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## The Imagined versus the Real Other

### Multiculturalism and the Representation of Muslims in Sweden

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# The Imagined *versus* the Real Other

*Multiculturalism and the Representation  
of Muslims in Sweden*

Aje Carlbom



**A**re Muslims so different from other citizens in Sweden, that they have to live in segregation and be separated from the rest of society? What is a Muslim, and who is to define this category? In his book, Aje Carlbom presents the main actors in this discussion and their ideological positions and interests. The multiculturalist ideology is hegemonic in Sweden on issues concerned with cultural diversity, and intellectuals in various fields of knowledge subscribe to the main moral dictates of this ideology. The author claims that the use of multiculturalist ideals when dealing with the Other masks essential important cultural and social aspects and processes. He argues that the multiculturalist hegemony, as all ideological systems, is reproduced through various material and symbolic affirmations and sanctions. Actors who criticize the ideology run the risk of being classified as racists, and consequently excommunicated from the community of right-minded citizens.

The statements in this discourse about what is and ought to be when it comes to Muslim integration are contrasted to empirical data gathered through anthropological fieldwork in a Muslim neighbourhood in Malmö, the third largest city in Sweden. The author shows that the discourse of Islam in Sweden, which is guided by multiculturalist ideals, leaves out important fields of knowledge which are crucial to an understanding of Muslim integration. The hegemony of multiculturalism, he argues, is an obstacle to understanding multicultural society. Further, the unintended consequences of good intentions may actually contribute to excluding Muslims from fully participating in Swedish society.

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To  
My Parents



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All errors and mistakes are, of course, my responsibility.

Lund, August 2003  
Aje Carlbon



## CHAPTER I

# Introduction

The central argument of this thesis is that multiculturalism is an intellectual obstacle to an understanding of contemporary multicultural Sweden. The hegemony of multiculturalism may, I argue, a) hamper a realistic understanding of what is going on in society and b) make it difficult to understand what kind of policy is best suited for an integration of immigrants. The argument is presented through an analysis of the discourse of Islam in Sweden. This discourse is used as an example of how multiculturalist ideology influences what is seen as good or bad to say publicly in Sweden about immigrants and immigration. The powerful moral imperative to be good, inherent in any ideology, prevents discussion, or even observation, of certain important empirical phenomena. The statements of the discourse are contrasted with my own empirical data from anthropological fieldwork in a neighborhood in Malmö called Rosengård where many Muslim refugees reside.<sup>1</sup>

Like many other European countries, Sweden has received many Muslims during the last few decades. The number of Muslims who live in this country varies, however, depending upon who is being asked. It is common to estimate that about 200,000 - 300,000 Muslims have moved into Sweden since the 1960s. In Sweden Islam is generally an urban phenomenon, since the majority of Muslims live in the three largest cities, Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmö. The social situation for Muslims in Sweden shows the same characteristics as for Muslims in other parts of Europe: they suffer from unemployment, live ethnically/religiously segregated, and constitute a target for Islamophobia and discrimination. Muslims in Sweden have a variety of national origins. Many come from the Middle East, from countries such as Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, and Turkey, or from North Africa where Algeria, Tunisia, and Somalia are represented. But they also come from Europe, where Bosnia is the principle country of origin. In Sweden, as elsewhere in the world, Mus-

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1 Most Muslims in Sweden are immigrants; that is, they are born and raised in other countries than Sweden. Of course, not all Muslims are immigrants; some are converts with Swedish or other national backgrounds. The main reason for focusing on the category of Muslim in a discussion about multiculturalism (and integration) is that this category contains people who belong to a group of persons who are understood by most intellectuals as different in terms of culture, ethnicity, and religion. If all Muslims had a Swedish cultural background, then this thesis would probably not have been written because, had that been the case, it is doubtful whether there would have existed a discussion about Muslim integration.

lims are a heterogeneous group in all senses of the word; some come from the countryside in their countries of origin, while others belong to an urbanized, well-educated elite. Some have been reborn as practicing Muslims in Europe, while some have come to Sweden to spread their faith in a new cultural setting. Some have organized their religious convictions along ethnic lines, and others have chosen to stand outside all kinds of organized ethnic or religious activities.

The globalization of Muslims and Islam has produced problems of various kinds in the whole of Western Europe. Many non-Muslim Europeans ask themselves if Muslims can ever become loyal citizens, if Muslims are prepared to accommodate and/or to interpret Islam in a way that makes it compatible with Western secular contexts. There is also a widespread fear among those classifying themselves as native Europeans that Muslims have come to Europe in order to facilitate an expansion of Islam, and that Islamic fundamentalism will spread to Western Europe. The immigration of Muslims to Western Europe has produced an internal political debate in various nation-states about how to treat Muslims; should they be accepted and welcomed as a part of Western Europe? Is it desirable that they are assimilated or integrated? What kind of religious rights should be granted Muslims? Should they have the right to establish their own religious institutions, or should the extant European institutions be opened up for the public practice of Islam? Should Muslims be integrated on an individual or on a collective basis? This debate is influenced by both contemporary and historical events, local and global. A by-now "classic" event is the Rushdie affair, where Muslims from all over Europe were enraged over what they saw as a blasphemous description of the Prophet Muhammad. The headscarf affair in France is another case in point. September 11, and *al Qaida*, can now be included in the line of events that influence various positions in the debate about Muslims and Islam in Western Europe.

The context of this thesis, however, is the Swedish national arena, and not a global one. The focus here is on a) interpretations, understandings, and representations of the globalization of Islam as a phenomenon within the boundaries of the Swedish nation-state. How is Islam dealt with cognitively by intellectuals in Sweden who are involved in representing Muslims to the larger Swedish-speaking public? b) what consequences can be drawn from using, as it will be argued in the thesis, a multiculturalist ideological perspective to explain various phenomena in Swedish society. It will be shown that in this country multiculturalism is used as an ideology to organize thinking about Muslims and Islam; and, while illuminating certain aspects of Muslim life, the multiculturalist perspective hides other aspects which are of crucial importance for integration. It will also be shown that a multiculturalist ideology leads scholars to interpret Muslim activities as a construction of a Swedish Islam in order to be morally correct. The problem here is that this interpretation conflicts with certain empirical realities. Scholars operate with an "imagined Muslim"; that is, someone who is different in a way that suits us. The real differences are left aside because they are seen as hazardous for the acceptance of Islam in a wider, multicultural mosaic framework in which diversity is seen as enriching. Hence the focal point of the thesis is the relation between the presentations of Muslims and Islam made by certain

Swedish scholars and the empirical data gathered during fieldwork in an urban neighborhood of Malmö populated by Muslim immigrants who have come to Sweden since the 1980s. The contradiction between these two types of knowledge constitutes the main conflict in the thesis. By two types of knowledge I mean that a) Swedish scholars have produced a hegemonic knowledge about Islam in Sweden for Swedish readers which is grounded in a multiculturalist ideological perspective, and b) data from fieldwork in Rosengård provides knowledge which, to a great extent, contradicts what the scholars argue. Both types of knowledge are, of course, influenced by the general discourse about Islam, multicultural society, globalization, etc.

My general intention in contrasting these two types of knowledge with each other is twofold: a) No empirical material speaks for itself; it must be compared to something in order to become meaningful (arguments, hypotheses, interpretations, statements). To describe an empirical reality *per se* is, as I see it, quite uninteresting, since it does not communicate anything more than the description itself. Furthermore, if the empirical data is not contrasted to something which can infuse it with life, one risks exoticizing the Other. To describe, for example, the Muslim practice of Islam without making an effort to place it in a social and political context is to focus on difference for its own sake, and this is, according to my worldview, to exoticize the Other, to treat him/her as a kind of exciting “object” which is used to provide subjective emotional experiences. Empirical data may, of course, be compared to a host of arguments or statements. My choice of the discourse of Islam in Sweden is based upon another goal of the thesis, namely b) showing that the multiculturalist ideology is hegemonic in Sweden, and indicating what the social consequences are when this ideology determines the construction of knowledge about Muslims and Islam. In Sweden, as will be shown in the thesis, most intellectuals agree with and live by the dictates and values of multiculturalism in their everyday lives, without even being aware that, when practicing this ideology, they also reproduce an ideological hegemony which keeps important social phenomena in the dark. These are phenomena which may directly contradict the good intentions (dictated by the ideology) of making it possible for Muslims to become better integrated into Swedish society. Multiculturalism, as an ideology (not as a description of society), promotes a perspective on society where cultural diversity is, in general, something which enriches us. Having this as a core value leads to a repression of aspects of diversity that may be understood by common Swedish citizens as non-enriching.

For example, a central argument in the discourse of Islam in Sweden is the claim that Muslims constitute a group of believers in need of collective religious rights. To argue this is to stand on safe political ground, since it is both in accordance with the “right to be different”, as stated by multiculturalism, and in agreement with the ideology of human rights as interpreted by certain Swedish scholars. In other parts of the world scholars often point out that recognizing groups, ethnic or religious, is to reify identity and “to impose a single, drastically simplified group-identity which denies the complexity of people’s lives, the multiplicity of their identifications and the crosspulls of their various affiliations” (Fraser 2000: 112; see also Baumann 1999; Wikan 2002). The problem with reification is that it obscures, as Nancy Fraser puts

it, “the struggles within the group for the authority – and the power – to represent it” (ibid.). “By shielding such struggles from view”, Fraser argues, “this approach masks the power of dominant fractions and reinforces intragroup domination”, and “thus lends itself too easily to repressive forms of communitarianism, promoting conformism, intolerance and patriarchalism” (ibid.). Intellectuals engaged in the discourse of Islam in Sweden, in their eagerness to be “good” according to multiculturalist standards, do not address the issue of reification. They leave the problem in silence. My argument, which I try to demonstrate using empirical examples, is that by avoiding this problem it becomes impossible to understand that the ideological idea of the right to be different is also used instrumentally by Islamists for a quite different project. The consequence of organizing thinking in accordance with multiculturalist dictates, is that Swedish intellectuals share in a political project to separate Muslims and Swedes. Contrary to the intellectuals’ own intentions, they are helping to construct a kind of permanent outsider status for Muslims in Swedish society. This is because religious rights, when practiced in the social world, are “materialized” in urban spaces where many Muslims live.

An hypothesis in the following is that Swedish intellectuals view society through a multiculturalist prism – not as a result of rational thought but due to other processes. The perspective is not chosen through conscious reflection on questions such as: “Which perspective shall I adopt in my understanding of the Muslim presence in Sweden?” Because of the hegemonic position of the multiculturalist ideology in Sweden, its values are forced onto all those actors who seek to say anything in public about cultural diversity. What is claimed here is that the discourse of Islam in Sweden must be understood as embedded in a larger political and social context which is permeated by multiculturalism in an almost total meaning of the word: it is the multiculturalist ideology which provides the language for how to speak about cultural difference. The hegemony is produced, it will be argued, by what the sociologist Göran Therborn (1988) has defined in terms of *affiliations* and *sanctions* (ibid.: 81). The multiculturalist hegemonic order in Sweden is reproduced via a system of material and discursive means whereby anyone who agrees unconditionally with the values of the ideology has a greater chance of making a successful career and, correspondingly, those who say the “wrong” things risk being punished in various symbolic and even material ways. In Sweden, and presumably also in other Western countries, the most common way to sanction someone who is heterodox enough to criticize the ideology (or some part of it) is to classify him/her as a *racist*. This term is an effective weapon for silencing criticism since the word signals the ultimate generalized evil in Swedish society.

The discourse of Islam is constructed by a category of actors whom I have chosen to call *pluralists* because they argue that Muslims generally ought to have the opportunity to separate themselves from non-Muslims. Three other categories – *Islamists*, *nationalists*, and *natives* – are also discussed in the thesis. In the text, these groups are, for analytical reasons, held distinct from one another. However, they are related to one another in the sense that each of the ideological standpoints articulated has been constructed in relation to the viewpoints of the others. Pluralists and nationalists

present their arguments *vis-à-vis* one another. Islamists have, to a large extent, taken over the multiculturalist arguments presented by pluralists. Nationalists formulate their statements about multicultural society in light of an awareness of what it is politically correct to say in public. Thus, all actors discussed in the thesis find themselves situated in the same global political and social context, which they try to cope with from different social positions. Their representations of Muslims can be read in terms of how different social classes generally deal ideologically with social transformations concerned with culture, the nation-state, and globalization. In these terms, pluralists represent a middle-class position which is characterized by a multiculturalist perspective. Nationalists represent, even if it may sound awkward to some, a working-class position, in that this group defends the traditional Swedish welfare state (*folkhemmet*). Islamists, who use multiculturalist arguments in their own politics of religion, represent a historically new political actor in the Swedish political landscape; an actor which has emerged as a consequence of the globalization of culture and people.

Ideological hegemony is not a static phenomenon. Even if the multiculturalist ideology, as will be shown in Chapter Three, is hegemonic in Sweden, the actors are involved in a political struggle to establish ideological hegemony concerning how to define, or “fill”, categories such as *Islam*, *Muslims*, or *multicultural society*. In the words of Slavoj Žižek (1999), the actors present certain statements about how Muslim empirical reality is constituted by emphasizing certain particularities which are turned into universal arguments concerning what is true. The argument presented in this thesis can be read as a third way to understand what is going on in society, in that the argument tries to avoid taking one of the ideological positions in the political debate. Instead, it tries to encompass all perspectives, in order to demonstrate the problems which are generated by using a specific position. Thus, an intention of central importance in what follows is to fill the signifiers, or categories, of *Islam*, *Muslim*, *Nationalists*, and *Native xenophobia*, with another type of content than that which is used in the hegemonic pluralist discourse. This thesis is not about Islam or culture. Rather, the main focus is on ideological hegemony and what this hegemony does in terms of how to understand the world. The empirical parts – the data from fieldwork – should therefore be seen as examples of processes which fall outside the realm accepted by multiculturalists as knowledge of Islam as a Swedish phenomenon. The main multiculturalist ambition is to include Muslims in society, but they are unaware that their multiculturalism appears to have the opposite outcome: it separates Muslims from society.

## 1.1 Knowledge about Islam in Sweden

Knowledge of Islam as a European phenomenon has grown considerably in recent decades. A large number of articles and books have been written dealing with various

topics related to Muslims and their religious faith. Not only has quantitative knowledge (such as the number of Islamic worshippers, where they come from, where they live, etc.) grown since the 1980s, but more qualitative knowledge, based on urban fieldwork and/or interviews, has also increased. In addition to scholarly works, knowledge about Muslims and Islam has been presented in the mass media which, it can be argued, has widened its focus to include non-militant Muslim activities. Hence, for Islam/Muslims in Europe, a host of topics have been analyzed and discussed during the last two or three decades (Al Sayyad and Castells 2002; Baumann 1999; Donnan 2002; Haddad 2002; Gilsennan 1990; Lewis and Schnapper 1994; Mandaville 2001; Metcalf 1996; Vertovec and Peach 1997).

However, this picture changes if the focus is moved from Europe in general to Sweden in particular. Articles and books about Islam in languages other than Swedish are certainly available in Sweden, but when it comes to books about Islam in Swedish, the presentations demonstrate profound differences. There have been no anthropological studies conducted in Sweden with a focus on Muslims and Islam. On the whole, knowledge is poor about Muslims, and about Islam as a Swedish phenomenon (see Otterbeck 2000). As a Swedish multicultural phenomenon, Islam in Sweden is described in a kind of “handbooks” which are available in bookstores or public libraries. These books are written in a non-academic style, by scholars from disciplines such as ethnology, Islamology/theology, and philosophy. What strikes a reader of these books is the high degree of representational conformism. Most authors adopt the same type of approach to the subject, an approach characterized by discussing the phenomenon Muslims/Islam in a particular way. Certain themes are thus illuminated, while others are rejected – or omitted altogether – from the discussion. In this thesis, my intention is to show what kinds of knowledge is transferred to Swedish readers, and what kinds of empirical, political, and theoretical problems emerge from these selective presentations. Especially significant is that all Islamic phenomena which can be interpreted as hazardous or threatening to Sweden are allowed no place in the discourse. If they exist, they exist only outside the Swedish nation-state: they are located elsewhere.

It may be asked why these representations of Islam are interesting as an *anthropological* problem – the Swedish works referred to are not even produced by anthropologists. Do they not fall outside the field of anthropology? If we step back and look at Muslims/Islam as a specific field of knowledge which includes both empirical problems and problems of representation, these expert accounts about Islam in Sweden become a more general scientific problem, since they can be used to illustrate how ideological hegemony is enforced by a group of intellectuals. The accounts may be used to illustrate some of the contemporary factors involved when actors speak in public about multiculturalism, Muslims, and Islam. Since these representations constitute the knowledge of Muslims in Sweden which reaches the largest Swedish-speaking audience, it is of interest to understand what kind of knowledge certain scholars construct for the public arena. Why do they talk about Islam and Muslims in this particular way? How are we supposed to understand that Islamism is recognized as an important political issue outside Sweden’s borders, but not inside the

country? How can we understand that in the discussion about Muslims/Islam in Sweden it is factors external to the Muslim group – that is, the established majority society and cultural homogeneity – which are defined as the main obstacles to Muslims integration, and not aspects internal to the Muslim group, which are defined as problematic?

The argument of this thesis is that the Swedish discourse I am concerned with is based on a multiculturalist ideological perspective which makes it difficult to see certain aspects of reality which can be interpreted as hazardous for society at large. In other words, understanding what kind of hegemonic knowledge is constructed for the Swedish public is important because, as Nader (1997), states: “What we see depends on what we know. What we know depends in part on how knowledge or knowing is produced and by whom and when and how it is filtered by experience” (ibid.: 721).

## 1.2 The representation of the Other

The representation of the Other has been considered an anthropological question since the 1970s (Marcus and Fischer 1986). A main problem in this discussion concerns the interpretations which are made in the construction of anthropological knowledge about other cultures. Modernists in the discipline had been convinced that it is possible for a scholar to understand and represent other cultures in an objective, un-biased way. This conception of the anthropological project has been challenged in recent decades by other scholars for being naive, since it disregards its own Western (and imperialistic) – and therefore culturally specific – point of departure. In the representation of the Other, as Paul Rabinow (1977) has argued, “there is no privileged position, no absolute perspective...the ‘facts’ of anthropology, the material which the anthropologist has gone to the field to find, are already themselves interpretations” (ibid.: 150).

A criticized, but important, scholar in the discussion about the representation of the Other, is Edward Said (1993 [1978]; see also Turner 2002). Said has been influential in pointing out a relationship between the political/social context and scholarly representations. But Said has also been one of the most influential scholars in the debates concerning Western notions of Muslims/Islam. His general argument is that Muslims/Islam have historically been described by scholars involved in an *Orientalist* enterprise, where the Muslim part of the world has been (and is still) imagined as a negative Other – as stationary and somehow dangerous to the West. Said’s main concern is the history of orientalist representations of Muslims/Islam, but the theoretical approach he offers is often practiced by scholars who are involved in the representation of Islam. That is, the negative images of Muslims/Islam prevalent in the West are often used as a point of departure in analyses concerned with “the Islamic threat” (see Esposito 1993; Ruthven 2001; Turner 2001).

Said is certainly correct that the representation of Islam is embedded in a larger political field, or context, in which an author/actor expresses his/her perspective. However, this thesis turns Said on his head, so to speak, being concerned with texts in which certain authors seek to construct a positive notion of the other, and thus make space for the other (Muslims) in Sweden. Hence it can be said that this thesis is dealing with representations that have emerged as a result of the arguments about orientalism suggested by Said: the representations of Islam in Sweden are constructed in opposition to what are regarded as orientalist representations of Islam. While Said and several scholars who use his approach challenge what he believes to be, from a contemporary perspective, the “bad guys” representing Islam, this thesis challenges what many multiculturalists would understand as the “good guys” in the representation of Islam. The fact that representations are never neutral cuts both ways.

As the term *Orientalism* indicates, it can be a hazardous task to publicly describe Muslims/Islam. Anyone attempting to do so is at risk of being included in a political universe which is generally organized from two different, often diametrically opposed, positions (Kalin 2001: 155; Al Sayyad and Castells 2002: 5; Milton-Edwards 2002). On one hand, there are authors who react against what they believe to be negative representations of Muslims/Islam, and who practice a representational stance via which they wish to highlight positive aspects of the subject. On the other hand is the position taken by those writers who represent Muslims/Islam in a way that can be interpreted as negative by those in favor of a multicultural society. Two labels are sometimes used to classify these positions. Writers in the first group, who avoided negative associations of Muslims and Islam, are sometimes defined as *apologists*, while the second position is occupied by *orientalists* (Milton-Edwards 2002). These two positions can be illustrated by the writings of four scholars frequently cited in literature about Islam. The writings of Edward Said – especially the book *Orientalism* (1993) – and John L. Esposito’s *The Islamic Threat* (1993) illustrate well how apologists argue that Islam/Muslims should be represented. The orientalist position is dominated by Bernard Lewis, especially the article “The Roots of Muslim Rage” (1990), and Samuel P. Huntington in his famous essay/book *The Clash of Civilizations* (1993; 1995). These two positions illustrate a general academic conflict concerning how to approach the categories of Muslim and Islam. In the Swedish context, the two positions exemplify the political conflict that exists in this country on the issue, but here the two camps can best be described in terms of *pluralists* (who celebrate diversity as enriching) and *nationalists* (who see Muslims and Islam as a threat to Swedish society).

