rather than changeable positions established through relations.<sup>45</sup> In practice this ideological

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<sup>41</sup> Y Hirdman ”Genussystemet” *Kvinnovetenskaplig tidskrift* häfte 3, 1988, Y Hirdman *Att lägga livet tillrätta*, Stockholm 2000

<sup>42</sup> Pfau-Effinger 2005

<sup>43</sup> SOU 1998:6

<sup>44</sup> L Holgersson *Socialpolitik och socialt arbete*, Stockholm 2000

<sup>45</sup> Lewis 2000

figure is not so different from the one race biology created, and that is why one might say that social policy even in this case is characterized by a lingering discourse.

*The Christian (western) morality discourse:* Sweden today is a secularised country in which only a small proportion of the population are active Christians. Nonetheless, one could draw the conclusion that a remnant of a dominant Lutheran belief has been imprinted upon local society, and that this is of vital importance in determining those who can be a part of that society and those who cannot. The Lutheran belief in Sweden was connected to the profane world in that royal and religious powers were strongly related and a part of everyday life. This can be illustrated by what Luther called “the worldly regiment” which was represented by the king and the Swedish Church, hierarchy and discipline, and obedience and respect.<sup>46</sup> Perhaps one should not be surprised, therefore, when it is possible to identify a differentiation in Christian versus Muslim; rather, one should see the Christian/Lutheran heritage as a lingering discourse which has strongly affected society, penetrating social policy, and excluding the “others” e.g. the Muslims. Can one say today that there is a discourse based on the contradictory Christian/Muslim pairing in Swedish local majority society that affects the inclusion of Muslim immigrants? As stated above, this is still an empirical question. What can be said is that there is a growing Islamophobia in Swedish society that suggests that it is so. It is also of interest, as my examples show, that there are very strong differences in opportunities for inclusion into the local society based on religious belief.

Basically, one could possibly state that both this racified discourse and the one that is based on the black/white construction are built on the idea of the “other”. The “other” is a European invention that serves as an abstract reflection.<sup>47</sup> The problem with the concept of the “other” is that one cannot identify degrees of exclusion, and also that one accepts an image of “ethnic absolutism” when the “other” is defined. Perhaps it is possible to talk about the “other”

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<sup>46</sup> R Ambjörnsson *Den skötsamme arbetaren*, 1998

<sup>47</sup> Said 1997



“other” instead, i.e. the “other” is always defined by several contradictory pairs that in certain combinations are interpreted as positive or negative for an immigrant, depending on context. With reference to the context that integration policy played out as activation policy constitutes, the combination that seems to be most exclusionary is that of being a “Muslim” “black” “woman”.

### **Diversity meets differentiation**

In the second part of this paper I am drawing on empirical examples to discuss the impact of diversity amongst administrators related to the differentiation described above. The aim is to present two angles of the representation dilemma. The first refers to the representative experience an immigrant could have as positioned and the second to the dilemma of ethnic absolutism<sup>48</sup> that both the client and the professional could be an object for in the position of immigrant and individual from an ethnic minority group. Those perspectives are finally related to the context of the public organisation in which the administrators are situated.

The organisations that use “Ethnic matching” are often convinced that there is some cultural knowledge that every person possesses simply by virtue of belonging to a certain ethnic group or by just being an immigrant. In other words, they are representative for “their” group. Those who make use of Ethnic matching do not take into account that “organisational settings fractures group positioning by other axes of differentiation and power” as Lewis states.<sup>49</sup> Neither do they take into account that discourses of ‘race’ and ethnicity could reposition both professionals and clients and that this also has a relational aspect.

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<sup>48</sup> Lewis 2000

<sup>49</sup> Lewis 2000 s 147

**Ethnic group positioning- the experience of being an immigrant in contrast to objectification and otherness**

In this section I attempt to give different examples of how administrators deal with their position in relation to the client, as both members of an ethnic group and immigrants, and as professionals in a public organisation.

*The common experience of being an immigrant:* Some of the administrators tend to deal with the situation without categorizing individuals into certain groups and point out the common experiences of being an immigrant as well as, perhaps, a refugee.

I could understand them precisely, their feelings, and I can identify with them and they can identify themselves with me. They can see that there still is some hope and possibilities. Of course, there are enormous differences between immigrants. What we have here, what we have in common, is that we are immigrants. We are refugees, and it is a feeling of shame to leave everything, to lose everything to come to another country. That is common. There are a lot of other things that divert us. We are different individuals, coming from different countries, different cultures.

This example is representative for some of the administrators who make similar statements to the one above.

*Otherness and objectification:* There are also examples of how administrators tend to handle the situation by positioning the client as the “other”. In the examples below I highlight a common way of doing this: treating the client as a child or someone with less knowledge and unrealistic suggestions. These examples refer to clients that have suggested some kind of activation with a view to obtaining future employment, suggestions that the administrators have found unrealistic.