In Sweden, the categories of Muslims and Islam are delicate and difficult to discuss in public, when the content of what is said can be interpreted either as negative by pluralists/multiculturalists, or in line with an orientalist position as described above. Even though the situation has changed over the years, it is still politically sensitive to criticize immigration policy in general, or ethnic diversity, or to say anything that might be interpreted as negative about immigrants or the multicultural society. Public presentations which are interpreted – often via the logic of guilt-by-association – as too critical may be understood to imply that the speaker is against a multicultural



society *per se*; or that he/she is a racist. When it comes to issues dealing with multiculturalism and multicultural society, contemporary Sweden is characterized by what Žizek (2002) has called the “unwritten *Denkverbot*” which characterizes the contemporary liberal-democratic hegemony. It is possible to criticize anything as long as the criticism stays within the confines of what is regarded as politically approved. As Žizek expresses it: “[you can] say and write whatever you like – on condition that you do not actually question or disturb the prevailing political consensus” (ibid.: 167).

One criticism which may be directed against what is argued in this thesis is that it is blaming the victim. This argument, which is based on the fact that Muslims are excluded and discriminated against, and are therefore victims of a hostile environment, can be put forward by both Islamists and pluralists. However, the real intention here is to do the opposite – to try and take Muslims seriously and open up the discussion for a more realistic understanding of how it might be possible for Muslims to leave their marginalized position and become integrated. If there exist ideological and social issues in society which makes Muslim integration difficult, these must be confronted in an honest and straightforward way, in order for the problems to be solved. It is impossible to come to terms with a problem unless that problem is formulated openly; if there is a cultural taboo standing in the way, this must be dealt with. Let us consider the question in terms of *equality*, an important value in multiculturalist ideology. In Sweden multiculturalism stipulates that equal treatment of Muslims means unconditionally accepting that these individuals are different in comparison to other citizens. Being equal according to multiculturalism is being equal *vis-à-vis* an Other who is imprisoned in his/her own cultural tradition, a slave under various cultural norms which must be followed. There exists no understanding, as Žizek (1999) argues, that the Other is “split in itself – that members of another culture, far from simply identifying with their customs, can acquire a distance towards them and revolt against them” (ibid.: 220).

The anthropologist Unni Wikan (2002) has presented a telling illustration of how this split may come about. In Norway the issue of whether Muslim girls should be required to take part in swimming at school had been taken up on the radio, where Wikan was scheduled to debate the issue with “a prominent Muslim spokesman”. One father had insisted that his daughter should be exempted from swimming because it was against Islam, an argument which was not considered legitimate by the school principal, who believed that swimming was part of the Norwegian school system, and important for physical health. The Muslim spokesman had taken the father’s side, arguing repeatedly that it was against Islam for girls to swim; he had criticized the principal – and the Norwegian school system in general – for “intolerance and discrimination” (ibid.: 149). However, just before the debate was to take place, Wikan and the Muslim spokesperson sat in a waiting room, where the following incident took place:

”But *I* am not against girls swimming!” he burst out. “I think this whole issue could have been solved”. I was quite taken aback, since I had heard him reiterate a contrary attitude time and again that day in the media. “But why don’t you say so?” I asked. “I can’t”, he answered, “for then they will think I am not a Muslim”.

My argument is that if this split, and Muslim heterogeneity, is not considered, then equality will be practiced *vis-à-vis* an Other who represents the differences in question and not *vis-à-vis* a different group in general. When it comes to Islam and Muslims, there is a great danger that the idea of equality is practiced only toward Islamists, rather than toward Muslims generally, since it is Islamists who represent Muslim difference in public. That is, this sub-group describes difference as they see it, and not as all Muslims see it. The problem with this is the kind of equality which will be practiced toward a sub-group whose ideology and political ambitions generally aim at making it more difficult for (especially) Muslim children and women to be integrated in society. Islamists have an aim of generally separating Muslims from non-Muslim contexts, something which prevents individuals from learning the cultural skills (language, codes of behavior, etc.) which are needed to get by in society. If the demands for an Islamic social/institutional structure are recognized by society, there is a significant danger that the state will become the co-producer of a Muslim enclave; that is, a social structure which separates Muslims and Swedes permanently.

Over and above this, it is more equal to involve oneself in a verbal confrontation, to take claims made by Islamists seriously, than to simply allow their arguments to pass in silence in the name of diversity. This group of political actors make certain demands on the public sphere. All other political actors who do this – and who are regarded as being equal participants in society – are met with respect as equal partners in a debate. To accept unconditionally claims expressed by Islamists – or other ethnic groups – is to deal with people from above, or from a distance, as though they were weaker, or as if they have not yet reached our level of intellectual enlightenment. It is thus more racist to keep someone at a distance because he or she is considered so culturally different that the person in question does not understand rational discussion, than it is to take the Other seriously and confront his/her arguments in a straightforward debate. But, someone might object, immigrants belong to a repressed minority who lack influence and power; is it not unequal to engage in a critical discussion with and about this category of citizens? Another type of answer from the one offered above is to say that Muslims have a greater influence in society in comparison to many other minorities. Homeless persons, unemployed people, and abused children are minorities who have less influence in society than do Muslims and other immigrants. Since so many intellectuals are occupied with making space for culture in society, the interests of immigrants are broadly represented, while problems related to class are, to a large extent, excluded from public debate. The pluralist discourse of Muslim difference which is discussed in this thesis provides illustrative evidence for this statement.

### 1.3 Key concepts in the thesis

Since certain terms recur regularly in the thesis, it seems appropriate to say something about how I have used them. The terms I have in mind are *multicultural*, *multiculturalism*, *discourse*, *Islamism*, and *hegemony*. All of these are used in contemporary debates about cultural diversity. I have no intention of redefining or formulating new theoretical arguments about any of these terms. What follows is a description of how they are used in this thesis. When I use *multicultural*, it should be understood as being purely descriptive. The word functions as a loose description of contemporary Swedish society in the sense that it is a society which hosts many immigrants. *Multiculturalism* is the ideology which has gained *hegemony* in Swedish society. That is, multiculturalism – with emphasis on the *-ism* – is the political belief system which is used to guide action (and thinking) in matters concerned with cultural difference/diversity for intellectuals in various institutions. If multiculturalism was introduced by the Swedish state in 1975 to guide its policy towards immigrants, today it has penetrated society in an almost total manner. Most journalists, scholars, policymakers, and bureaucrats in Sweden subscribe to the central dictates and values (enrichment, tolerance, etc.) of multiculturalism.

#### Conceptual levels

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IDEOLOGICAL    multiculturalism (one among several possible hegemonic ideologies) model of and for society

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EMPIRICAL      multicultural society (the culturally different Other)

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In this thesis I argue that a multiculturalist ideology (multiculturalism) guides thinking in matters concerned with Islam in Sweden: it is multiculturalist ideals and values that organize the discourse about Islam as a Swedish phenomenon. The term *discourse* has stood out as a truly hegemonic term in social science in the last two decades, and I have no intention of adding yet another theoretical perspective to this debate. My definition of discourse follows a suggestion of how to understand the term offered by Iris Marion Young (2001). She says that discourse constitutes a system of knowledge which “conveys the widely accepted generalizations about how society operates”, and “the social norms and cultural values to which most of the people appeal when discussing their social and political problems and proposed solutions” (ibid.: 685). This more general description of discourse can be applied to the Swedish context in the sense that the discourse of Islam in Sweden makes up a system of knowledge organized by certain assumptions of how “society operates”. The multiculturalist content of the discourse of Islam in Sweden is closely related to the notion of *hegemony* as it is understood by Young. “Hegemony”, according to Young, “refers to how the conceptual and normative framework of the members of a society is deeply influenced by premises and terms of discourse that make it difficult to think critically about aspects of their social relations or alternative possibilities of institutionalization and action” (ibid.: 686). The hegemonic ideology – when it comes to cul-

tural diversity in Sweden – is multiculturalism, which provides citizens with ideas of how to think about *difference*, and with a language with which to talk about it. It will be argued in this thesis that the discourse of Islam in Sweden is influenced by the hegemony of multiculturalism.

The term *Islamists* (and *Islamism*) is used to define those Muslims who believe that Islam is “a total way of life”.<sup>2</sup> That is, Muslims who believe that Islamic ideas and norms should permeate both private and public space, and that the rule of humans ought to be replaced by the rule of God. This usage of *Islamism* [*Islamist*] follows a definition suggested by the Islamologist Anne Sofie Roald (2001): “an ‘Islamist’ [is] a Muslim with an Islamic world-view or a Muslim who regards Islam as a way of life. [An] Islamist regards Islam as a body of ideas, values, beliefs and practices which explicitly or implicitly encompass all spheres of life including personal and social relations, economics and politics” (ibid.: 27). By using the term in this way, it is possible to obtain a certain cognitive economy and provide a clear-cut way to distinguish members of this Muslim sub-group from other Muslims. But it is important to keep in mind that Islamism is both a heterogeneous and homogeneous phenomenon. Generally, a political goal for Islamists is to work toward the Islamization of the world in its totality: all Islamist groups share this particular goal (Sidahmed & Ehteshami 1996). The means for attaining this goal, however, differ among various groups. This is why many authors talk about moderate and revolutionary (or militant) Islamists (ibid.). For the former category, the Islamization of public space may be embedded in a political project which emphasizes democratic methods or verbal means: Islam should be spread by the word, rather than by the sword. For the latter category, their goals may be achieved through force, or violence. As used in this thesis, the term refers to *moderate* Islamism, since this is the type of Islamism which dominates political Islam in Sweden. I am aware of the problems associated with the various “dangers” of using the term Islamism. The term is used by the news media in descriptions of various violent activities, but not in describing peaceful everyday politics in either the West or the Muslim world. But, just as with other terms used to describe various ideological constructions (communism, environmentalism, liberalism, conservatism,

2 There is a debate about which terms to use in discussions about political Islam. Some writers prefer to define various groups as *fundamentalists*, while others think that the term *Islamists* is better. The anthropologist Henry Munson Jr. (1988) regards the term *Islamism* “as a clumsy neologism”, and argues that fundamentalism better describes “anyone who insists that all aspects of life, including the social and the political, should conform to a set of sacred scriptures believed to be unerring and immutable” (ibid.: 4). Critics point out that it is difficult to use the term fundamentalism because it has been used by the media more as a label than as a concept, and also, because the term has its history in a Christian tradition (Hjärpe 1994: 160). However, using the term Islamism is also problematic, since it may give an impression that religious fundamentalism is a phenomenon only to be found in the Muslim world, while it is actually universal (ibid.: 162). Even though religiously pious Muslims regard fundamentalism – to follow the fundamentals of Islam – as a virtue, I have chosen the term Islamism/-ist because that was the word most often used by Muslims in referring to political activism in the name of religion. This is in line with the argument presented by Anne Sofie Roald (2001): the term Islamist ( *Islami*) is an activist self-denotation. As one of her informants put it: “At the universities in Algeria in the seventies we – the students who regarded Islam as a system of life, as an ideology – used the term ‘Islamists’ ( *Islamiun*) in order to contrast ourselves to the other students with other world-views” (ibid.: 27).

etc.), the term Islamism functions in this thesis as a signifier for those individuals and groups who have the political ambition – in the long or short run – of organizing both the private and public spheres ("society") via religious ideas. It is possible, of course, to speak about religious entrepreneurs or religious activists (as I do here and there in the text), but the term Islamism is preferable because it provides a clearer focus on the political side of the activities which I wish to describe. However, this category of Muslims are not any more dangerous to society than any other group of non-violent citizens who are convinced that their particular worldview should permeate the whole institutional structure.

How are the terms Islamism/Islamists related to the terms Muslim/Muslims? About one billion individuals in the world identify, and are identified by others, with the category *Muslim*. Therefore, the term Muslim is both a subjective and an objective category for identifying a certain group of people. However, it is important to understand that the term Muslim does not, in itself, signal anything about how Islam is understood or what religious ideas and values the person in question possesses. For example, some of those who call themselves Muslims drink alcohol, while others reject this as a anti-religious act; some Muslims argue that only those who surrender their whole person and life to the rule of God should have the right to call themselves Muslims, while others call themselves Muslims without thinking about religion at all. All Muslims are not Islamists, but all Islamists are Muslims, and not Buddhists, Christians, or Hindus (Pipes 2002). The term Islamism thus refers to a Muslim subgroup involved in political activities of various kinds. Islamists have, as noted above, constructed a political ideology for how society ought to be organized; they are involved in trying to convince other Muslims of the importance of practicing Islam; they are often organized into formal associations (or political parties), etc. Islamists are politically active in the name of Islam. It is, of course, difficult to say anything about whether Muslims in general share the same ideological outlook as Islamists. Some may do so, while others may not. A reasonable hypothesis, however, is that the great majority of those who call themselves Muslims are non-Islamists: Islamists are a minority in relation to the whole group of individuals who use the term Muslim in their own self-identification.

Some readers of this thesis, especially those who live according to the values of multiculturalism, may think that it is unnecessary to use the term Islamism. A multiculturalist objection to the term could be that there is a risk of stigmatization here, since this term may further reinforce the boundaries between us and them. Others may object and say that it is unnecessary to use the term because Islamists make up a marginalized group in relation to the larger group of Muslims. As stated above: most Muslims are non-Islamists. The choice to use the term is based on the following assumptions. First, Muslims in general are already stigmatized in the West, although this is not because of an inherent Islamophobia among Westerners, but because of global militant Islamist activities which arouse fear among both Muslims and non-Muslims. The activities of these groups will continue to stigmatize Muslims as long as no alternative presentations challenge their deeds. Second, even if Islamism in general is a marginal phenomenon among Muslims, it is moderate Islamists who domi-

nate political and representational activities in Sweden. It is moderate Islamists who define, for native Swedes, what a Muslim is and the difference that makes a difference between Muslims and the rest of the population (*Att förstå islam; Islam vår tro*). It will be argued that this is a key problem, since it is a definition which excludes the majority of modest and more secularized Muslims who do not practice religion according to the slogan “Islam as a total way of life”. Third, it is appropriate to use the term Islamism in order to point out that we are dealing with a Muslim sub-group (and not all Muslims) who argue for the right, and even the duty, to separate Muslims from non-Muslims.

## 1.4 Organization of the thesis

Chapter Two describes the methodological aspects of the thesis. In it I describe the sites of the fieldwork, and the kind of interviews and observations that have been made. Chapter Three provides both theoretical and empirical background to the chapters which follow. Emphasis in Chapter Three is on multiculturalism as a hegemonic ideology which permeates Swedish society in a relatively total meaning of the word. In one section, it is argued that ideas of domination and power are avoided when it comes to multiculturalism, and that this is due to an understanding of multiculturalism as a kind of optimal example of moral goodness.

Chapter Four presents a general outline of the discourse of Muslim difference in Sweden. The globalization of Islam has meant that two political positions have been established, a pluralist perspective in favor of the public establishment of Islam, and a nationalist perspective which opposes all public manifestations of the religion.<sup>3</sup> In the chapter a third actor, the Islamists, are taken up as examples. It may seem odd to use Islamists as examples, since it is argued elsewhere in the thesis that this is to a great extent is a “silenced” group. The reason for doing so, however, is to illustrate that multiculturalism blurs the boundary between ideology and empirical knowledge. One conclusion of the chapter is that the three actors, who often are presented as representing incompatible views on difference, stand ideologically close to one another, because all three agree that Muslims are so different from non-Muslims that they must be kept separated from non-Islamic public space.

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3 A problem here is which categories to use for the different groups. I have chosen the term *nationalists* for a group of native Swedes who are organized into political parties, and the term *natives* for a group of Swedes who generally remain outside of party politics. These groups have overlapping ideas, which will become clear in Chapter Eight, on issues of multicultural society. The term *pluralists* was chosen in order to distinguish those multiculturalists who are in favor of ethnic/religious institutions – and thereby a separation of Muslims from other Swedes – from actors who believe that it is the established public institutions which should be characterized by cultural diversity. Pluralists and other multiculturalists take the same position concerning how to value cultural differences.

Chapter Five discusses how Islamism and ethnic/religious segregation are factors which are kept in the “dark” by pluralists because of the values of multiculturalism. Here it is also argued that the discourse of Islam in Sweden is, to a large extent, based on a normative, rather than empirical, approach to Muslims and to religion. Instead of trying to analyze problems related to religious rights, scholars try to define all Muslim activities in terms of a Blue-and-Yellow (the colors of the Swedish flag), or Swedish, Islam. As such, the pluralists are involved in the construction of a national ideology which is grounded in the ideals found in multiculturalism.

Chapter Six was written in order to provide an empirical examples of the function of religious rights in a social context, here in the form of the neighborhood Rosengård. The chapter aims to show that the discourse of Swedish Islam is pre-occupied with a fantasy of the Muslim Other, and not with the *real* Other, who is trying to deal with a complicated and chaotic life situation. Marginalization, and what this social condition means for individual men, is discussed as a factor behind the development of Islamism as a social strategy to construct order in life. Another section of the chapter deals with Muslim self-criticism of the isolationism practiced by Muslims in the neighborhood.

Chapter Seven can be read as an extension of Chapter Six, in the sense that it attempts a wider contextualization of what it means for an individual to live in an institutionalised structure on a local level. In opposition to hegemonic ideas of segregation, the chapter argues that there is a process of ethnic/religious enclavization currently taking place in Sweden. An important point in this chapter is that this process of enclavization can not be understood if the meaning of the term enclave is based on the American enclave as a prototype of what it is that constitutes an ethnic enclave. A processual perspective is instead argued for: enclavization is understood as part of the construction by Muslims of a social shield to protect them from what they see as various threats in Swedish society.

Chapter Eight deals with how a group of native Swedes in the Rosengård neighborhood describe their lives as members of an ethnic minority, or enclave, within an enclave. If the early chapters of the thesis deal with how middle-class Swedes, and scholars, describe Muslim immigrants, this final chapter shows how Swedes from working- or underclasses perceive contemporary multicultural Swedish society, and how they react to it. This group of citizens belong to the category of *cultural racists*, or *Islamophobics*, to use the terminology of the Swedish pluralists. The Swedish working-class is therefore, according to multiculturalism, composed of bad or evil persons. In the chapter, however, it is shown how members of the native working-class, like their Muslim neighbors, try to make the best of a complicated situation, noting that they also have a desire to be defined as “good” persons.





## CHAPTER 2

# The Field of Study

This chapter is a general outline of the methodological aspects of the thesis. First, I say something about the neighborhood where the fieldwork was conducted. This section is intended to place the field in the representational and political context of Sweden. Second, the chapter provides a description of the kind of interviews and observations that make up the empirical material of the thesis. Third, I discuss some of the complications of doing fieldwork “at home”. Fourth, I say something about the relationship between my empirical data and the discourse of Islam in Sweden. Fifth, the chapter contains a short description of the city of Malmö and the two global processes that have transformed life for most residents in the city in recent decades: 1) the immigration of a large number of people from Africa, the Middle East, and Europe, in combination with 2) the de-industrialization which has been taking place in the city since the 1970s.

## 2.1 The neighborhood

The ethnographic material for this study has been collected in an urban neighborhood called *Rosengård*, located in the southern part of Malmö, the third largest city in Sweden.<sup>4</sup> Rosengård is one of the most famous urban suburbs in Sweden, and it has, through the years, become a place about which every Swede knows something. The neighborhood has become a symbol for the negative side of modernity. As ethnologist Per-Markku Ristilampi (1994) points out, Rosengård has been, since it was constructed in the 1960s and 70s, a target for political and scientific debates and discussions in various media. When it was first built, and for a few years afterward, the neighborhood was used to exemplify working-class exploitation. Here, it was argued – mainly by Marxists – the Swedish working class was placed in tall, inhumane, concrete buildings, where people lived inhumane lives (Flemström and Ronnby 1972). Gradually, however, the working-class perspective has given way to a culturally-

4 On January 1, 1999 the city of Malmö had 254,904 residents ( *Områdesfakta för Malmö*, 1999).

grounded discussion. As in many other urban neighborhoods, the native working class which originally inhabited Rosengård has moved away, to be replaced by various ethnic groups. There are still native Swedes living in the area, but the great majority of residents residing in the houses today were born in countries other than Sweden. Most residents of the neighborhood come from the Middle East and the former Yugoslavia (*Områdesfakta för Malmö*, 1999).

In 1995, my wife, Sara Johnsdotter, our son Isak, and I moved to Rosengård in order to conduct fieldwork. The main reason for choosing Rosengård, of course, was that the neighborhood is used symbolically to represent a place where most of the problems of contemporary society are found in concentrated form. At first we tried to settle into one of the worst parts of the neighborhood, but the housing company claimed there were no apartments available here.<sup>5</sup> After a number of visits to various parts of the neighborhood, we were offered a contract for an apartment in the most ethnically Swedish part of the area. We were thus placed in a block where a small group of native Swedes resided; a group that, in the local context, constituted an ethnic minority. As are many native Swedes who visit the neighborhood for the first time, we were initially surprised by the high degree of social order and the high material standard which met the eye. The neighborhood, sometimes described as an immigrant ghetto, showed no (or very few) similarities with, for example, American, British, or German areas of the same kind. In Rosengård there were a lack of signs marking out that one had entered a poor, underclass area. Instead of laundry hanging out to dry on balconies, garbage in yards, and graffiti on building walls, the neighborhood is clean and it is relatively safe to move about in its public spaces, even at night. Here the residents live in modern apartments, equipped with all the practical amenities needed for everyday life. Inside the neighborhood are also found various types of sports facilities: several soccer fields, a small stadium for ice-hockey, tennis courts, and minor stadiums for handball, basketball, wrestling, etc. There is also a relatively large park close to the neighborhood; a park which many families use for walks, barbecues, and picnics in the summer. Compared to many other ethnic ghettos, such as, for example, "Little Istanbul" (*Kreuzberg*) in Berlin, where Turks reside in small, poorly-equipped apartments and houses (Mandel 1996: 147-167), Rosengård is perhaps best described as a kind of Swedish welfare ghetto.<sup>6</sup> Compared to other neighborhoods of this kind, Rosengård is located quite close to downtown Malmö. It is easy to reach the city center by bus or bicycle.

Today's Rosengård is a pleasant, relatively safe, multiethnic place where various ethnic groups quite literally live side by side. A birds-eye-view of the city of Malmö

5 We suspect that they believed us to be journalists working undercover in order to reveal poor housing conditions. This suspicion is based on the observation that there actually were several empty apartments available in this particular part of Rosengården.

6 That the neighborhood is relatively safe and has a relatively high material standard is to a large extent due to the efforts of the area's largest real estate owner, Malmö Kommunala Bostadsaktiebolag (MKB). During the last ten years, MKB has actively attempted to raise the standard of living of the residents, in order to avoid a "slumification" of the neighborhood. When Prof. Jack Katz from UCLA visited us in the neighborhood, he was amazed at the high degree of order that met the eye in the public spaces. "This must be studied", he said.

shows that the neighborhood is generally an island of cultural difference in a sea of Swedish homogeneity. However, if we look at the neighborhood from the inside, it becomes clear that the place is also internally divided among various groups. The general tendency is that various parts of the neighborhood are dominated by different ethnic and/or national groups. Arabic-speaking residents tend to reside in particular parts of the neighborhood. Some, especially Sunni Muslims, occupy the high rise buildings in the center of the neighborhood. The materially worst portion of the neighborhood, called *Herrgården*, is occupied by Romanis and Iraqis; this section is locally known as “Romano Platso” (see Popoola 1998). In 1999, 95% of the population of *Herrgården* (which was estimated to be 4,462 persons) had social welfare payments as their main income source. In that part of the neighborhood where fieldwork was conducted, *Örtagården*, 61 % of the residents (4,725 persons) received social welfare payments. In a section called *Törnrosen* (2,950 persons), 80 % had social welfare as their principle income.<sup>7</sup> These figures do not tell us much about the real income level of the families in these parts of the neighborhood, but they do tell us that a great many persons in the neighborhood were marginalized from the formal Swedish labor market (*Områdesfakta för Malmö*, 1999).<sup>8</sup> These three areas (“blocks”) within the larger neighborhood (Rosengård) contain the highest concentrations of immigrants in the whole of Malmö (Carlsson 1996: 216).<sup>9</sup>

The neighborhood can be described as a multiethnic area, but it can also be defined as a multi-religious neighborhood, where Islam is the largest faith. During the last decade, the neighborhood has gone through a process of Islamization, in both a quantitative and a qualitative sense. Muslims with varying national backgrounds have settled in this urban area; for some it is their first place of residence in Sweden, while others have found their way to the neighborhood after having spent several years in other Swedish cities. The Islamization is noticeable in everyday life in various ways. Nowhere else in Malmö is it possible to observe such a great concentration of women dressed in *hijabs* as in Rosengård. One of our informants, a man from Iraq, said that he had never in his life seen so many traditionally-dressed women in one and the same place. During recent decades, there has also been a growth in the number of Islamic associations in the neighborhood.

7 Between 1989 and 1993 the total amount of money spent on social welfare increased from 148 million to 247 million Swedish crowns. The number of immigrants in the city increased, during the same period, from 44% to 46%, with “immigrants” in the city consuming 65% of Malmö’s total social welfare budget (Carlsson 1996: 224).

8 Administratively, the whole neighborhood consists of nine “blocks”: *Emilstorp*, *Östra kyrkogården*, *Kryddgården*, *Apelgården*, *Törnrosen*, *Örtagården*, *Herrgården*, *Persborg*, and *Västra Kattarp*. However, the popular stereotype associated with the term *Rosengård* refers mainly to *Törnrosen*, *Örtagården*, and *Herrgården*. These three “blocks”, or areas within the area, contain the largest number of refugees.

9 Even when people have a low income, it is easier to survive economically within the neighborhood than outside it. This is due to the fact that prices can be kept lower because many of the stores sell “second hand” food. To put it simply: straight cucumbers are sold in stores outside the area, while the curved ones are sold within Rosengård.

## 2.2 Interviews and observations

In addition to observations made while living an ordinary everyday life in the neighborhood (using the stores and the commercial center in the area, talking to neighbors, taking our son to the daycare center, to school, and so forth), the thesis is based on both informal (everyday conversations) and formal (tape-recorded interviews) discussions and interaction with various kinds of residents. Both Sara Johnsdotter and myself have conducted interviews with native Swedes living in the area, Muslims (Islamists, secularized, and ordinary practicing Muslims), Christians, Swedish bureaucrats, etc. For some months, both Johnsdotter and I also worked as language and computer teachers in one of the Somali organizations located in Rosengård (see Johnsdotter 2002). Here I had an opportunity to both conduct interviews and observe activities from inside an immigrant organization. In addition to that, I also had an opportunity to participate and make observations in one of the Koran schools for young people which were organized in the large mosque. During fieldwork some of the young Islamists in the city of Malmö organized a so-called evening course about Islam in which I took part. Since I have been involved in studies focusing on Muslims for several years, I have also included material from some of the earlier studies in this thesis. A couple of years ago, for example, I followed a group of Muslim men in the city of Malmö for several months as they tried to deal with problems related to integration (Carlbom 1993; 1994). Another type of data included in the thesis comes from interviews and observations made during a study about attitudes to female circumcision among Somali migrants in Malmö (Johnsdotter, Carlbom, Omar, Geesdiir, and Elmi 2000). This was a transethnic study in which I and Ali Elmi interviewed Somali men with diverse Islamic outlooks on life, while Sara Johnsdotter and Asha Omar interviewed Somali women. The study was based on thirty tape-recorded interviews and several informal conversations on the issue with persons inside and outside Somali cultural and religious associations. Thus, the empirical material in the thesis consists of interviews with Muslims that have been conducted over a period of several years.<sup>10</sup>

In the Somali organization mentioned above, I worked with both men and women, but otherwise my informants were generally Muslim men. The main reason for this was, of course, that it was easier for me, as a man, to establish social contacts with Muslim men. The consequence of this is that the thesis has a male bias. Even though this is the case, the text discusses experiences and themes which overlap with female experiences of living in a minority in the West. There *are* practicing Muslim women whom it is possible to interview in private but, as a general rule, Muslim women are restricted by their religion from talking and interacting freely with men other than close family members. In general, it proved to be both difficult and easy to conduct

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<sup>10</sup> Most interviews during the research were conducted in Swedish, although some were done in English, or in a combination of Swedish and English. The study on female circumcision was conducted in Somali and Swedish with Geesdiir and Elmi [Somalis] functioning as researchers, interpreters, and translators.

interviews with Muslim men. My research in the neighborhood reflects a more general political situation in Sweden for Muslims, in the sense that it is easier to establish contacts with men who are oriented toward integration into Sweden than it is to establish contacts with men who turn their backs on the majority society. I seldom experienced problems when I asked the group of open men for interviews; interaction took place in a relatively open atmosphere, often in the homes of informants. A different situation occurred when I tried to get into contact with Muslim men who, more-or-less actively, isolated themselves from non-Muslims. More than once, I was either dismissed or classified as an agent sent to check up on Muslim activity. It took me, for example, almost two-and-a-half years to arrange an interview with one of the Muslim "leaders" in Rosengård, and that was possible only after a great deal of lobbying from my wife, Sara Johnsdotter, who had established a social relationship with this particular man's wife.

Another part of the material consists of observations of certain specific situations which took place during the course of fieldwork, both a) in Rosengård and b) at conferences with anthropologists and sociologists. Observing social situations has a long tradition within anthropology, and has been theoretically developed by scholars in the so-called Manchester school. Social situations, or case studies, refer to, as Mitchell (1983) argued:

the documentation of some particular phenomenon or set of events which has been assembled with the explicit end in view of drawing theoretical conclusions from it ... the focus of the case study may be a single individual as in the life-history approach or it may be a set of actors engaged in a sequence of activities either over restricted or over an extended period of time [ibid.: 191].

I am not saying here that I have conducted detailed situational analyses during my fieldwork, but only that I have used this approach in order to collect data from various social contexts (see also Epstein 1979; Gluckman 1958; Mitchell 1956; Rogers and Vertovec 1995).

When it comes to a) two social conflicts occurred in Rosengård which I attempted to follow up as they happened. One of the conflicts took place at a school in the neighborhood and involved two Swedish teachers and a couple of Swedish and Muslim parents. The conflict was basically about identity and what kind of socialization children in a multiethnic environment should undergo. The other conflict was of a more representational character, and involved various Muslim individuals and groups. On one hand, Islamists challenged the representation of Muslim women in a local newspaper, and, on the other, secularized Muslims challenged Islamist ideas about isolationism. Conflicts of this type do not happen everyday among Muslims, but they are useful methodologically since they highlight structural aspects and problems which can be difficult to understand in the flow of everyday life.

During the course of fieldwork in Rosengård I have also had an opportunity to b) observe how Swedish anthropologists and sociologists reacted to empirical data I presented at academic conferences held in Sweden. My general experience from these occasions is that some of the reactions from Swedish social scientists (to what Sara Johnsdotter and I have argued) have been emotionally strong. Following an anthro-

pological conference at the end of the 1990s, we received a letter from a Swedish anthropologist (higher in rank than either of us) who advised us to ignore and not discuss publicly the empirical data we had found in Rosengård until after we had read what other authors said about multicultural reality. This letter was written in a patronizing tone, but with the best of intentions. We, however, interpreted the message in the letter as political – rather than methodological – advice. The letter was an example of how hegemonic ideological control is “embedded and invisible” and how “those who in fact exercise it may not understand its extent” (Nader 1997: 720).

A general conclusion based upon observations from the conferences is, however, that there is a difference in what Swedish scholars have said publicly compared to the views they have expressed in private or semi-private contexts. During presentations in public, in front of a group of listeners, most explicit presentations have followed the dictates of a multiculturalist ideology; scholars have acted and reacted on moral rather than scientific grounds. In private, however, some of these same individuals have stated quite different opinions from the ones they expressed in the public sessions. At one conference, for example, I was attacked for taking up the theme of Islamism. However, during a coffee break, one scholar who had been publicly critical told me in confidence that Islamism was an important topic for discussion and research. A number of scholars also told me, after listening to criticism I had formulated against certain statements in the discourse of Islam, that this approach was unnecessary since scholars are also “humans of flesh and blood”. Most crucial, however, is the fact that the most common reaction to the data I have presented at the conferences has been *silence*. Most participants, and this is true for both anthropologists and sociologists, have not commented on the data with a single word. This is, of course, interesting from an anthropological point of view. Why – as has been the case with the conferences of Swedish anthropologists (with a hundred or so scholars) – have almost all of the participants kept their mouths shut? Sennet (1999) understands “silence” as a way “of creating a sense of oneself as property which can be defended [...] when one begins to speak one takes the risk of that property becoming subject to the inspection or challenge of other people” (ibid.: 131).

Observations like these are among the experiences which have shaped what is argued in this thesis about how to understand the public discourse of Islam in Sweden. My claim here is that the silence practiced during the conferences where the topic of Islam has been up for discussion illustrates a more general problem in Sweden, where the issue is multicultural society or ethnic/cultural diversity. Thus, the silence I have experienced at conferences, and the silence about the problematic aspects of Islam in the discourse of Islam, are symptomatic of the Swedish public context in general. This, however, may be understood as a normal state of affairs for scholars. All academics are embedded in the tension that exists between speaking the truth and succeeding in a career. The ambivalence produced by being involved in this situation may, of course, have as a consequence that one chooses to formulate statements in line with the contemporary ideological hegemony, or at least take it into consideration, before saying anything in public.

## 2.3 Fieldwork at home

During the 1980s there was discussion within the discipline of anthropology about doing fieldwork at home (Jackson 1987; Altorki and El-Solh 1988). It is not necessary to delve too deeply into that discussion here. I only wish to point out some of the methodological problems with which I have had to cope during my work on this thesis. One of the problems of doing fieldwork in a location like Rosengård is that the neighborhood is a politically contested urban space, both historically and currently. For a number of years this neighborhood has been part of political and scientific discourse about the problems of a modern, multicultural society. As an anthropologist trying to conduct research in the area, one is far from, as Salzman (1994) expresses it, "a lonely hero in the heart of darkness" (ibid.: 29). In fact, the opposite situation obtains. One enters a space, as an anthropologist, which is disputed and defined by a host of diverse actors, some positioned inside the neighborhood and others outside of it. There exists, and there existed before Johnsdotter and I moved to Rosengård, a relatively large stock of knowledge about the neighborhood. This knowledge consists of a mixture of myths, fantasies, political definitions, and scientific hypotheses transformed into "truths". One of the most enduring myths about the neighborhood, well-described by the ethnologist Per-Markku Ristilampi (1994), is that Rosengård is a dangerous place, a place characterized by social chaos, crime, and violence. This type of knowledge did, of course, affect research at an initial stage, because this was knowledge which I, as a native Swede, had un-reflexively incorporated into my own subjective stock of knowledge during my life in Sweden. It took me almost a year to get rid of these pre-determined representations about the neighborhood, and to begin to see everyday life there in a more realistic manner.

Another problem with the anthropological knowledge produced during fieldwork in a place like Rosengård is that it becomes involved in a competitive relationship with other definitions. The scientific goal of producing objective and distanced understanding of a particular social problem is in danger of clashing with other actors' ambitions and political interests. In contemporary Sweden, various actors are involved in the problem of immigration and integration in various ways, on various levels. Symbolically there is, for example, the problem of how to define an ethnically segregated neighborhood. The biggest real-estate owner in the neighborhood, a company which works both socially and ideologically in Rosengård, has an ambition to introduce a positive image of this multiethnic space, and chooses therefore to describe it as an "international neighborhood", where the whole world meets. Another type of symbolic manipulation seeks to purge the definition of all characteristics which might give associations of difference and calls these kinds of neighborhoods, as does the Cultural Geographer Roger Andersson (1997), "Swedish thinly-populated neighborhoods" (ibid.).<sup>11</sup> There are also those inspired by Marshall McLuhan, who want public opinion to view these places as part of a "global village". None of

11 This term is a translation from the Swedish phrase *svenskglesa bostadsområden*. *Svensk* means Swedish and *glesa* means thinly.

these definitions are, of course, wrong in themselves, but they do signal that the ethnically segregated areas in Sweden are politically contested spaces, where definitions and descriptions are often determined by the interests of the respective observers. One implication of the fact that neighborhoods like Rosengård are politically contested spaces, is that all studies concerned with multicultural society should carefully consider the effects of multiculturalist ideology on interpretations of data from Rosengård. Most actors and institutions in Sweden are encompassed by the dictates of this ideology. From a methodological point of view, the ideology needs to be considered because of the great danger that the values of this particular political belief system may guide thinking in directions which overlook those empirical issues which are not thought to be in line with what the ideology stipulates as good for society. In other words, a methodological problem when one is conducting fieldwork at home is how to distance oneself from ideological categories (see Gullestad 2002).

Another kind of problem when doing fieldwork at home is more directly related to the informants who have aided in the production of the thesis. My Muslim informants and I have largely shared the nation-state's political space, and this has created certain problems in our relationships. One problem is related to the question of my own national identity, of how to describe and classify my presence in the neighborhood. Why did a native Swede freely choose to stay in this neighborhood? Several times during fieldwork, some of the Muslim men saw me as an agent sent by *SÄPO*, the Swedish secret police. Such a categorization was used a number of times, by both moderate and Islamist groups, but it has been a more commonly occurring suspicion among groups that work politically for Islam. At other times I have been taken for a person working for other official institutions, such as the Social Democratic Party, or the Welfare Office. This, however, seems to be the kind of problem confronting anthropologists conducting fieldwork away from home as well (see Starn 1994: 16). The problem of defining my role has generally been based on confusion surrounding the letters "Soc...". Many institutions in the Swedish welfare state have names that begin with just these three letters, and telling informants that you are a *social* anthropologist, studying the area in question, has further added to the confusion. Most of the time, fortunately, it was possible to solve this linguistic problem, but sometimes – even after weeks of interaction – a suspicion was expressed that I had been sent by some institution to check up on people. This is certainly not unusual; it might be considered self-evident that immigrants display difficulty in defining persons and institutions in a, for them, new society. But I also believe that this lack of culturally-specific knowledge to some extent illustrates the level of integration of those individuals who feared my, or our, work in the neighborhood.

In relation to informants, other aspects of what might be termed knowledge also arise. Some of my informants have been Islamists who work politically for Islam in Sweden and Europe. One of their goals is to construct a more positive representation of Islam than the stereotypical media picture they believe dominates the Western image of Islam. I have been, and still am, part of this political project – in the sense that my own representation of Islam can be experienced to a certain extent as a threat for the Islamists, and for other Muslims as well. During fieldwork and afterwards, I have,



for example, been contacted by informants who wished to discuss my use of language when it concerned the description of certain religious activities. In two interviews I used the words *fundamentalism* and *Islamism* when describing certain Muslim individuals and groups. I know that some of my informants reacted to these terms, and one person contacted me in order to discuss my usage of the words. This was all very friendly and polite. The problem with my use of words was, as they saw it, that the terms fundamentalism/Islamism could give negative associations to native Swedes of what was going on in the neighborhood. It could also, the Islamists argued, give the wrong associations to other Muslims, since Muslims in general could start to think about the neighborhood and themselves in terms of whether Muslims practiced Islam in a correct manner. The Islamists I am referring to here are moderate Islamists who are involved in trying to make other Muslims see the importance of making a distinction between culture and religion.

When doing fieldwork in a Swedish neighborhood like Rosengård, one sometimes confronts the problem of *objectification*. That is, some Swedes would most certainly argue that it is morally wrong to conduct anthropological fieldwork among immigrants, since this category is often understood in Sweden as being composed of the victims of a racist majority society. Since immigrants are victims, they should not be observed, but helped to emancipation. The sociologist Reza Banakar (1994) has, for example, described fieldwork conducted among immigrants as a form of “moral complicity and deficient scientific activity which directed the first anthropologists’ studies of the ‘wild man’ in Africa” (ibid.: 24). There is certainly a structurally-based difference between immigrants and Swedes in general, but it is important to keep in mind that objectification also works the other way around. Immigrants are not only victims, but also actors who are involved in various types of cultural, economic, and political projects. I thus gradually became aware during the research process that Islamists often used me as a means of the establishing a positive image of Islam. I realized that I was embedded in an Islamist political project after an interview during which the informant said that I could benefit in various ways since I, as he said, “belong to the friends of Islam”. Personally, I had, and have, no problem with that. This classification made me aware of the political implications of writing about Islam. It also made me reflect on what the social role of an anthropologist is. For Muslims in general, and for several Islamists in particular, I was one of very few Swedish contacts (other than converts and bureaucrats) who entered their life-worlds. I was not perceived as an individual Swede, but as a representative of the majority society who wished to make a public presentation concerning Muslims/Islam.