**Example 1 Clients wishing to take a driver’s license**

And he just talked about being a driver, a driver’s education. And he could not get it because he didn’t have a Swedish driver’s license. So it was Catch 22. Unrealistic.  
(Administrator 3)

Example 2 Clients wishing to study

Well now she (young, Muslim, single mother) has chosen to study at college because she wants a nice clean job with office hours. Sometimes it is really hard to tell – is it at all realistic? (Administrator 4)

Example 3 Clients not wishing to remove the veil

I ask the women (the Muslim women) if they are ready to take off the veil to get a job. Nowadays I don't care if it is provoking. It is unrealistic to think that you can get a job if you have a veil. (Administrator 5)

In these examples the clients are treated as objects with whom there is no reason to have a dialog; instead, it is reasonable to control them because they are very ignorant and do not know better. The last example is from one of the organisations where the administrators often talk about their clients as “stupid” or use similar expressions. In the following case too, the client is seen as a child:

She didn't get that bit that she must study to be a teacher. Even a child understands that if mummy only has elementary school she can't get a job as a teacher. No one is so stupid that they couldn't understand that. Not even a baby.  
(Administrator 22)

The administrator above is very upset that the client prefers to have a work placement at a school as a teacher instead of going directly into education, and this is her reaction. There is also another method of positioning the clients as the “other”, by comparing them to what is “normal”. For example, there is a widespread view in some of the organisations that Somali people are lazy, and in the quotation below the administrator refers to a Somali family that she finds lazy. She points out the importance of “normality”.

To walk ten minutes with their child to childcare is normal. That women get an education and then try to get a job is normal. And it is important to talk with them, to discuss, to bring in the normality concept. (Administrator 5)

In this case too there is a tendency to see the client as ignorant and in need of knowledge about what is normal. Another example of otherness is when immigrants from one minority group position another group. This is the case in the last example where an administrator that lives in another part of the town comments on the clients that live in the area (a suburb) where he works:

The reality here is not the same as ... I get a feeling of ...for example, there are a lot of children that don't go to school here. And two parents are at home and take care of the children. No ordinary middle class family would have done so, but things like that happen out here in Rosengård (name of the suburb) where no one works and people are out the whole night and such. And I don't know if it is right, but it is this feeling that out here ... People don't have the same schedule. (Administrator 20)

The above are some examples of objectification and "otherness". Another method of dissociating yourself from other immigrants or ethnic groups is of course in the way explained earlier in the paper – by differentiation based on ethnic absolutism.

To conclude this section, two ways to deal with the position of administrator and at the same time immigrant or "member" of an ethnic minority group become apparent. The first is to objectify other immigrants as ignorant (children) and different from yourself because they belong to another ethnic group, or class, or live in another area, or do not act in a "normal" way, or just because they are clients and you are the administrator. The second is to adhere to a belief that individuals, no matter in which group they are positioned, have different experiences, and the only common knowledge the individual could have is that of having emigrated and immigrated. It seems that the latter group of professionals does not tend to categorize as the former. This attitude was common among administrators in the organisations that were characterized by regulations for the administrators but also cooperation with the client and a high degree of legal security. On the other hand, the tendency to objectify and categorize clients was more common in the organisations in which the control was directed

towards the clients, and where the professionals had a high degree of discretion.<sup>50</sup> Stereotypical discourses were also more common in these organisations.

As Lewis points out, a class, person or group can, due to the intersection of race, gender and class, occupy positions of both subordination and dominance within a specific context.<sup>51</sup> This becomes clear in the examples above, as does the fact that organisational settings could either fracture or confirm group positioning, depending on the relation to class, gender, culture etc. Again, it became relevant to talk about positions in an intersectional perspective; that is, one defines oneself and the “other” from a scale of different and fluid positions depending on power relations.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion I would like to highlight the “Integration policy as activation policy” dilemma III, which consists of the discourses that are built into both the Swedish local majority society, and activation policy. I would like to suggest that these discourses could affect the policy deeply, considering that the construction as in this case, is spelled out as activation policy, which is built on a dual-welfare model, locally administrated and individually conditioned. I also suggest that the discourses presented above contribute to the construction of a Swedish integration policy that deeply affects outcomes and social rights for the individual or citizen and, as stated above, the citizen that is defined as “Muslim” “black” “woman” seems to be the most excluded.

Another interesting problem that deserves to be highlighted is the belief in the positive effects of ethnic matching. As stated previously, this matching could both mean objectification of the client, thereby strengthening of your own position (as “member” of a different group, class, gender), or it could mean recognition of the client as an individual in a

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<sup>50</sup> See Lipsky 1981 for the concept discretion

<sup>51</sup> Lewis 2000 s 167

special position and with special experiences. Ethnic matching is, however, much more complicated than its rather optimistic advocates believe, and depends on organisational settings and the position and attitude of the administrators.

Finally, one might say that in several aspects there is a *clash of politics* when integration policy is spelled out as activation policy. The universal and multicultural ideology that characterizes integration policy is in sharp contrast to the activation policy that has been chosen in order to achieve integration: not only because the latter is selective but also because it makes a categorization of individuals based on gendered and racial discourses possible.

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