## 2.4 Discourse versus empirical findings

The overall construction of the thesis follows the methodological approach I have practiced during research. One part consists of empirical data from fieldwork and the

other part consists of statements about Islam in Sweden which can be found in the discourse of Islam as a Swedish phenomenon. During the course of research I have contrasted what is argued about Islam in Sweden with what I have found in a specific field site. I am sure that some readers may react to this distinction, especially those who believe that there is no reality which is unaffected by discourse, that everything is, in fact, a question of discourse. However, during the work on this thesis, the distinction has functioned as a methodological tool which has made it possible to keep anthropological knowledge from the field separate from knowledge as it is represented in the discourse. The distinction has also revealed that the knowledge of Islam found in books about Islam in Sweden to a large extent follows the ideological logic of multiculturalism. Thus, it is “knowledge” which keeps aspects of Islam that could be understood as hazardous for multicultural Sweden “in silence” for Swedes, as well as for Muslims generally. A related problem concerns authors of books about Islam in Sweden and their social position in society. Most participants in the discourse are scholars who base their authority to speak publicly about Muslims in Sweden (and to be believed for what they say) on having university educations. Was I supposed to regard their hypotheses as scientific arguments about the world, or as ideological statements? The problem was that their positions were blurred: most of them were scholars, but in their texts they practiced, as will be shown in the following, the moral dictates found in the multiculturalist ideology. Instead of trying to understand the problem of Muslim integration in a “cold” and distanced manner, they stood out as participants in the political field – where most took a stance for the right of Muslims to be different (without complicating matters with issues such as group rights *vs.* individual rights, or social consequences of institutionalization). This is the basis for the decision to include the writers of the discourse as political actors in the field of Islam. Another reason for doing so, about which I say more in Chapter Four, is that the discourse these actors have constructed appears, to a large extent, to mould major portions of the knowledge of Islam as a Swedish phenomenon for a Swedish-speaking public.

In anthropology there has been much debate about the role of the researcher in recent decades. In the 1970s feminist anthropologists pointed out that much anthropological knowledge had a male bias, due to the fact that most anthropologists were men. In their monographs, these male anthropologists included women, but from an unreflexive male perspective (see Moore 1988). The role of the researcher has also been discussed in broader terms, in relation to the structural position anthropologists have assumed in the project of colonialization. For example, Orin Starn (1994) argues that anthropologists tend to practice “an innocent distance from the structures of imperialism” because they often refrain from ethical discussions about their role in the wider structure of agents active in different political projects in the countries where fieldwork is conducted (*ibid.*: 16-17). The Norwegian anthropologist Marianne Gullestad (2002) also argues for the importance of practicing self-reflexivity one’s texts. However, it is quite difficult to understand how one’s own social position influences the construction of knowledge. Where should boundaries be drawn? There is a danger that self-reflexivity may be used as a moral virtue by anthropologists

who wish to stand out as “good” in the eyes of their readers. This is a virtue without content, and without risk. This is, for example, how Gullestad (ibid.) practiced self-reflexivity in her book about Norway. She argues for the importance of trying to understand how gender, class, and nationality influence what is said in discussions about cultural diversity – and attacks Hylland Eriksen for not speaking about himself in a discussion about Norwegian nationalism; but she says nothing substantial about how her own identity and social position have influenced the knowledge in her own book. Another factor which makes it difficult to *really* say something about *how* a book has been influenced by various contextual factors, is the fact that a self-reflexive text can always be used in counter-arguments to what an author has argued. Academics are involved in a struggle in which too-detailed self-reflection would amount to handing out free ammunition to their opponents.

However, let me point out one aspect of my identity (white, male, 40+, Swedish) which may be regarded as a problem for this thesis. In a section called “the social organization of ideological discourse”, Therborn (1988) points out (with the help of Foucault) that ideological discourse is always “restricted” (ibid.: 83). The restrictions refer to rules, according to Therborn:

on who may speak, how much may be said, what may be talked about, and on what occasion ... in a given situation, only persons of a certain age, sex, knowledge, social position and so on are allowed to speak (or will be listened to), about a set range of topics for a set length of time [ibid.].

In the hegemony of multiculturalism, which constitutes the general ideological context for this thesis, much of what is said in the following pages runs the risk of being criticized with *ad hominem* arguments because it is uttered by a middle-aged Swedish man. That is: I am the “wrong” person to say certain things about multicultural society, both in the eyes of Muslim immigrants and of women with a feminist perspective. Being part of a group, of the minority, makes it more legitimate to formulate statements which can be interpreted as negative concerning that group. For instance, it is in order for Muslims to argue that marriages between Muslim women and non-Muslim men should be forbidden – being something that, from a Western perspective, should be understood as a “natural” thing for someone who is culturally different to say. However, it is regarded as racist if a native Swede claims that Western women ought to refrain from marriages to Muslims or other culturally-different persons. Even though both practices function to protect the boundaries of the group, it is only considered as morally dubious for Westerners to make such statements.

## 2.5 The city

The Rosengård neighborhood is located in a wider urban context which has gone through a profound economic and social transformation during the last few decades.

Historically, the city of Malmö can be described in its main contours as a typical Western city. Its welfare was based on a relatively well-developed industrial structure containing several small and large companies, and a port that once harbored one of the world's leading shipbuilders, *Kockums* (Billing & Stigendahl 1994). During recent decades, however, the city has been the subject of two parallel global processes which have transformed lives of many of its residents.

On one hand, the city has been affected by what Peter Dicken (1992) has defined as a global shift. Since the 1970s, the city has gone through a process of de-industrialization, wherein several of the largest companies have either moved to other parts of the world, or closed down. The shipyard, which was one of the most important employers in the city since the Second World War, is today a comparatively small company involved in producing submarines. In order to counteract the economic downturn, local policy-makers have tried to implement various projects. A bridge to Denmark, *Öresundbron*, has been built to connect Sweden with Denmark, but as yet there is no measurable effect of this connection in terms of investments or jobs. The state has also invested huge sums of money in the construction of a local university; a university that symptomatically is located (in part) on the grounds of the former shipyard. If it is as Saskia Sassen (1994) has argued, that today's cities are involved in global, rather than national, economic capitalist competition, then it is hard to see what the city of Malmö can do in order to make itself attractive to a global elite. The city has neither a favorable climate nor tax laws that might function as an incentive for people to settle here.

On the other hand, the city has been a target for the globalization of people, or culture, as it is sometimes argued. During the 1960s and 70s, in order to keep its industries going, the city of Malmö imported labor – as did several other industrial cities in the Western world. In terms of numbers, this import of people from other European countries was nothing compared to the large influx of refugees that have become reality since the 1980s. The earlier labor immigrants could begin to work almost immediately on arrival in Sweden (Lundh & Ohlsson 1994), but for the later refugees (and their families) the situation has been different since they have not been welcomed as participants in the national economic project. The altered economic conditions of the city – and for the immigrants – are reflected in the growth of small service companies. Several of the small grocery shops in the contemporary city are owned by immigrants. Urban space in Malmö has seen a greater number of kebab kiosks, and other catering facilities. The number of taxi drivers of foreign descent has also grown in the last few decades. In the Rosengård neighborhood, the local shopping center, *RoCent*, once housed mostly Swedish-owned businesses, while today most of the stores are owned and operated by immigrants.<sup>12</sup>

12 The total number of people born in a country other than Sweden is, for Malmö, 56,903 persons; that is 22% of the 254,904 residents of the whole city. The number of persons born in Sweden, but with at least one parent born outside of Sweden, is 33,206. This category makes up 13% of the total number of residents in the city. Thus, roughly 30% of the residents of the city of Malmö could be considered "immigrants" [ *Omårdesfakta för Malmö*, 1999].

## CHAPTER 3

# The Hegemony of Multiculturalism

A central argument of this thesis is that the multiculturalist ideology works as an intellectual obstacle to understanding multicultural society (see Wikan 2002: 75). It may sound self-evident that a political ideology cannot be used to understand the empirical world analytically, since ideologies are basically intended to influence political action. The reason for pointing this out, however, is that many intellectuals in Sweden and elsewhere use the multiculturalist ideology both as a political model of and for society (Geertz 1973) *and* as a model to organize scientific thinking and writing about contemporary society. In everyday thought, the terms multicultural and multiculturalist (i.e., part of an *-ism*) may be used interchangeably, but in this chapter the focus is on the *ideology* of multiculturalism – that is, on what is in some people's minds.

This chapter is being written to provide a basis for the arguments presented in the chapters that follow. I have tried to do three things here. First, to describe multiculturalist ideology as a hegemonic political belief system in contemporary Sweden. Most middle class actors subscribe to the values of this ideology. An argument related to the hegemony of the ideology is that ideas of control, domination, and power are moved into the background, since the values proposed in the ideology have been “embodied” by most contemporary intellectuals. To many contemporary observers, power and domination are aimed at the Other, via discrimination and exclusion, not something directed towards native Swedes who criticize multiculturalism. Second, I suggest that multiculturalism is grounded in globalization; that is, the ideology should to be understood as an instrument of the elite to cope with cultural and material transformations which have taken place over recent decades. Third, I argue that, in order to fathom why the discourse of Islam in Sweden is constructed as it is, it is important to understand that it is constructed within a multiculturalist ideological matrix. Knowledge of Islam is influenced by ideological considerations. These function as intellectual obstacles to understanding certain aspects of multicultural society such as, for instance, ethnic/religious enclavization and Islamism. The multi-

culturalist ideology is an intellectual obstacle because it avoids issues which can be interpreted as producing negative statements about multicultural society.

The main focus in this chapter is on the multiculturalist ideology because it is the hegemonic ideology in contemporary Sweden on issues of cultural difference. However, as some observers have pointed out (Heywood 2003; Therborn 1988), ideologies always overlap with other ideologies: in everyday political life they are seldom represented in pure forms. Multiculturalism is thus embedded in, and combines with, other ideological structures – such as liberalism, socialism, environmentalism, and conservatism. In Sweden, for example, the Green party, the Social Democratic party, and the Left party all agree to the central assumptions and values dictated by multiculturalism. There are, however, good reasons for challenging multiculturalist ideology. Because multiculturalist ideology is hegemonic, it becomes important to criticize this political belief system even more than other systems which are excluded from the public sphere.

## 3.1 The multiculturalist ideology

### 3.1.1 A coherence system

In Sweden, multiculturalism is not perceived as a political ideology among others. Instead, the arguments, ideas, and values which are built into the ideology are understood by a great many Swedish intellectuals (policy makers, journalists, researchers) as self-evident truths about contemporary society; truths which stand beyond the realm of criticism. To be in favor of a multicultural society (meaning in favor of cultural diversity), is seen as one of the most important moral virtues for citizens in Sweden. A general working definition of multicultural ideology is thus to understand it, as the linguist Charlotte Linde (1993) would say, as a *coherence system*. That is, “a discursive practice that represents a system of beliefs and relations between beliefs” which “provides the environment in which one statement may or may not be taken as a cause of another statement” (ibid.: 163). Thus, a central assumption in this thesis is that the inherent values of the multicultural ideology provide speakers with a cognitive structure, a system of ideas and values, which can be (and are) used to organize statements about cultural difference.

This linguistic term, coherence system, has also been used by certain authors in theoretical discussions of the term *ideology*. Thompson (1984) argues that ideology is a “political belief system” which can be used to “guide action oriented towards preserving, destroying or rebuilding the social order” (ibid.: 76).<sup>13</sup> Thus ideologies, as defined by Thompson, are characterized as “coherent systems” of beliefs which are

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13 Thompson's discussion is based on the work of Martin Seliger (1976).

constructed by some interrelated elements (ibid.). Ideologies are made up of *descriptions, analyses, moral prescriptions, technical prescriptions, implements, and rejections* (ibid.: 78). Ideologies blend these elements, according to Thompson, in a “peculiar mixture of factual content and moral commitment”, where they are used to understand (and guide action) within a certain political system (ibid.). A similar approach is suggested by Andrew Heywood (2003), who argues that ideologies “straddle the conventional boundaries between descriptive and normative thought”, and thus “bring about two kinds of synthesis: between understanding and commitment, and between thought and action” (ibid.: 12). Therborn (1988), contends that ideologies generally answer three questions:

1. *what exists*, and its corollary, what does not exist: that is, who we are, what the world is, what nature, society, men and women are like. In this way we acquire a sense of identity, becoming conscious of what is real and true; the visibility of the world is thereby structured by the distribution of spotlights, shadows and darkness.
2. *what is good*, right, just beautiful, attractive, enjoyable, and its opposites. In this way our desires become structured and normalized.
3. *what is possible* and impossible; our sense of the mutability of our being-in-the-world and the consequences of change are hereby patterned, and our hopes, ambitions, and fears given shape [ibid.: 18].

The questions offered by Therborn correspond to how John Lye (1997) views the term ideology.<sup>14</sup> Lye suggests that an analysis of ideology should be about trying to understand the assumptions behind an ideology of what is regarded as “natural, just and right” and what these assumptions “distort or obscure” (ibid.). He also points out, as does Therborn, that the practice of one type of ideology often means the denial of issues for which it is difficult to find space within the system of ideas that build up a certain ideological approach. Various things can, according to Lye, be “left out” by an ideology, including people, classes, areas of life, experiences, negative aspects, etc (ibid.). The perspective of ideology discussed thus far suggests that ideologies in general contain a mixture of diverse elements which serve as a basis for a certain type of perception of how the world is and ought to be.

When it comes to the multiculturalist ideology, it is communicated through a discourse of cultural difference (Heywood 2003; Therborn 1988). Many scholars have used the concept of discourse in recent decades, and I see no point in trying to offer a theoretical contribution to that debate. My understanding of hegemonic discourse comes close to how Young (2001) defines the term, namely as:

a system of stories and expert knowledge diffused throughout the society, which convey the widely accepted generalizations about how society operates that are theorized in these terms, as well as the social norms and cultural values to which most of the people appeal when discussing their social and political problems and proposed solutions. [...] [Hegemonic discourse] refers to how the conceptual and normative framework of the members of a society is deeply influenced by premises and terms of discourse that make it difficult to think critically about aspects of their social relations or alternative possibilities of institutionalization and action [ibid.: 685-686].

14 The ideas of John Lye have been downloaded from a page called *Ideology: A Brief Guide*, <http://www.brocku.ca/english/jlye/ideology.html>

Although Young here offers a general definition of the term discourse, her approach is useful when it comes to understanding multiculturalism as an ideology concerned with how to think and talk about cultural difference/diversity. Multiculturalist ideology is, it will be argued throughout this thesis, a system of expert knowledge which makes up a conceptual and normative framework which is used to talk about cultural difference. Due to its hegemonic position, it is difficult for people “to think critically about aspects of their social relations or alternative possibilities of institutionalization and action” (see also Winther Jørgensen and Phillips 2000). I will demonstrate that all actors in Swedish society have to consider the multiculturalist ideology when they seek to discuss cultural diversity; even those actors who do not agree with multiculturalism, as will be shown in Chapter Eight, have problems in defining an alternative position on issues concerned with the Other and his/her cultural distinctiveness.

### 3.1.2 Multiculturalism and its enemies

The multiculturalist ideology in Sweden is used by the state and other political actors (intellectuals in various fields) as a political ideology to guide actions intended to preserve, destroy, and rebuild the social order. These are powerful words, and in Sweden they are not used in the everyday political discourse to designate the transformation from a monocultural to a multicultural society. But I believe that, in the minds of most sympathizers of the ideology, Swedish society should be preserved in its general institutional outline, although, according to multiculturalists, some aspects of this order should be deconstructed for the purpose of rebuilding a “real” multicultural social order. The former minister of integration, Ulrica Messing (1999a), argued a couple of years ago that Sweden “before the Second World War was a relatively homogeneous society in terms of ethnicity, culture, language, religion, and traditions. But that homogeneity has been radically broken during the last four decades. Today Sweden is a society characterized by ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity” (my translation from Swedish). And this new situation, according to Messing (here describing *what is good*), is a process that will help Sweden develop since “cultural diversity has a creative capacity [which can] vitalize our cultural life and provide us with good experiences which are necessary for international cooperation in a more and more complicated world” (ibid.) (my translation from Swedish).

Even if Sweden *is*, according to Messing’s ideological approach, multicultural, it is not multicultural in the real sense of the word. Some things must first be deconstructed and re-built in order for a true multicultural society to come into existence.

The lack of ethnic and cultural diversity is present in most sectors in our society – in everyday life, in the labor market, in political life, in the life of associations, and in cultural life. To break segregation, counteract discrimination, and support diversity in all societal sectors is therefore one of the most important tasks for the future [ibid.].

The main target of the ideology are those factors which in some manner stand in the way of the implementation of cultural diversity, which is regarded as the most im-



portant value of the ideology. The obstacle *par excellence* can thus be captured in the term *homogeneity*. The existing social order in the Swedish nation-state is a problem, since it is too culturally homogeneous. This understanding of the problem of integration is central to the multiculturalist perception of the world. As will be shown in Chapter Four, both *pluralists* (Swedish scholars) and *Islamists* (religious activists) reason in the same way as the former social democratic minister quoted above.

No ideology can be understood in isolation from other ideologies. Thus, the multiculturalist ideology sheds light on certain aspects of contemporary reality and defines what is “good” in this reality. In doing so, however, it also rejects other aspects. For example, as Messing says, segregation is an evil according to multicultural logic, since it hampers the possibility of making room for diversity in established institutions. To classify segregation – the division of national space – as bad, makes it difficult, according to multiculturalist logic, to argue that there are also good aspects of the perspectives of certain ethnic/religious individuals/groups. In order to grasp the fundamental construction of multiculturalism, and its articulation of values to fight for or struggle against, we can present the ideology in contrast to nationalism, i.e., in relation to what the ideology *rejects*.

| <b>Multiculturalism</b> | <b>Nationalism</b>   |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| cultural heterogeneity  | cultural homogeneity |
| anti-racist             | racist               |
| anti-discrimination     | discrimination       |
| cultural enrichment     | cultural conflicts   |
| equal                   | unequal              |
| respect                 | disrespect           |
| “open”                  | “closed”             |
| tolerance               | intolerance          |

In this binary scheme of oppositions, the term nationalism is used as the “enemy” of multiculturalism. All ideologies or ideas which somehow argue for cultural homogeneity, for national boundaries, for the primacy of the Swedish language – that is, any arguments which somehow point out characteristics which can be interpreted as standing in opposition to the central values of the multiculturalist ideology, are regarded as the enemy by multiculturalists. Multiculturalists subscribe to most of the ideas and values in the left-hand column above. They see themselves as being in favor of cultural heterogeneity, as anti-racists, as equal (to immigrants), as treating other cultures with respect, etc. Hence, in the right-hand column it is possible to find the ideas and values that ought to be fought against in contemporary Sweden. Needless to say, multiculturalists/pluralists regard the values in the right-hand column as bad or wrong, while nationalists themselves understand their own values as being good. As will be demonstrated in Chapter Eight, all the actors involved in the discourse of multiculturalist society understand themselves to be morally good and trustworthy.

The ideological struggle against racism (and all other values in the right-hand column above), may take more or less militant expressions. Leftist multiculturalists of-

ten argue for the inclusion of excluded “identities” from a relatively totalitarian point of view. For example, in the book *Maktens (o)lika förklädnader* (2002), Pauline Stoltz argues (my translation from Swedish):

We also need ... a focus on how we can expand the moral boundaries around political communities. Certain unacceptable positions, like racist positions, should be impossible to occupy. Both in feminist movements and within states. [...]. That is, theorists need to find new ways to make visible the systematically excluded others in the dialogues which concern how social practices and policies harm their interests. Those who want to construct social relations which are more universal, less unequal, and more sensitive to cultural differences may see this as an important ethical undertaking [ibid.: 55].

This is a dogmatic, normative statement which reveals that some ideas ought to be cleansed from the democratic debate. The problem, however, is what is meant by the words “racist positions”; what is included in this concept? If I understand the leftist debate about multiculturalism, within it only “Westerners” can be defined as racists. The different Other is per definition a victim who ought to be empowered and freed from a long history of colonization. So, what shall we do with all those different Others who are fascists? Those traditionally-minded men who believe that women ought to take care of the household and raise children, instead of pursuing a career? What about the traditional women who agree that these should be their main tasks? What shall we do with Islamists who are ideological enemies of Marxists because they regard Marxists as atheists? There is a great danger that, when everything comes around, the Other is really an empty signifier for leftists. There may be no one there to take part in the project to “expand the boundaries around political communities”, because very few individuals and groups seem to have the capacity to live up to the high moral standards argued for by the left.

An important value in multiculturalism is the practice of tolerance towards culturally different individuals, something closely related to claims about the acceptance of cultural difference. However, as the example above illustrates, it is not always clear what kind of cultural differences ought to be tolerated. Žižek (1999) has made an important point when it comes to multiculturalism and tolerance. He claims that the multiculturalist:

tolerates the Other in so far as it is not the *real* Other, but the aseptic Other of premodern ecological wisdom, fascinating rites, and so on – the moment one is dealing with the *real* Other (say, of clitoridectomy, of women compelled to wear the veil, of torturing enemies to death ...) with the way the Other regulates the specificity of its *jouissance*, tolerance stops [ibid.: 219].

In Sweden two of the most problematic issues when it comes to what the real Other is doing are honor killings and female circumcision (see Johnsdotter 2002).<sup>15</sup> There exists no ideological space at all for tolerance towards these practices of diversity among liberal, multiculturalist, middle-class citizens. A new phenomenon which challenges the value of tolerance concerns problems in Islamic private schools in Swe-

15 Sara Johnsdotter shows in her thesis, *Created by God* (2002), that, among other things, native Swedish activists have great difficulties in dealing with female circumcision.

den. A television documentary highlighted that in these schools another Other than the “imagined” Other practiced patriarchal values, abused children, and censored books which contained sex education. When these practices were presented to the public they, as was explained in a newspaper, “shocked the whole Swedish school system” (*Sydsvenska dagbladet*, 9 and 10 May 2003).<sup>16</sup>

To think with the help of the multiculturalist ideology (or, of course, any political ideology) is to think of society in a relatively black-and-white fashion. Thus, if the ideas and values above are used to guide action and thinking in an un-reflexive way, there is very little space left for criticism, or any discussion of negative aspects of multicultural society, as described by Lye and Therborn above. If cultural difference generally is understood as enriching for society, it is difficult to find room for, for example, a discussion about differences which may be socially damaging. This is reflected in almost all public declarations about multiculturalism in Sweden; that is, the multiculturalist ideology organizes thinking in a way that contrasts morally good ideals with morally bad ideals: multiculturalists almost always talk of binary oppositions, of conceptual pairs. Therefore, claims in favor of cultural diversity, or a multicultural society, are always followed by an argument about the need to fight discrimination, xenophobia, or other intolerant ideas. For example, the Swedish Social Democratic Party declares that it is important for various organizations in Sweden to “open up the doors for the multicultural Sweden”, a declaration followed immediately by the claim that “the whole Swedish society must work together towards integration – against discrimination and racism” (*Integration för mångfald*, partistyrelsen, 1998).<sup>17</sup> My point here is that the Swedish multiculturalist ideology makes it difficult to say anything about cultural difference and society that is not formulated as an ideological slogan (with a morally approved content), since the logic built into the ideology is that all critical viewpoints are something to fight against, tend toward racism, and are therefore morally reprehensible.

Something that makes multiculturalism even more difficult to discuss and criticize as a hegemonic ideology is the fact that, in the official version, criticism of the ideology is associated with the Holocaust and thus with Nazism.<sup>18</sup> In July, 2003 the Swedish state established a new government ministry, the *Ministry for a Living History*. Here, multicultural ideals are connected to one of the worst crimes in history, the Holocaust. “The ministry”, it is declared, “has a national mission to promote work with democracy, tolerance, and human rights, with its point of departure in the Hol-

16 Female (and male) circumcision, honor killings, and the Muslim veil are the most obvious and most debated cultural problems in multicultural societies. Other cultural traditions which are experienced as negative by many Westerners are *halal*-slaughter and crimes committed by immigrants. So far, ethnic food is usually considered by many to be an enriching aspect of diversity. But it is possible to imagine a future situation where, for example, the Chinese habit of eating dogs could be evaluated as a negative aspect of cultural difference.

17 The document can be downloaded from [http://www.sap.se/sapdesign.nsf/main?openagent&Layout=Politik\\_undersida&docid=82B8048B3CD17C42C1256C150035DF52](http://www.sap.se/sapdesign.nsf/main?openagent&Layout=Politik_undersida&docid=82B8048B3CD17C42C1256C150035DF52)

18 To use this example is not intended to downgrade or trivialize the Holocaust. The intention is to highlight the problem of using it as an “ideological weapon” related to multiculturalism. To be “intolerant” toward the multiculturalist ideology is certainly not synonymous with being a Nazi. To think so is to trivialize the Holocaust (Finkelstein 2001: 13).

ocaust". If values related to democracy, tolerance, and human rights are the antithesis of the Holocaust (in terms of a binary opposition), then it will be really difficult to say anything which questions the values of multiculturalist ideology: all heterodox ideas about multiculturalism can be dismissed as Nazism – and who wants to stand out as a Nazi? From a democratic point of view, the ideological connection between tolerance and Nazism (two extreme positions in the political debate) is at risk of contravening democratic ideals, since there is a strong danger that many citizens will feel a great fear of saying anything that may be interpreted as intolerant. Debate multiculturalism, yes, but do it with ideological slogans about enrichment. Otherwise, one risks nothing less than being classified as an enemy of humanity.

### 3.1.3 Silenced issues

To use the multiculturalist belief system as a model for society also implies that certain issues are left out of the description, or "silenced", as Lye and others quoted above argue. This is not the appropriate place for presenting an extensive list of omissions; the point here is to highlight "silencing" as an important aspect of ideology in general. In the multiculturalist order of things, it is, for example, difficult to find space for problems related to *class*. The concept of class in Sweden produces associations with socialism (an un-democratic political order), and to "Swedishness". The working class in Sweden is basically made up of native Swedes, so to argue for the welfare of the working class is indirectly to argue for the welfare of native Swedes, and thereby exclude the Other. It can also be argued that *culture* has superseded the term class. The basic assumption is still there: that there exist citizens in society who are structural victims; but since multiculturalist ideology is grounded in the idea of cultural difference, there is no cognitive space left for class; because of that, there is no intellectual space left over to discuss those economic and social problems encountered by the Swedish working class. When it is, as the former minister of integration Ulrica Messing (1999b) argues, "our [cultural] differences [and not similarities] that make life rich and exciting to live" (ibid.), the Swedish working class risks becoming ideologically marginalized (see Wikan 2002: 87). That the members of the Swedish working class experience themselves as politically marginalized by the Social Democratic Party is a claim made by native Swedes which will be discussed in Chapter Eight.

Something else which is silenced by multiculturalism is the *global capitalist system* and all the problems related to this type of economic order. Žizek (1999) goes even further in his criticism of multiculturalism, arguing that "everybody tacitly accepts that *capitalism is here to stay* – critical energy has found a substitute outlet in fighting for cultural differences which leave the basic homogeneity of the capitalist world-system intact" (ibid.: 218). He claims that "the ideal form of ideology of this global capitalism is multiculturalism", because to be occupied by:

PC [politically correct] battles for the rights of ethnic minorities, of gays and lesbians, of different lifestyles [is to be involved in] performing the ultimate service for the unrestrained development of capitalism by actively participating in the ideological effort to render its massive presence invisible [ibid.: 217-218].

The problem of keeping economic conditions in silence because of a preoccupation with the politics of identity has also been addressed by Fraser (2000). She claims that many of those involved in identity struggles “simply ignore [economic] distributive injustice altogether and focus exclusively on efforts to change culture” (ibid.: 110).<sup>19</sup>

In Sweden the hegemony of multiculturalist ideology leads observers to explain the exclusion of immigrants from the labor market as a consequence of racism. That is, the different Other is not offered work because of attitude problems among employers. The problem in understanding exclusion in this manner is that it keeps global economic transformations in ideological shadow. To understand exclusion *only* in terms of discrimination also seems to be based on a naive definition of capitalism. In fact, employers employ anyone, “colored” or culturally different, as long as it is profitable. Otherwise, it would be difficult for transnational corporations to function in a global market. And, if the explanation of the exclusion of the Other from the labor market is reduced to discrimination alone, how can we explain that immigrants in the West were included in, and even invited into, the industrial labor market from the late 1950s to the 70s? Was there less structural racism in the West during those decades?

Another factor which may lead intellectuals to leave out certain themes from their knowledge is a fear of “aiding the enemy”, the nationalist right-wing, against multicultural society. That is, criticism of multiculturalism, or aspects of multicultural society which could be interpreted as hazardous for society, are not discussed because they could be understood as legitimizing racism. In this thesis, however, I discuss two phenomena which are rarely discussed in the contemporary multicultural political order. One of these is *Islamism*, the other, *ethnic/religious enclavization*. Both of these phenomena are problematic for the multiculturalist ideology since they point out aspects of cultural diversity which can be seen as negative for society. They challenge the multiculturalist description of what multicultural Sweden is, and ought to be. According to multicultural ideology, cultural diversity is supposed to enrich Sweden in many different ways. To discuss Islamism and enclavization, however, is to say something about diversity which is not on the multiculturalist agenda. Islamism is not generally understood as an enriching phenomenon; on the contrary, many non-Muslims (and Muslims) regard it as problematic. Multiculturalists fear that Islamism, both as a term and as a phenomenon, may be associated with the Islamic threat (expansion of Islam, militancy, etc.). The existence of enclavization is denied by many multiculturalist actors, since it is associated with a permanent division of (ur-

19 In her article *Rethinking Recognition* (2000), Fraser argues that the struggle for recognition must be embedded in the institutional matrix where misrecognition takes place. In order to combine economic subordination and cultural discrimination, she suggests that it is of importance to avoid arguments about group rights and instead focus on social status in general. She claims that her model will make space for a more flexible struggle for the rights of misrecognised groups/classes.

ban) space. That goes against multiculturalist ideological logic, which says that ethnic segregation is an evil which is to be eliminated.

### 3.1.4 Embodiment and ideological hegemony

Contemporary multiculturalist ideology is hegemonic when it comes to issues related to immigration and globalization generally (see Heywood 2003). The concept of *hegemony*, a term borrowed from Antonio Gramsci (1971), has been used by anthropologists interested in cultural domination (Kurtz 1996; Comaroff and Comaroff 2002 [1992]). Gramsci used the concept in order to discuss the cultural, or symbolic, dimensions of domination and power (in contrast to a vulgar “economism”) (ibid.: see also Fraser 2000: 111). Kurtz (1996) points out that Gramsci defined hegemony in terms of “intellectual and moral leadership” (ibid.: 103) conducted by a class of intellectuals who formulate ideologies, values, etc, in order to “control” the minds of citizens. The social role of intellectuals in this political activity is well formulated by Nader (1995), who argues that:

the notion of hegemony...implies that some systems of thought develop over time and reflect the interests of certain classes or groups in the society who manage to universalize their beliefs and attitudes. Dogmas reinforce controls as they are produced and reproduced by intellectual elites – academics, writers, representatives of the mass media, and so on [ibid.: 721].

Multiculturalism, it is argued in this thesis, is a hegemonic system of thought in Sweden, and its beliefs and values are transferred to the “common man” by intellectuals from various social fields. Thus it is claimed that this ideology makes up a central building block of the mental dispositions, of the *habitus*, of contemporary Swedish intellectuals. For a number of years the intellectual elite (journalists, policy makers, officials) has contended that Sweden is, and should be, a multicultural society where cultural difference in general enriches society. One can illustrate this with a host of examples, since multiculturalist ideals and values emanate from most official institutions in Sweden.

For instance, the Swedish government has launched an action plan to promote diversity within the Cabinet (*Ethnic and cultural pluralism in the government cabinet*, 2003). It is officially argued that this plan is important in order to raise consciousness in the Cabinet about the “quality and competence that can be gained by ethnic and cultural pluralism” (ibid.) (my translation from Swedish). Higher education should also reflect multicultural ideals. In a press release from the Ministry of Education it is stated that “the university needs to better ensure social and ethnic diversity”, since “diversity [will] raise competence in universities” (Ministry of Education, April 15, 2000) (my translation from Swedish).<sup>20</sup> Most political parties in the Swedish parliament also subscribe to multiculturalist ideals. The Liberal Party, *Folkpartiet*, claims that:

<sup>20</sup> The press release can be downloaded from [http://www.regeringen.se/galactica/service=irnews/action=obj\\_show?c\\_id=32758](http://www.regeringen.se/galactica/service=irnews/action=obj_show?c_id=32758)

Sweden has been built according monoethnic conditions. Now, we have to see the possibilities in an increased diversity in the whole of society – in the labor market, public service, culture, and politics. Minority groups who so wish shall have the possibility to build their own structures and institutions. It can be a question of firms, schools, and nursing homes, grounded in ethnic belonging [Folkpartiet, policy program](my translation from Swedish).

The Green party, *Miljöpartiet*, claims that the “multicultural society enriches us [Sweden]. We want the state and other institutions to be consciously transformed and reconstructed so that pluralism is affirmed and discrimination is defeated” (Miljöpartiet, policy program)(my translation from Swedish).

Another example of how multiculturalist ideology is hegemonic in Sweden is the policy for cultural diversity formulated by the national radio and television company, *Sveriges Radio*. It is a policy which can be read as the ABC of multiculturalist ideology. It starts with three political slogans: “Cultural diversity – enriches the [programs offered], cultural diversity – takes advantage of human resources, cultural diversity – enhances tolerance and contravenes prejudices” (Sveriges radio, 2003)(my translation from Swedish). The whole organization should be permeated by multiculturalism, both with regard to how to organize the workforce and in the various programs broadcast. Swedish Radio “is based on the notion that cultural diversity is an asset” (ibid.). The company should “mirror multicultural Sweden”. It should, according to this policy, “take a stand for a democratic society’s basic values, meaning free speech, the right to vote in free elections”. And, “Therefore, we must distance ourselves from or refute expressions which go against these values”. This, however, is not always the case; because it is also stated that, “to argue for the principal of the equal value of all humans means, among other things, distancing [oneself] from racism. Therefore, in this case, we are biased” (Sveriges Radio).

For many intellectuals multiculturalist ideals have become “embodied” in a Bourdieuan sense of the word; that is, many intellectuals have forgotten that multiculturalism is an ideology; its dictates have become naturalized as the truth about society. This embodiment of categories has also had another effect: certain notions of power and domination are forgotten or placed in the background. For intellectuals sympathetic to multiculturalism, it is not regarded as an ideology used by the state for the purpose of dominating peoples’ minds. The multiculturalist ideology and its moral values are instead regarded as self-evidently good, as ideas which have nothing to do with the power to influence the thinking of Swedish citizens. Domination and power are for many intellectuals only directed towards the culturally different Other, expressed in terms of exclusion, discrimination, and racism. These factors are not regarded as aspects of the relationship between actors acting in the name of multiculturalism and the critics of this ideology. Therefore, various multicultural actors (the state, researchers, and journalists) are united in their political struggle; this is a political situation which would have been almost impossible some decades ago, when intellectuals regarded the state as an important instrument for the domination of the working class. In contemporary society, anarchists, conservatives, Marxists, liberals, social democrats, progressive scholars, and engaged authors all agree that the main political battle to be fought is the struggle against the (hidden) enemy of racism.

Multiculturalism was introduced by the Swedish state in 1975 as part of a new policy for coping with immigration. During the thirty years since the introduction of that policy, the ideology has spread throughout society in a way that makes most (native Swedish) middle-class citizens multiculturalists. Today multiculturalist ideology and its moral values saturate both the private and public spheres, and it is an ideology with a powerful signifying value for moral goodness: anyone expressing him/herself publicly who wants to appear as a morally good person is expected to argue for the values inherent in the ideology – tolerance of cultural difference, openness in general, etc. To do the opposite, to say something which could be understood as negative toward multiculturalism, turns the speaker (according to the multiculturalist logic) into a racist. It is inconceivable to associate being a morally good person with being against multiculturalism. Such a person must either be evil (a racist) or a misguided victim of racist ideology, who needs to be educated (enlightened) through multiculturalist campaigns.

So what is ideological hegemony? The Comaroff's (2002 [1992]) have captured the essence of the term when they say that it is about "the effort of others to impose on them a particular way of seeing and being" (ibid.: 494). Žižek (1999), however, has formulated an answer to the question which is fruitful to use in an understanding of the following chapters in this thesis. He suggests that "politics is the struggle for the content of the empty signifier which represents the impossibility of society" (ibid.: 177). When it comes to the multicultural society as an "empty signifier", the struggle consists of filling this category with, as Žižek argues, a particular content which is universalized as the only true way to understand society (ibid.). In Sweden, the state and intellectuals in the media and universities have worked to fill the signifier with a (particular) content grounded in multiculturalism, with all that means for descriptions of what are, morally, the role of immigration, ways of formulating problems of multicultural society, etc; in short: a specific perspective on society. In this ideological project, all particularities which can be interpreted as hazardous for the political project of transforming Sweden into a real multicultural society are stigmatized or excommunicated.

### 3.1.5 Excommunication and ideological control

In her article *Controlling Processes* (1995), Nader argues that "cultural control" is "often implicit and not dramatic and is related to the creation of social categories and expectations and to ideological construction" (ibid.: 719). And, when cultural control is hegemonic, it is "impersonal, embedded, and often invisible, and even those who in fact exercise it may not understand its extent" (ibid.: 720). This is certainly the case when it comes to the hegemony of multiculturalism in contemporary Sweden; the values – and perspective – offered by the ideology are not understood as hegemonic, but as self-evidently good. However, cultural control, or "multiculturalist control", is not necessarily, or always, a smooth, unproblematic process: ideological hegemony is also upheld using symbolic and material punishments.



Therborn (1988) points out an aspect of ideology in general which is important for understanding how the hegemony of multiculturalism is upheld. "In every society", he argues, there is "an ideological order of power, control, and domination" (ibid.: 81). He claims that all ideological orders are reproduced through various discursive and non-discursive "affirmations" and "sanctions" (ibid.). If someone practices "acts in accordance with the dictates of ideological discourse", it is an affirmative action that may provide the subject in question with a job being sought or some other material resource. If someone, on the other hand, acts in a way that contravenes the dictates of the ideological discourse, "he or she is sanctioned, through failure, unemployment, bankruptcy, imprisonment, death or whatever" (ibid.: 34). A discursive sanction Therborn designates as *excommunication*; that is, when "the victim is excluded from further meaningful discourse as being insane, depraved, traitorous, alien, and so on" (ibid.: 82). The excommunicated person, according to Therborn, is "condemned, temporarily or forever, to ideological non-existence: he is not to be listened to; he is the target of ideological objectification" (ibid.: 83).

In multicultural Sweden there are examples of heterodox actors who have become targets of sanctions for having expressed the wrong ideas according to the dictates of multiculturalist ideology. During the 2002 election campaign, a local politician in the city of Kristianstad was sanctioned for having expressed disparaging opinions about Muslims in Sweden. He was doubly punished for his act: he was excluded from the political party Moderaterna and was symbolically and publicly condemned for being a racist, which is the worse crime anyone can commit in the multicultural order of Sweden (*Sydsvenska dagbladet* 14, 15, and 21 September 2002). Another example took place on Öland, an island located off the Swedish east coast. Here, a nationalist became the target of sanctions after having written an article in the local newspaper, *Ölandsbladet*. He had been hired as a juggler by the zoological garden on the island, but after having published an article in which he revealed that he was a member in the nationalist party, *the Sweden Democrats*, the head of the zoo, Boris Bravin, broke the contract. Bravin stated that it probably would have been possible for the man to work as juggler for the zoo if he had not publicly confessed his political affiliation (Lodenius & Larsson 1991: 49). The anthropologist Kajsa Ekholm Friedman was also the target of symbolic sanctions in 1997-98, when she argued that a multiculturalist Sweden also meant serious social problems. She was attacked by several "right-minded" multiculturalists (I was one of them), because she had said the "wrong" things, and because she had accepted an invitation to lecture at a meeting organized by an organization called The People's Will and Mass Immigration (*Folkviljan och massinvandringen*). This organization was described in the media as xenophobic, or racist. In the nation-wide turbulence which followed the publication of her arguments, several academics and political commentators argued, in line with what Therborn describes above, that she ought to be dismissed from the university (Friedman 1999; Ekholm Friedman 1997).<sup>21</sup>

21 This incident, seen in the light of history, is an illuminating illustration of how ideological hegemony is upheld in a society.

An important discursive instrument in the control and domination of the multiculturalist ideological order is the classification of its apostates as racists. When it comes to multiculturalism as a specific type of ideological hegemonic order, it is thus important to avoid symbolic acts which can be interpreted as racist (in other orders it may be a question of being, for example, anti-Communist, blasphemous, etc.). In other words, it is important to be *politically correct*. This term is often used by those critical of the dictates of multiculturalism; it has become a kind of general label for those contemporary expressions which are in line with the ideological hegemony. Jonathan Friedman (1998) has argued that political correctness is one of the greatest problems of contemporary multicultural society since it is grounded in guilt-by-association and not in what he calls rational discourse. It is not, he argues, the factual content of linguistic expressions that count, but the associations that can be made concerning the person who has said something critical about multiculturalism. Friedman points out an important aspect of the political situation in multicultural Sweden, but I am not sure that this is a historically new phenomenon, or a phenomenon unique to Sweden, as he seems to imply in his discussion (ibid.). What seems to be the case, is that all ideologies, regardless of their specific content, function with their own binary logic, where the specific values of what counts as wrong (and thereby as something to be excommunicated) may differ – but not the logic itself. For Marxists, capitalist values may be sanctioned; for Islamists, non-Islamic values may be sanctioned; for multiculturalists, nationalist ideas; and so on.

Political correctness, as a general phenomenon, seems to show the same characteristics under all types of hegemonic regimes. Tamara Dragadze (1987) has described conditions for anthropologists in the Soviet ideological order in terms of a “basic contradiction between official doctrine and their fieldwork experience” (ibid.: 158). The general outline of the official ideology in the Soviet Union was, according to Dragadze, characterized by a supposed equality between the sexes and “harmony between the generations” (ibid.). Furthermore, the official ideology dictated that relations between ethnic groups, and between city and village, was a relationship characterized by “love” and “mutual respect” (ibid.). According to Dragadze, it was also important that there were “definite indications of a convergence of thought and custom by all Soviet peoples” (ibid.). If the work conducted by Soviet anthropologists did not satisfy the core values of the official ideology, the anthropologists were in great danger of becoming the target of sanctions. If they published texts which were in line with the ideology in power, they could be “applauded as progressive” but, on the other hand, if the texts challenged the core values of the ideology, they were considered to be signs of “backwardness” (ibid.). According to Dragadze, Soviet anthropologists responded to the tension in this system “by writing about past traditions” (ibid.). The system also produced a certain strategy among anthropologists for coping with the fear of reprimands: “They are vague about actual dates when describing a custom and, if admitting that it was witnessed recently, a catchphrase is used such as ‘this custom is dying out’ or ‘it has ceased to exist’. A good measure of self-censorship is used, not only about what to publish but also about which questions to ask” (ibid.).

To some actors in Sweden, almost any means seem legitimate to use in controlling the public sphere in the fight for moral goodness against the evil of discrimination. To some actors, the battle for multiculturalism against racism demonstrates almost religious overtones, where the struggle seems to be perceived as a cosmic struggle against a kind of optimal evil which is hidden everywhere in Swedish society. In order to “reveal what otherwise should have been hidden”, the government’s investigator Anders Westholm and the “Ombudsman against discrimination”, Margareta Wadstein, argued for the introduction of attitude supervision in Sweden where “situation tests” would be used to find out whether employers think in a correct way (*Dagens nyheter*, April 14, 2003). The authors say that it should be possible, using techniques of concealment, to “construct a situation which reveals what otherwise would have been hidden” (ibid.). In the struggle against discrimination, it would be reasonable that “an organization or a person, for example an employer, without being aware of it, be tested in a way which makes it possible to decide whether or not the person acts in a discriminating way” (ibid.) (My translation from Swedish). This is perceived by the authors to be a morally good act, and not as an institutionalized inspection system where citizens’ ideological outlooks would be overseen.<sup>22</sup>

The multiculturalist ideology provides pre-defined answers as to how to cope with cultural difference. Public actors never invite citizens to political debates where there is an open question of whether society should be governed by a multiculturalist ideology or not. Most often, citizens are invited to participate in collective actions against racism, always based upon multiculturalist ideological assumptions. There is almost never an open question of whether multiculturalism is good or bad for a society, or any discussion of taking part in critical examinations of multiculturalism. The ideology is basically something that citizens should accept as the true way of understanding reality. A typical example of what this ideological socialization can look like took place in spring, 2003 when the local government in Malmö initiated a project called *Malmö against racism*, a public manifestation in collaboration with several small and not-so-small institutions in the city. The central values in the multiculturalist ideology were given the following formulation:

Today Malmö [is] multiethnic, but the road to the multicultural society is still long. Distrust and insecurity about the unfamiliar and different is as common in our city as everywhere else. Around the city of Malmö, in institutions and associations, in the central administration and in various neighborhoods, we raise up and show the multiplicity of culture, its strength and richness under the common slogan *Malmö against racism*” [2003, Program for the manifestation published by the City of Malmö] (my translation from Swedish).

This is an illuminating example of how certain hegemonic actors have an ambition to “colonize...consciousness with the signs and practices, the axioms and aesthetics” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2002 [1992]: 494) of multiculturalist ideology.

Hence, the multiculturalist ideology is used by various influential actors in order to control arguments and thinking in the public sphere. It has also penetrated public

22 In the weeks after the publication of the article, I waited for a debate about this ideological control system. There was, however, no debate.

institutions where knowledge and science are supposed to be central themes. For example, the IMER (Immigration and Ethnic Relations) educational program at Malmö College expresses the following central idea in their policy of education (my translation from Swedish):

Our students will learn to see the multicultural society not as a problem to be solved, but as a challenge and an opportunity for developing Swedish society in a positive way. One often forgets the simplest of truths, namely that the most developed contemporary societies and nations are the ones which have been built by immigrant groups. This is historical proof of that diversity, or multiculturalism, gives more than it costs [ibid.].

This example demonstrates the influence, and hegemony, of the multiculturalist ideology in contemporary Sweden. This statement is formulated by a public institution (for education and research), where the students are supposed to be critical – but only in line with a multiculturalist ideological approach to society. The main focus in the educational program is on students learning that multicultural society is a challenge, and that immigration is crucial for development. The categories are not even open to critical reflection. They are pre-defined truths which will be delivered, presumably, by the (ideologically) enlightened teachers.

That this political-ideological project is given primacy in this particular education is further reinforced by what is said to be the “most important task” for students after graduation (my translation from Swedish):

The approach which we teach our students, that is, seeing the multicultural society as a challenge and as something that can give added-value to society at large, has begun to be accepted more and more by companies and organizations in trade and industry. This is the case, not least for large Swedish companies. But there is still a long way to go. The most important task for our students in the labor market will be to re-define the work that is being done and to try to accomplish a paradigm shift when it comes to how multiculturalism is perceived [ibid.].

The work to be done by the students is thus a redefinition of all the critical and negative ideas and arguments regarding multiculturalism. A claim made in relation to the ideology is that the students, after graduation, may become involved in important work in making way for immigrants in the job market. The ideology also evokes an image reminiscent of the functioning of a “communist party” school, where the young people attending learned correct thinking, and afterwards went out into society to enlighten the masses in the new communist “religion”. The fact that the state has a policy of making multiculturalists of its citizens is not surprising, since a state is primarily a political institution whose goal is upholding social order. It is harder to understand, however, when an institution which claims to be an educational institution for research and knowledge bases its work on pre-defined ideological categories of what is true.

The hegemony of the multiculturalist ideology may also influence newspaper editors to censor their papers. In the year 2000, the subscribers to a paper called *Rosengårdstidningen* received an issue just before Christmas where the main headline was “Fathers who are not permitted access to their children may become murderers”

(*Rosengårdstidningen*, December, 2002a). In the article, an Iraqi jurist was interviewed about a problem which is kept silent in Swedish society, namely that many men from the Middle East feel discriminated against by the system when it comes to conflicts about the custody of children after divorce. This jurist claimed that many men had been unjustly accused of abusing their children, and that, since the system almost always listens to what the female complainant says, it consequently neglects male voices. Some men, he said, “have gone insane from not seeing their children”, and “in a second they have lost control and become murderers” (ibid.) (my translation from Swedish). Shortly after this issue had arrived, a new issue came through the mailbox. This new issue was followed by a letter from the editor-in-chief, Hans Månsson, who said:

Hello all readers of Rosengård! You have recently received one or more issues of the newspaper *Rosengårdstidningen*. Unfortunately, the wrong issue. I would be very grateful if you could destroy the first issue and instead hand out the issue you have received now [ibid.].

The new issue, with the interview still printed, had a new headline: “Schools get more money” (*Rosengårdstidningen*, December, 2002b). During a conversation with one of the reporters at the newspaper, the problem was explained to me: “We couldn’t publish the first issue. The headline was racist”. The problem was, as I understood the reporter, that the first headline had represented Muslim men too negatively.

### 3.1.6 Culture: “not enough” and “too much”

My reason for challenging this “morally good” discourse is to show that multiculturalism is a *eurocentrist* ideology which, fundamentally, discriminates against the Other. Basically, multiculturalism is grounded in a tolerance of an imagined rather than a real Other (Žižek 1999: 219). The cultural difference which is supposed to be accepted/tolerated is a difference which is defined from Western assumptions of what constitutes a difference which enriches us. Thus, all cultural practices which are defined as morally contestable for multiculturalists are either denied or become objects of moral panic. Female circumcision, a practice which from an “African” perspective is understood as a morally good act is, even in its mildest form, understood from a Western sexual perspective as something which should be forbidden (Johnsdotter 2002). Islamism is another theme. Islamists – who belong to the group of Muslims who criticize secular society, and who often argue for the necessity of isolating Muslims from a (perceived) lack of morality in the West – are not taken seriously as actors who actually mean what they say. As will be shown in the thesis, the discourse of Islam as a Swedish phenomenon is to a large extent formulated in order to normalize Islamists, to make them appear almost like Swedish Social Democrats (see Svanberg and Westerlund 1999).

Multiculturalism also discriminates against the Other by operating with an essentialized and homogeneous definition of culture – an imagined notion of culture. Muslims are constructed as a collective of believers who have traveled from the Eu-

ropean periphery, carrying Islam in their bags; when they settle in Europe they start to practice religion as they have always done (Baumann 1999). Thus, *all* Muslims are so different (and they all practice Islam in the same way) that they should be separated from other citizens. This “imagined” description of Muslims discriminates against all those Muslims who do not wish to practice Islam in a stereotypical way, but who would nevertheless like to define themselves as Muslims. “Real” Muslims may be either Islamist or secularist, involved in struggles of how to define Islam, for or against the establishment of mosques and other institutions, for or against democracy, etc. Consequently, the anti-discriminatory ambitions of multiculturalism may have, in the long run, discriminatory effects, by not taking seriously those Muslim actors who really want to separate Muslims from non-Muslims; and, paradoxically, by making space unreflexively for definitions made by Islamists and then letting these stand as representative for *all* Muslims.

Wikan (2002) has argued that the concept of culture is a “new concept of race” (ibid.: 79). This is an important point to understand if one wants to fathom the problems which follow from multiculturalism as a hegemonic ideology. Wikan (ibid.) asks “What is racism?” and provides the following answer:

It is to treating people condescendingly for ethnic or biological attributes. “Culture” functions in a racist manner if it is a model of humans we apply only to “them” but not to ourselves and when this model implies a *derogatory view* of the Other. And this is my contention: Whereas Norwegians generally regard other Norwegians as individuals with a different character and the ability and will to think for themselves, immigrants are largely perceived as *products* of culture. They are perceived as caught in the grip of culture and therefore unable to exercise independent judgment. But they are thereby deprived of motivation and intention, yes, even of folly and stupidity – basic human traits. This is disrespectful and really quite degrading [ibid.: 81].

Thus, multiculturalism, in its one-sided focus on culture, reduces the Other to someone to be understood only as a member of another group, leaving no space for the individual. However, Wikan points out that it is not only Norwegians [or Swedes] who use culture as an instrument for understanding certain behavior; immigrants also use it in their own self-descriptions (ibid.). From a Swedish perspective, Wikan is correct in her observation of how the term culture is understood and used. In Sweden it is the Other who practices culture, not the Swede. It can be argued that many Swedes, especially the intellectual elite, consider themselves as standing outside, or above, culture, since they have reached a high level of modernization and intellectual refinement. Swedish intellectuals are above various cultural practices which are cherished by common citizens. For example, a few years ago one Swedish school stopped singing the classical chorale *Den blomstertid nu kommer* at the close of the school year prior to the summer vacation, because it could be experienced as exclusionary or discriminatory by Muslims and other non-Christian students.

Another type of discrimination may be a consequence of the strong focus on culture which is stipulated by multiculturalism: it forces individuals to interpret themselves as different, against their own will. Rima Berns McGown (1999) illustrates this with the example of how author Neil Bissoondath experienced multiculturalism in a

Canadian context. To force “recognition of him as a hyphenated Canadian impedes his ability to renegotiate his own identity as he wills it, so that Multiculturalism is, at one level, a constricting force, and an alienating one” (ibid.: 165). Furthermore, McGown says:

[Bissoondath] resents the Canadian government’s implication that the preservation of elements of his birthculture are and should be important to him, when perhaps his choice may be to eat nothing but poutine and tortière for the rest of his days and to attend only quiet dinner parties where Mozart and Bach are played discretely in the background [ibid.].

The reduction of immigrants to culture sometimes takes absurd forms in its fixation on difference. Such as, for instance, when people from countries other than Sweden practice gymnastics, and this activity becomes an example of a “multicultural sports arena” (*Utblick/folkhälsa*, No 1, 2003).

A problem which runs through what has been discussed thus far is that multiculturalism discriminates in two ways. First, it fails to emphasize sufficiently nuances of difference (by avoiding the “Real Other”; e.g., Islamists). Second, it overemphasizes the importance of cultural difference (by reducing the Other to culture and forgetting individuality or personality). Recognition of cultural difference may be experienced as discriminating, as McGown argues above, but to not recognize difference may also be a kind of discrimination (as in the case of Islamism, or female circumcision). This is a kind of theoretical trap from which it is difficult to find an escape. It is addressed by Žižek (1999), who argues that there is no “happy medium between ‘too much’ and ‘not enough’” (ibid.: 220). His solution to the problem is to do “nothing”, because “the only authentic communication is that of ‘solidarity in a common struggle’, when I discover that the deadlock which hampers me is also the deadlock which hampers the Other” (ibid.: 220).

### 3.1.7 Globalization as chaos

How are we supposed to understand why so many contemporary actors organize their thinking according to a multiculturalist model of and for society? Geertz (1973) has argued that ideology is basically a “response to strain” in a society (ibid.: 219). His argument is that in times of profound social change, actors become victims of a cultural, social, and psychological “loss of orientation” which enhances the need to construct ideologies (ibid.):

It is a loss of orientation that most directly gives rise to ideological activity, an inability, for lack of usable models, to comprehend the universe of civic rights and responsibilities in which one finds oneself located. The development of a differentiated polity (or of greater internal differentiation within such a polity) may and commonly does bring with it severe social dislocation and psychological tension. But it also brings with it conceptual confusion, as the established images of political order fade into irrelevance or are driven into disrepute [ibid.: 219].

When the “old” political order is changed, the symbolic systems previously used to understand the world no longer suffice, and in this process actors need new ideologies to construct cognitive and social order. Geertz’s contention, it will be argued here, is suitable as a general description of how to understand the social context which forms the basis of the conceptual and psychological needs of individual actors to use the multiculturalist ideology to orient themselves in the contemporary world.

The same type of argument is also suggested by Therborn (1988). He argues that the explanation of the “generation of ideologies” must be grounded in “processes of change in the structure of a given society and in its relationship to its natural environment and to other societies” (ibid.: 43). Hence, multiculturalist ideology must be understood as an instrument for order which is embedded in a larger social and political (historical) context. These theoretical assumptions could, from a contemporary perspective, be described in terms of globalization. Schematically, this is a situation which is characterized by global economic changes (de-industrialization, the rise of new economic centers in Asia, the movement of people from its former periphery into Western Europe, and the rise of Islamism as a transnational movement) – transformations which have been essential to the “breakdown” of traditional political structures as we know them from the cold war era (Dicken 1992; Friedman 1995; Sassen 1994). The “old” stability which characterized the period after the Second World War has been superseded by a political context in which there is a great need to find symbolic systems which can provide cognitive and social order.<sup>23</sup>

A classical Marxist approach to the question relates ideology to the concept of class, and argues that it is a symbolic system which is part of a society’s superstructure for control and domination of the working class (Heywood 2003; Therborn 1988; Thompson 1985; Larrain 1979). This type of approach – appropriately modified – can also be applied to multiculturalism. Recent decades have seen an ideological shift in the West, where the main societal conflict is no longer focused on the position of social classes and their material conditions. The main political conflict now takes place between groups who are either for or against multiculturalism. In this struggle, as Friedman argues (1995), certain elite groups desire to create a global multicultural world, while ordinary people oppose this project by constructing various fundamentalist ideologies such as, for example, nationalism. Understood in these terms, multiculturalism is a political belief system used to guide the actions of a certain category of citizens – the elite. The same argument has been suggested by Zizek (1999), who claims that multiculturalism as a:

politically correct liberal attitude ... functions, *within its own society*, as a narrow elitist upper-middle-class circle clearly opposing itself to the majority of common people, despised for being caught in their narrow ethnic or community confines [ibid.: 219].

23 In anthropology and other disciplines, the term *globalization* is often used in connection with terms like *creolization* or *hybridization* (see Friedman 1995; Pieterse 1995). The terms refer to how cultures becomes mixed when people meet across borders, etc. This perspective is left out of my discussion because it is not characteristic of the Swedish public debate about culture or religion.



In conclusion, all the actors discussed in the following – pluralists, nationalists, Islamists, and natives – are actors who make comments on the same global political context from different social positions in the Swedish nation-state.

### 3.2 Summary

This chapter has argued that multiculturalism may be understood as a *coherence system* in the sense that it functions as a political belief system which produces cognitive guidelines for the individual concerning what to say in and about multicultural society. As a belief system containing a mixture of descriptions of what *is* and what *is good*, it stands in a relationship to what the system declares to be its political enemy. In contemporary Sweden the enemy of multiculturalism is any ideology which argues for values that may be understood as standing in opposition to multiculturalism (and against enrichment). The core value in the multiculturalist ideology, a value that organizes many other values, is that cultural difference enriches society.

It has also been argued that multiculturalism is hegemonic in contemporary Sweden on issues relating to cultural diversity. The power in this discourse to define what *is* and what *is bad* transforms it into a phenomenon which all public actors in society must consider before acting on issues dealing with the Other. Since all ideologies are embedded in structures of affirmations and sanctions, all actors have to “think twice” before they publicly formulate arguments and/or questions about multicultural society. Thus, there is always a certain tension surrounding the choice of whether to say something that may be regarded as worthy of affirmation – or sanction – by others in the ideological order. A central aspect of this tension is that most actors fear the discursive, or symbolic, sanction of being classified as racist, since this may have a real impact on their opportunities for pursuing successful careers in society. To be described as a racist in contemporary Sweden often means that an individual may lose both his/her job and reputation. An important aspect of the hegemony is that many intellectuals have embodied the multicultural ideology in the sense that its beliefs and values are part of the mental structures of their identities. This, in turn, makes it difficult for them to perceive multiculturalism as an ideology among other ideologies: it is regarded as natural truth – the only way to approach cultural diversity. When one distances oneself from the values of the ideology, this is regarded as the evil act of a morally dubious actor.

In summary: the multiculturalist claim can be formulated something like this: “we should not reinforce the boundaries between Us and Them”. However, multiculturalism itself seems to do precisely this. It causes people to concentrate on differences rather than similarities among citizens. It is to this fixation on difference that we turn in the next chapter, where pluralists, nationalists, and Islamists describe their ideological standpoints on Muslim difference.



## CHAPTER 4

# The Discourse of Muslim Difference

The globalization of Muslims/Islam has produced a two-dimensional political debate in Sweden: a multiculturalist intellectual elite arguing in favor of Muslims, and a category of native and xenophobic citizens arguing against Muslims and Islam. There is, however, also a third category, the Islamists, who reflect the discursive overlap between the pluralists and the Islamists. The term *pluralists* refers to a social category of Swedish scholars who interpret Islam as part of multicultural Sweden. A central idea in their representations of Muslim/Islam in Sweden is, as we shall see below, that the Swedish nation-state is becoming a culturally plural society, where Muslims and Swedes live side by side, and that this is a desirable state of affairs. That is basically why I have chosen to call this category of scholars pluralists, rather than multiculturalists. In other words: pluralists argue that Muslims should have the right to establish Islam in separate institutional structures.

The pluralists are opposed to the *nationalists*, who understand the Swedish nation-state from a position which pluralists label as Islamophobic, racist, popularly orientalist, or xenophobic; to be a good human being is to be a pluralist and advocate diversity, and to be bad is to represent society as the nationalists do. Nationalists represent the homogeneous Swedish nation-state as worthy of protection, and want to save it from what they consider a general breakdown of traditional values and social structures, which they believe would be a consequence of the imposition of cultural pluralism. The term *Islamists* refers to a Muslim sub-group who work politically to carve out public space for Islam in Sweden. When I refer to Islamists in this chapter, the term refers to a specific group of politically active Muslims who are active on a national level in the Islamic umbrella organization *Swedish Muslim Council* (*Sveriges muslimska råd*). Many of the Islamists active herein belong to the *Muslim Brotherhood* which is one of the most influential (among Muslims) Islamist movements in Sweden (Otterbeck 2001; Roald 1999; 2001).<sup>24</sup>

To say that there is a discursive overlap between Islamists and pluralists does not mean that they are engaged in organized cooperation. The Swedish actors I refer to below are scholars who take a relatively clear stand *for* Muslims, arguing on their be-

half in favor of certain religious rights, rather than analyzing the social situation of Islam as a consequence of globalization. The Danish-Syrian author and politician Naser Khader (2000) points out a similar phenomenon in a discussion about “halal hippies” in Denmark. These are “great minded and tolerant” category of citizens who define themselves as anti-racists. They are “radical multiculturalists”, claiming that immigrants to Denmark should “preserve their language and culture” (ibid.: 139). I will argue in this chapter that the scholars involved in promoting this multicultural project often become allies of “fundamentalists and reactionary patriarchs” (ibid.: 142). Therefore, what I am referring to here is not unique to the Swedish situation. In Sweden, however, the ideological overlap is not discussed or understood as a problem in multicultural society. Nor is it contested.

These three political actors – pluralists, nationalists and Islamists – have chosen to concentrate on different problems for Muslims in Sweden. My goal here is to compare the three perspectives. Even though each of the three positions is constructed in relation to the others, they often appear autonomously from one another. Pluralists often mention nationalists in their texts, but only in passing – as purveyors of ideas that are xenophobic or racist. Pluralists and nationalists are normally represented as opposing parties in the general discourse of multicultural society. A comparison of the three views can help us to understand fundamental commonalities among the three perspectives. All accede to the idea that Muslims are so different when compared to non-Muslims that the Muslims should be independent of established public institutions. A comparison will also make it possible to see that all three positions may be understood as ideological responses to globalization. Pluralists, who argue for the rights of Muslims (also, in effect, an argument on behalf of Islamists), have the goal of breaking down parts of the established society, in order to make way for Islam. This is also the position taken up by Islamists who regard Sweden as a single, great, homogeneous problem. Nationalists, on the other hand, have the goal of protecting Sweden from what is regarded as a global invasion of difference. The three actors will be compared concerning how they represent the nation-state, religious rights, and the role of Muslim difference in contemporary society.

## 4.1 The Discourse of Islam in Sweden

Thus far I have tried to show that multiculturalism is hegemonic in issues relating to cultural difference in Sweden. The hegemony of multiculturalist values and an approach to cultural difference generally in terms of enrichment is shared by most native Swedish citizens. These values must always be taken into account by anyone

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24 The Muslim Brotherhood seems to have wide influence in politics all over the world. The journalist Richard Guston reported from France that the Muslim Brotherhood received one third of the votes in elections to the national Muslim council which was established in order to come to terms with Muslim integration ( *Sydsvenska dagbladet*, 19 May 2003).

making public statements about multicultural society. Basically, this is true because public representations of multicultural society always take place against a backdrop of, as Therborn puts it, a fear of being the target of various types of *sanctions*. The risk always exists that, if the wrong arguments or ideas are openly expressed, then some ideologically correct actor (with a need to control the public sphere and keep it clean of ideological “pollution”) will emerge and demand the *excommunication* of the heterodox speaker. This is just what happened to the local politician Christer Ewe in Kristianstad. It also happened in 1997 to professor Kajsa Ekholm Friedman, when she discussed multiculturalism from a critical point of view.

The Swedish discourse of Islam is a prominent example of multiculturalist ideological logic. That is: multiculturalism functions as a *coherence system* of (political) beliefs which make up a cognitive structure which can be used to organize statements about Islam in a Swedish political context (Linde 1993; Thompson 1984). Therefore the discourse is generally organized by the values which can be found in the ideology described above; it is a discourse that is constructed in relation to nationalist ideals which are regarded as the main political “enemy” of Islam. The general contour of the discourse demands that it avoid those aspects of Islam which might be understood as being in line with how nationalists approach Muslims/Islam. Symptomatic is that most of the authors who are the co-creators of the discourse take a relatively clear stand in favor of what is regarded as the Muslim right to be different. This means that most authors refrain from making a distanced analysis of several problems involving Muslim integration in general. One example of this is the question of whether the right to be different should be based on the individual or the group. The problem of the reification of Islam and internal power struggles among Muslims – who is it that is supposed to represent the group? – are well known aspects in the general discourse of Islam in Europe (see, e.g., Baumann 1999; Frazer 2000). But in Sweden, the problem is not discussed. Swedish authors take for granted that Muslims make up a collective of believers in need of group rights in order to become integrated into society.

Even though most of the contributors to the discourse of Swedish Islam are guided by multiculturalist hegemonic values, this discussion can also be seen as a sub-discourse within the larger multicultural discourse; one which is preoccupied with Islamic issues, and religious rights, but not with culture or rights generally. Participants in the discourse also differ in comparison to how several other actors discuss issues of diversity, in their basic understanding of what integration actually means. To many multiculturalists in Sweden (the state, for example; see Messing, above), integration generally means that the established public institutions should make space for diversity. Authors involved in the discourse of Islam in Sweden, have constructed a two-fold argument: a) Muslims ought to have the right to practice Islamic rituals in established public institutions (pray at work, the wearing of *hijab*, private shower rooms for Muslim children, etc.), and b) emphasis should be placed on the argument that Muslims should have the right to construct their own parallel public sphere, including Islamic private schools, information centers, kindergartens, university education, and so on. Thus, freedom of religion, in this discourse, means not only that

a religious actor has a right to believe anything he/she wants in the private sphere, but also includes the public sphere.

When the discourse of Islam as a Swedish phenomenon is discussed in this thesis, it is a specific discourse which I have in mind. In Sweden, most knowledge of Islam is presented by means of what are often called textbooks about the phenomenon. That is, books written in an easily-accessible language and aimed at informing a broad Swedish-speaking public. Generally, it is these textbooks to which I refer when I say “the discourse of Islam as a Swedish phenomenon”. When I have asked Islam-ologists about the knowledge of Islam in Sweden as a Swedish phenomenon, answers reflect a view which says that it is acceptable to avoid certain issues. One such scholar claims, for example, that:

textbooks are built on few studies and are no accounts of research results, but they are teaching materials. When I wrote my book the goal was to give a simple introduction to Islam and the life of Muslims in Sweden.

In light of this, it may be regarded as unfair to challenge the representations in these textbooks, as I do in this thesis. However, I have chosen to view these books as cases of representations of Islam which are based in a political context where multiculturalism is hegemonic. I argue that the textbooks are good examples of how Islam is represented to non-academics outside the field of expertise. They are formulated in a way that does not contravene the dictates of a multiculturalist ideology. The assumption here is that anyone in contemporary Sweden who has the desire to say something publicly about diversity must consider the “ideological order of power, control, and domination” (Therborn 1988: 81) in order to avoid becoming a target for various kinds of material and symbolic sanctions. This also holds true for academics who write textbooks about Islam.

Other reasons for choosing these particular texts about Islam in Sweden are that these books make up the bulk of knowledge that exists concerning Islam as a Swedish phenomenon, and that they are directed toward a Swedish-speaking public with an interest in understanding what it is like to be a Muslim in Sweden, and what Islam is. The assumption here is that the representations found in these books to a great extent dominates the presentation of Islam as a phenomenon for Swedish middle-class readers who take up various official positions in the public sphere. As stated on the back cover of one the books (my translation from Swedish): “This book is just as useful for instruction in nursing and primary school as it is for those who have an ambition to understand Muslim neighbors and workmates better” (Stenberg 1999). To write a textbook about Islam is thus not a politically innocent activity; it is rather an activity which may contribute to the construction and transmission of a certain type of knowledge about Islam and the problems connected to the issue. An assumption here about the categories – knowledge about Islam in Sweden – is, Gullestad (2002) argues, that “our actions in the world are based in the categories we use to interpret it [the world] through, and in that way categories may have concrete effects” (ibid.: 43). By contrasting what various actors (including myself) claim about Islam in Sweden to the empirical reality outside the texts, it will be possible to see what

kind of knowledge is constructed for Swedish middle-class readers, and what value for action this knowledge carries.

If one considers that multiculturalist values are hegemonic, then the authors who are involved in the writing of textbooks may be defined as ideological gatekeepers in relation to the assumed readers of the books. It is argued in this thesis that it is important to understand that intellectual activity must be perceived, as Gramsci (1971) argued, “in the ensemble of the system of relations in which these activities have their place within the general complex of social relations” (ibid.: 8). Roughly formulated, the intellectuals who have constructed the discourse of Islam in Sweden are positioned between the political elite (“the state”) and the “people”, and they reproduce the values which the “system” considers to be important in the ideological control of Swedish citizens’ attitudes toward the Other. These writers have made various choices concerning what is to be illuminated in their texts, and what is to be kept “in the dark”. It is therefore important to understand what knowledge of Islam and Muslims in Sweden these writers have deemed important to offer to Swedish-speaking non-experts outside the universities.

## 4.2 The pluralist discourse: Sweden as intolerant

In the pluralist discourse about Islam in Sweden, the main problem for Muslims is represented as a problem with the public sphere in the majority society: Although it is possible to find comments in this discourse saying that Muslims regard Swedish welfare society as being in line with Islamic ideals (Hedin 1999: 137-138; Svanberg & Westerlund 1999: 10), Sweden, on the whole, is represented as an “imagined community” full of problems. Swedish majority society is thus construed as the enemy in this discourse, in relation to which all Muslim problems should be understood. Generally, in pluralist discourse, the majority society is something that needs to be reconstructed in order to provide space for Islam as a total way of life (see Sander 1991: 64-66; Karlsson & Svanberg 1997). All in all, the pluralist discourse follows the moral dictates of multiculturalist ideology concerning how to approach difference.<sup>25</sup>

25 The type of approach represented by the pluralists is not unique. It is common for leftist writers in Sweden to reduce the whole problem of integration to a problem of racism in the established majority society. Thus many leftist writers argue that the Other is only a victim of the majority society, of institutionalized racism. However, the Other is, in this discourse, anonymous and without subjective voice. The Other is, too put it roughly, non-existent as a human being of flesh and blood. Many leftist writers take it for granted that the Other wants to be included in the Swedish political community without ever asking that Other about his/her own ambitions (Uhrbom 2003; Housset 2003; Dahlstedt 2003).

#### 4.2.1 The homogeneous nation-state

What kind of problems are emphasized and how are they represented? In the pluralist discourse, scholars often point to Swedish cultural homogeneity as an obstacle to Muslim integration. Roald (2003), for example, states that the ideal of the Swedish welfare society (*folkhemmet*) has laid a foundation for Muslim problems:

The welfare society ideal of equality and equal opportunities for everyone in Sweden has turned into an ideal of uniformity or homogeneity. It is particularly this concept of uniformity that prevents the integration of many immigrants in general, and Muslims in particular (ibid.: 70).

The same train of thought is formulated by Sander (1991), who argues that Muslim problems emanate from the Swedish formula “One nation, One People, One Religion” (ibid.: 63); this is an ideal that, according to Sander, symbolizes that the country “has been an unusually ethnically, culturally, religiously and socially homogeneous society” (ibid.). Ritzén (1994) uses the Swedish majority society as a vehicle for identifying Muslim problems in society. In his version, the majority society is a major problem since it is “still the calendar of the majority society that decides the time for excursions to the forests, national school examinations, tests, and employment interviews” (ibid.: 132).

Closely related to issues of cultural homogeneity are representations which focuses on social relations between Muslims and Swedes. We thus find concern about various types of us-and-them relationships. Needless to say, in pluralist discourse, it is the majority society that is attacked for constructing negative notions of both Muslims and Islam. “The tendency today is to connect positive values to Western civilization and negative values to Islam” (Ritzén 1994: 124). The same issue is discussed by Roald (2001) who claims, in line with Elias (1994), that established groups tend to use the worse part of the Other as representative for the whole group in question, while using the best part to represent their own group. Samuelsson (2000) argues that the greatest obstacle to Muslim integration is how the non-Muslim Swedish population perceives Muslims and Islam (ibid.: 56). Muslim prejudices in this discourse are never described as problematic for integration or for social relations with Swedes. It is only Swedes – the majority society – who discriminate and keep Muslims at a distance. All in all, pluralist arguments follow the logic of multiculturalism: the majority should be dismantled because it is too homogeneous.

Pluralist scholars reproduce a hegemonic multiculturalist idea which states that Sweden ought to be characterized by cultural pluralism instead of cultural homogeneity. A problem here, however, is that pluralists do not seem to be aware that they are articulating a certain ideological perspective of the Swedish majority society. Instead of trying to analytically distance themselves from multiculturalist categories, they practice them when dealing with the problems of Muslims in Sweden. Nothing is good or bad *per se*; it is always a question of seeing something from a particular perspective, and when seeing the Swedish majority society from the perspective of a practicing Muslim, the majority society may certainly be seen as a problem. But it is possible to also see the majority society from another group’s perspective, and argue



that the problem really is a question of cultural heterogeneity. My point here is that pluralist scholars tend to perceive cultural homogeneity as a moral problem rather than analyzing it as one aspect among others in the total political and social contexts which make up the consequences of immigration. The cultural homogeneity of Sweden is a product of history which was once understood as a necessary condition for solidarity between people.

#### 4.2.2 Islamophobia

The emphasis on “Swedes as the problem” can be illustrated by how pluralists discuss the issue of the establishment of mosques at various places. For pluralists the main problem when it comes to the establishment of mosques in Sweden are the Islamophobic attitudes among the native Swedish population. Undiscussed is the social situation *per se* which develops when newcomers to a society have the ambition of establishing a non-traditional (for native Swedes) type of institution (Karlsson & Svanberg 1995; Johansson & Uddin 1994). Many native Swedes have opposed, or wished to have debated, questions about the location of mosques, but their arguments are indiscriminately classified by pluralist writers as Islamophobia or discrimination (ibid.). Issues that have been raised concerning architecture, traffic, and Islam and its compatibility with democracy (see Karlsson and Svanberg 1995). Muslim needs to establish mosques are understood as self-evident, as “natural”, while native needs to understand who the Muslim actors are, or arguments against the establishment of mosques, are dismissed; instead, natives are classified as Islamophobic when they raise questions about the establishment of mosques.

Swedish pluralists tend to describe any statement that is in any way negative toward Muslims and Islam as an expression of Islamophobia. A common way to represent these negative representations is to discuss them as being generally characteristic of how the Swedish majority society regards Islam. Ritzén (1994) says, for example: “In an interview, the philosopher of religion Åke Sander says, that there does not exist any other single subject that Swedes are so massively negative to as Islam” (ibid.: 124). Sander (1996) himself believes that one of the greatest obstacles for Muslims in Swedish society is “that various xenophobic, nationalist and extreme right-wing groups” have turned Muslims “into a symbolic target for their complaints and dissatisfaction” (ibid.: 283). Here, the Islamophobes are presented as an anonymous category whose ideas are not discussed – the beliefs of this group are taken for granted. Karlsson and Svanberg (1997), however, point out which anti-Islamic group they have in mind in a discussion about conflicts related to mosques. “The Sweden Democrats”, they say, “took up the questions of mosques and turned it into an issue in the 1994 elections, and their newspaper *The SD Courier* reproduced the campaign poster ‘The Sweden Democrats – before it’s too late!’ with a photo of kneeling Muslims at the Gustaf Adolf Square in Gothenburg” (ibid.: 122). This specification of the “enemy” is quite unusual in pluralist discourse. Most often it is taken for granted that

an anonymous nationalist threat hangs over Muslims, and this is used as a point of departure for the pluralist argument.

A common pluralist way of defining Islamophobia is to characterize it as a fear of the religion Islam and Muslims (Roald 2002: 51). Roald, one of the scholars used by the state in its “official” definition of the term, states that Islamophobia can have several causes. One factor is that Muslims are often culturally different in comparison to Westerners; other causes may be religious, crudely racist, and economic (ibid.). The dichotomy between us and them is presented as a main factor in the creation of Islamophobia, where Muslims are regarded as “backward” and “lower” (*Sweden Against Racism*). According to the pluralist position, expressions of Islamophobia are most often found in the media and in conversations between people (Roald 2002: 52; ibid.). Important in understanding Islamophobia, as defined by pluralists, is realizing that it is produced by an idea of Islam “as unacceptable, because it is represented as a threat against the Western world” (Roald 2002: 51). This threat is either denied outright, or described as a “myth” based on an idea of Islam as a homogeneous phenomenon, where the most militant part of Islam is mistakenly seen as representative of Muslims and Islam as a whole (*Sweden against racism*). This argument is also used to describe problems for Muslims in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks in the USA. As Roald (2002) says, “after the terror act in the US in autumn 2001, beliefs that Muslim terrorists presumably stand behind anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim expressions have increased”. Moreover, “a small group of fundamentalists stand out as a model for all Islamic proponents” (ibid.).

Islamophobia, or *cultural racism*, as it is also called, is regarded as a problem by pluralists, and this may certainly be the case, but in this discourse all negative expressions of Islam are described as manifestations of phobic attitudes toward Muslims. Hence there is no intellectual space in the pluralist discourse for distinguishing milder forms of critique of Muslim practices, such as the Muslims’ own *ethnocentrism*. This reduction of the definition has as a consequence that it becomes almost impossible to criticize Muslims or, for that matter, any Islamic ideas. Pluralist discourse rules out any possibility of challenging totalitarian religious interpretations (and not Islam as a religion) made by fundamentalists or Islamists, since all criticism is reduced to Islamophobia. In doing so, pluralists practice the same type of stance towards criticism as do many Islamists. Tibi (1998) notes that few Westerners understand that Islamic fundamentalists in Western exile see themselves as representatives of the only true Islam, and in order to “[discredit or deflect] any criticism of their totalitarian views, they deliberately accuse their rivals of anti-Islamism” (ibid.: 19). Thus, pluralists conceptualize the relationship between Islam and the West with the help of a binary worldview where critique is regarded as anti-Islamic.

An example of how this binary worldview is constructed can be found in The Runnymede Trust’s (1997) report on Islamophobia. The Trust sees Islamophobia as part of a two-dimensional worldview. They make a distinction between a closed and an open view of Islam. “Phobic dread” of Islam is part of a closed view, while “appreciation and respect are aspects of open views” (ibid.: 1). The two views are contrasted with each other in a list of eight oppositions; for example, “monolithic and static *ver-*

*versus* diverse and dynamic”, or “inferior *versus* different but equal”, etc. (ibid.: 2). Another question suggested by the Trust’s report is “whether Muslims are seen as manipulative or sincere” (ibid.). The scheme presented by the Trust implies that a negative stereotype of Muslims/Islam should be exchanged for a positive one. However, it is doubtful that this is a solution to the problem of Islamophobia, since the positive view perpetuates a homogeneous perspective of Muslims/Islam. It is just the negative Islamophobic perspective turned up-side down. From an analytical point of view, it is useless to perceive Islam or Muslims through a two-dimensional prism. Such a perspective ignores those Muslim actors – Islamists – who consciously try to manipulate Westerners in order to make public space for Islam. In summary, it ignores Muslim heterogeneity in both its more benign and more insidious variants.

#### 4.2.3 Institutional completeness

In the pluralist discourse, Swedish majority society is also described as a place which lacks certain religious rights. According to Sander (1991), the Freedom of Religion Act in Sweden is constructed from an “anthropocentric, individualist, subjectivist and secularist notion of religion” (ibid.: 65). This means, in Sander’s opinion, that freedom of religion in Sweden is basically understood as a private, not public, phenomenon; this becomes a problem for Muslims who regard Islam as a total way of life (ibid.). Alwall (1994) also argues that there is a lack of religious rights for Muslims in Sweden, emphasizing that Sweden should live up to the standards in *Article 18* of the *UN Human Rights Convention* (ibid.: 92).<sup>26</sup> “When it comes to freedom of religion in Sweden”, he says, “it is still not clear whether this has been fully achieved” (ibid.). In addition to the importance of introducing the full practice of human rights into Sweden, Alwall also believes that religious rights should include both the right to religious socialization and the provision of some kind of economic resources (ibid.: 92-93). Ritzén (1990) has suggested that the dominant Swedish view of religion is too narrow, since it is “divorced from politics, economics, law, health, hygiene, diet, dress, ritual for greetings and sex life” (ibid.: 4). Many pluralists thus fail to problematize human rights since they take it for granted that these rights mean group rights, rather than the individual rights supported by many other actors.

Thus, in pluralist discourse, scholars argue for an extension of religious rights to Muslims, meaning that the public sphere in the majority society should generally be opened up to Islam. Women should have, as Roald (2002) points out, an opportunity to wear a *hijab* without being stigmatized. Native attitudes at workplaces should also be transformed, in the sense that employers should show a greater understanding of the practices of Islam (Ritzén 1994). The extension of religious rights, as under-

26 *Article 18* in the Human Right convention states: “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance”. The *UN Declaration of Human Rights* can be downloaded from <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>

stood in pluralist discourse, also includes the establishment of public institutions on Swedish territory. Ritzén's (1994) formulation can be understood as representative of a general statement in the discourse, when he says:

In order for a minority to survive, it must establish institutions that fulfill collective needs. In the case of Islam, for example, mosques, educational opportunities for Imams, schools, media outlets, slaughterhouses, judicial institutions, cemeteries, information centers, and coordinating organs [ibid.: 131; see also Karlsson & Svanberg 1997].

The same argument can also be found in the writings of other researchers. Sander (1996) criticizes official multiculturalism for being aimed at cultural assimilation. This leads to great frustration among Muslims and a "fear of extinction" (ibid.: 285). In order to solve this problem, Sander argues that it is necessary for Muslims to have the possibility of constructing a high degree of "institutional completeness". Muslims should have the right to establish their own public sphere in Sweden, otherwise "children born to Muslim parents in Sweden run the risk of losing their Muslim identity before they can even find it" (ibid.: 280; see also Lundberg and Svanberg 1991: 45).

The idea of institutional completeness used by Swedish researchers is borrowed from Raymond Breton (1964). Breton used the concept methodologically to frame the hypothesis that the integration of immigrants could move in three different directions: a) immigrants can be integrated into their own ethnic community, b) into the native (receiving) community, or c) into other ethnic communities (ibid.: 193). The basic idea in his hypothesis was that an ethnic group with a more highly-developed institutional completeness will be more likely to integrate into their own ethnic community than into the native community. In Sweden, this concept is primarily used methodologically to explain what kind of institutions various groups have established or – as is the case with Muslims, need to establish – in order to reproduce Muslim identity.<sup>27</sup> The adoption of Breton's concept is not, however, seriously coupled to the second part of his argument, that institutional completeness based on ethnicity or religion may limit the opportunities for immigrants to become integrated into the native majority society. As Breton states:

Institutional completeness would be at its extreme whenever the ethnic community could perform all the services required by its members. Members would never have to make use of native institutions for the satisfaction of any of their needs, such as education, work, food and clothing, medical care, or social assistance [Breton 1964: 194].

The Cuban enclave in Miami, which shows a high degree of ethnic institutionalization in all senses of the word, provides a good illustration of Breton's statement about the process of ethnic integration (Portes & Stepick 1993; see also Gustafson 1998: 91; Driedger & Church 1974).

The meaning of *integration* for the Swedish researchers that have used Breton's concept is the Swedish state's definition from 1975, where Muslim institutionaliza-

<sup>27</sup> In pluralist discourse there is no discussion of why it is important to reproduce Muslim identity. The importance of reproducing it is taken for granted: it is self-evident among pluralists that Muslim identity is a valuable asset.

tion is seen as integration into Sweden. A central idea in Breton's thought was that the most important factor in the process of ethnic integration was the existence religious institutions. As he put it: "religious institutions have the greatest effect in keeping the immigrant's personal associations within the boundaries of the ethnic community" (ibid.: 200). The pluralists who use Breton's concept of institutional completeness avoid discussing the more general theoretical perspective that was laid out by him. It is not generally possible, in Swedish pluralist discourse, to find scholars who attempt to examine problems, aside from native xenophobia, related to Muslim religious rights, including institutionalization (see Sander 1996). Svanberg and West-erlund (1999), for example, present Islamic institutionalization conducted by Muslims in Sweden as an example of how Muslims – even though this category of immigrants reside in ethnically segregated neighborhoods cut off from Swedish contexts – are involved in the construction of a "Swedish Islam" (ibid.: 10). "As an established religion with a well-developed infrastructure, Islam can", they say, "with the same right as other minority religions, today be regarded as a native religion" (ibid.: 11). And even if the mosque is understood in terms of a Muslim micro-society of importance for Muslim community and the construction of religious identity (Karlsson 1999: 200), it is regarded as an arena for integration into the native majority society (ibid.: 209); as the sign of a "positive stance towards integration from the side of Muslims" (Karlsson & Svanberg 1997: 121).<sup>28</sup>

Pluralist scholars argue that being integrated into Sweden implies the construction of independent ethnic/religious institutions. This concept of integration transforms the meaning of the concept as defined by the Swedish state, which promotes integration as the construction of cultural pluralism in the already-established public Swedish institutions (see *Delaktighet för integration*, 1999).<sup>29</sup> Their description also differs from the way many other researchers understand the construction of ethnic (and religious) institutions. For example, in two articles about Muslims in Great Britain and France, Kepel characterizes the Muslim predicament in Europe as a situation where Muslims find themselves "between society and community". The main problem, according to Kepel, is that Muslims in France and Britain are not fully absorbed into the established public institutions, nor do they participate in a well-developed religious community (Kepel 1995;1997). Kepel claims that there exists a French society with certain French public institutions, and that these institutions exclude Muslims (who are involved in a process of constructing a separate community). The most publicly dominant writers in the pluralist discourse in Sweden fail to problematize the

28 The "sign" referred to here by pluralists is the mosque *per se*. The assumption underlying this seems to be that if Muslims did not want to integrate, they would not wish to construct mosques.

29 *Delaktighet för integration – att stimulera integrationsprocessen för somalisktalande i Sverige* (1999) is a report published by Integrationsverket. Here integration is described as participation in the social community for cultural and ethnic minorities: "They shall have the opportunity to preserve their cultural identity and at the same time be incorporated into the economy, production, distribution of resources, politics, and government in the majority society. Important arenas for participation in the public sphere of the majority society are the labor market, the national school system, the life of associations/organizations, and the political system. Participation is an important condition for integration" (1999: 16)(my translation from Swedish).

argument about Islamic institutionalization. They take it for granted that the presence of religious institutions automatically leads to integration into Sweden. We shall see in Chapters Six and Seven that so is far from the case.

### 4.3 Individual versus collective rights

All over the world there exists an awareness among scholars and others of the theoretical problems involved in deciding what to emphasize when it comes to *cultural* rights: is it the individual or the group which should be granted rights? However, this problem is not addressed by pluralists in the discourse of Islam in Sweden. In the following I will first present short glimpses of the debate about Muslim rights outside Sweden; thereafter the voices of Swedish pluralists will be presented. The intention in this section is to illustrate the difference between the debate taking place outside Sweden and how the issues are presented for Swedish middle-class readers. The difference between these two discourses, it will be argued, is basically due to the hegemony of multiculturalism in Sweden, which stipulates that immigrants generally should enjoy the right to be different. Hence, for Swedish pluralists, the integration of Muslims is primarily an ideological problem and not, as for many scholars outside Sweden, an empirical or theoretical problem.

The issues involved in discussions about “multiculturalism” are, Gullestad says (2002), “extremely complicated” (ibid.: 13); several diverse arguments have been presented. However, in the philosophical literature, a central theoretical distinction is made between liberal individualist and communitarian approaches to cultural difference (Gutmann 1994; see also Johansson Dahre 2001). The first position rejects groups, ethnic or otherwise, as the basis for a specific right to practice difference. As it is stated in the introduction to *Engaging Cultural Differences* (2002):

many liberal individualists reject not only pride of place for groups but even using groups as significant categories. Any affiliation with a religious or ethnic group, in this view, is simply a voluntary choice by an individual; it deserves no greater respect than an individual's choice to join a club or give a speech. No exemption or accommodation should be granted due to religious or ethnic group membership unless the same exemption or accommodation arises for individuals who have athletic, political, or artistic affiliations [Schweder, Minow, and Rose Markus 2002: 9]

In contrast, communitarians emphasize the group, or membership in a group, as the foundation for cultural rights. They reject the idea of “the unencumbered and unbounded self, and see people formed and inevitably embedded in relationships with others...[for communitarians] the liberal assumption of the individual as the fundamental unit of analysis seem mistaken or even cruel” (ibid.). A classical communitarian argument is to be found in Charles Taylor's essay *The Politics of Recognition* (1994) where he suggests that there exist groups of citizens who belong to “a culture” which needs to be recognized (ibid.: 66; see also Kymlicka 1998).

It could be argued that anthropologists have traditionally been preoccupied with studies of culture as perceived from a communitarian perspective. In recent decades, however, a critique has been developed within anthropology to the idea that cultures are “homogeneous” structures where all members of a group encompass the same ideas and values. Fredrik Barth (1995), for example, has argued that culture is not bound to distinct units in the world; on the contrary, culture is:

characterised by a complex and patterned continuity ... I share some ideas with persons widely distributed over the world. Others with my closest neighbour; and no single other person in the world has the same identical set of concepts and ideas – culture – that I have [ibid.: 13].

The same claim is made by the anthropologist Gerd Baumann (1999): “Culture is thus not the tied and tagged baggage that belongs with one national, ethnic, or religious group” (ibid.: 95). The problem, when it comes to an identification of “culture (including religion)” based on groups is, as Fraser (2000) states it, *the problem of reification*. This problem, “to impose a single, drastically simplified group-identity which denies the complexity of people’s lives, the multiplicity of their identifications ... lends itself all too easily to repressive forms of communitarianism, promoting conformism, intolerance and patriarchalism” (ibid.: 112).

Wikan (2002) has also addressed the problem of reification. She argues that no person is a prisoner of his/her culture. She captures with precision one of the greatest problems of using a homogeneous definition of culture, preferring instead the concept “acting subject”:

This acting subject is in motion; he or she is a feeling, thinking individual with the ability to adapt to new circumstance and respond to changing situations. Culture cannot do such things, for culture is a thought construct. [...]. Is it legitimate for women to work outside the home or not? Are children to be brought up to learn to choose for themselves, or is deference of their elders’ judgment an ultimate goal? These are some of the issues on which people in the poor quarters of Cairo, where I did fieldwork for a number of years, disagreed with one another. Both views are part of the culture of the people [ibid.: 84].

This view of culture is used by Johnsdotter (2002). She has shown that Swedish policy makers use what might be called the “old” anthropological concept of culture when they try to understand and deal with female circumcision, while Somalis in Swedish exile – as acting subjects – are involved in a process of abandoning or re-formulating the practice.

Another problem connected to the idea of group rights is the problem of determining *who* belongs to the group. According to what criteria should someone be defined as a member of a certain collective? Here, all sorts of difficulties arise. Whose voice shall, for example, be regarded as authoritative in the definition of a groups’ culture or religion? In the case of Muslims, is it the voice of self-proclaimed leaders or that of the “common man” which determines how the group is to be constituted? As Wikan (2002) points out, there is always an element of power involved in the concept of culture (and religion), in the sense that some (often men) have more culture than other members of the group. “Some people”, argues Wikan, “have the right –

or seize the right – to define what is to count and for what, and the result, the authoritative ‘truth’, is often called culture. Culture and power go hand in hand, in every society, at all times” (ibid.: 87). A group-oriented definition of culture thus masks, as Fraser (2000) puts it, “the struggles within the group for the authority – and the power – to represent it” (ibid.: 112). Hylland Eriksen (1997) has formulated the central paradox of multiculturalism and ethnic leadership:

Here, the fundamental paradox of multiculturalist ideology becomes highly visible; it presupposes that the ‘cultures’ are homogeneous and ‘have values and interests’. The mere fact that the formal leaders of an ethnic group invoke particular values and traditions does not imply that all members of the group support them. This is why it can be dangerous to accord special rights to groups, for groups inevitably consists of persons with often highly discrepant values and interests [ibid.: 60].

On Mauritius, the site of Eriksen’s fieldwork, a Muslim Personal Law (MPL) were introduced by the British, something which made it possible for Muslims to follow their own family law. A consequence of this, according to Eriksen, was that it became almost impossible for women, and quite easy for men, to apply for divorce. On closer examination, it became evident that there existed a widespread opposition to the law among citizens (also among Muslims), and the law was removed. Muslims, especially young persons, wanted to have the same rights as other citizens of Mauritius (ibid.). Hence, as this section has tried to show, there exists an international debate about problems concerned with whether the recognition of cultural rights ought to be grounded in the individual or in the group. However, as will be shown below, these problems do not concern most of the Swedish pluralists involved in the discourse of Islam in Sweden.

#### 4.3.1 The discussion about Muslims/Islam outside Sweden

A matter of concern for many scholars outside Sweden is the question of whether Muslims should be integrated into secularized society on an individual or a collective basis. This issue is addressed by Shadid and van Koningsveld (1996) as a problem of whether “some form of communitarianism” should include “the eventual recognition of (some aspects of) Islamic personal law, or should integration take place on the basis of the acquisition of European citizenship, including the effect of secular civil law?” (ibid.: 7). The discourse about Islam in Europe outside Sweden reveals two general approaches to the problem of whether Muslims should be considered as individuals or as a group. Jacques Waardenburg (1996), writing from a Swiss context, has argued that there are certain advantages for Muslims in being able to organize themselves on a community basis, since this could play a crucial role in a process of Muslim emancipation (ibid.: 146). He argues that a Muslim community – here also implying the construction of religious institutions – may provide Muslims with a “collective consciousness” which can give “coherence and meaning to their life expe-



rience and offer in fact a kind of alternative to the rather foreign Swiss system and Swiss interpretation of life and the world" (ibid.: 154).

Gerholm (1994) describes the main themes in the French debate, where the main dividing lines are drawn between the two general alternatives of *insertion* and *intégration* (ibid.: 389; see also Kepel 1990: 382). The first term refers to a process where immigrants individually and gradually become part of the receiving society. They attend schools in the receiving society, perform military service, socialize with the natives; they are still Muslims, but have to practice religion within a secularized framework (ibid.). The other term refers to a process where the group, rather than the individual is inserted into society as a closed enclave, where external contacts are monopolized by particular leaders (ibid.; see also Eriksen 1997). Remarkably, as we will see below, the type of problematization described here has not been applied by pluralist scholars to the discourse about Islam in Sweden. In Sweden Islam is "inserted" into an ideological framework about religious rights.

Tibi (1996) argues that there exist two alternatives for Muslims in contemporary Europe, namely "integration of Muslims in Europe, or the creation of a distinct, but consistently alien, Islamic community" (1996: 130). The problem, Tibi believes, is that Muslims should be integrated on an individual basis within a secular European framework, since otherwise there is a great risk of the construction of "ghetto-Islam, a communitarian Islam in its own right with deep tensions affected by the surrounding European secular social environment" (ibid.: 131). As an alarming example for Europe, Tibi uses India, where tensions between Hindus and Muslims seem to be based on the fact that the secular Indian state has not recognized the Hindu practice of *dharma*, while at the same time Muslims have the right to practice family law as formulated in *sharia* (ibid.: 134-135). Tibi claims that if a secular state promotes religious rights for one group and not another, this will lead to serious conflicts between the majority society and the religious minority (ibid.: 137). Tibi's hypothesis is that in order to avoid stimulating xenophobia directed against Muslim minorities in Europe, it is essential to think carefully about the recognition of Muslims as a religious collective (ibid.: 142; see also Karlsson 1994).

Another danger suggested by Tibi (2002) is the risk that "Islamists among the migrants to Europe" will use multiculturalist ideology to further their own political ambitions (ibid.: 38). They will be "usually more sympathetic to multiculturalist positions than they are to democratic integration", and this is because "they understand perfectly well how to instrumentalize multicultural views – how to make use of them for fundamentalist ends" (ibid.). The outcome of this instrumentalization of Western liberal tolerance, according to Tibi, is that Islamists are claiming, "in the name of communitarianism, ghetto rights for Islamic minorities" (1998: 19). The problem for Muslims with ambitions of becoming European citizens, is that they are prisoners of a dual scheme of opportunities, since they must choose between "rejection and the pressure to join a cultural ghetto" (ibid.: 41). This, argues Tibi, may in turn be "particularly harmful to Muslim juveniles who have been born in Europe and are seeking to develop their identities and personalities here" (ibid.).

### 4.3.2 Swedish pluralists

The Swedish pluralist discourse about Islam in Sweden argues that Muslims should be granted religious rights as a collective. Many, if not most, pluralist scholars in the Swedish discourse describe Muslims as a collective of believers – as a homogeneous group – when it comes to religious rights. This statement can be illustrated with several examples from the literature. Brattlund and Samuelsson (1991) have argued that Islam is powerful in social cohesion because it links people together from “Indonesia in the East to Morocco in the West”, and that Islam also makes people act and think in a uniform manner (ibid.: 10). In line with this, Samuelsson (1999) argues that it is “wrong to emphasize that Muslims come [to Sweden] as individuals. Muslims come to Sweden as members of a religious community or an ethnic community that to a great extent forms their behaviour and attitudes” (ibid.: 86). Alwall (1994), who has argued for a cultural pluralism where “several cultures live side by side” (ibid.: 94), points out that even though the Muslim group is very heterogeneous in historic, ethnic, national, linguistic, and cultural aspects, “it seems reasonable to regard [Muslims] as a (religious) minority” (ibid.: 96).

When it comes to arguments about religious rights for Muslims, it is possible to identify a paradox related to the categories of Muslim and Islam. Swedish pluralists point out that Muslims should have certain religious rights because Islam is a total way of life. As Karlsson and Svanberg put it in *Religionsfrihet i Sverige* (1997): “Islam does not make a distinction between private religious beliefs and a secularized society, but Islam is a complete way of life, a culture in itself” (ibid.: 102). The same view is articulated by Sander (1990b): “Traditionally Islam is a ‘guide’ (*al-huda*) for the whole private, social, cultural, and political life, and not only for that which, from a Christian horizon, is regarded as the religious sphere of life” (ibid.: 91). In another text he states: “Islam is...a ‘total way of life’ for *all* human existence” (Sander 1991: 66; see also Sander 1996: 282). It is in line with this that Samuelsson (2000) defines the category Muslim as a person who “must” accept three religious ideas: 1) the belief that there exists only one God and that Muhammed is God’s Prophet, 2) a belief in the whole Koran and not only in parts of the word of God, and 3) a belief in *Sunna* (ibid.: 15). Hence, Islam – which is written down in the Koran – is a total way of life, and every Muslim, in order to define himself/herself as Muslim, must be a person who believes in the Koran in its totality.

My point here is that it is this type of religious homogeneity which supplies the foundation for arguments about group rights for Muslims in Sweden; it is via this type of definition that Islam/Muslims – considered as a religious community – are to obtain religious minority rights. This idea of homogeneity, however, stands in contradiction to other parts of the Swedish discourse where heterogeneity is emphasized as constitutive for Muslims. Thus, Karlsson and Svanberg (1997), in the same text as quoted above, state that “it is important to point out that the Swedish Muslims are not a homogeneous group” (ibid.: 103). According to these authors, the heterogeneity consists of differences in nationality and ethnic origin, in education, and in knowledge about and in interpretations of Islam (ibid.). Some Muslims also choose

to become “non-practising or even non-believing” (ibid.). In a text about immigration published by the Swedish state in 1995, Sander suggested that the category *Muslim* could be divided into nine different sub-categories with respect to the degree of religiosity among Muslims (Omsäter 1995: 77-79). These nine sub-categories are: atheists, agnostics, liberals, the silent and indifferent, cultural Muslims, “ordinary” believers, pietists, normativists, and ritualists (ibid.: 78). According to Sander, only three of these sub-categories (pietists, normativists and ritualists) are religious in a way that puts them close to the notion of Islam as a total way of life; the other categories are made up of Muslims who are religious in a weaker sense than seeing Islam as a total way of life (ibid.). And, according to Sander, only one of the sub-categories, the normativists, subscribe explicitly to the idea of Islam as a total way of life or as a complete system for the whole of society (ibid.). Samuelsson (2002) refers to a statistical analysis of religiosity among Muslims that contradicts the idea that a majority of them see Islam as a total way of life. “There are sources”, he says without telling us what the sources are, “which state that 80% of the Muslims do not practice their religion on a regular basis, for example in the form of prayers” and also that “less than 40% participate in Friday prayers in the mosque” (ibid.: 19). The same point is made by Rasmussen (2002) about Muslims in Denmark (my translation from Danish): “Less than 20% of the approximately 160,000 persons defined as Muslims in Denmark practice their religion. The rest have the same relationship to Islam, as most members of the state Church have to Christianity” (ibid.: 1).<sup>30</sup>

In view of this heterogeneity of practice, we must ask: what kind of collective are we dealing with? Who is it who needs religious rights, if a majority of those identifying themselves as Muslims are non-practicing, even non-believing? If only 20% among those identifying themselves as Muslims actually practice Islam as a total way of life, who will comprise the desired “parallel public sphere” organized along Islamic lines. We end up with a distinction, not between Swedes and Muslims, but among Swedes, non-practicing Muslims, and practicing Muslims. We can see here the problems with how terms, such as *Islam* and *Muslims*, are used by pluralist scholars. Even though Islam, as a religion, may be regarded as a religious teaching with ideas that encompass both the private and the public spheres, there is no self-evident relationship between the Koran/Sunna and Muslims as individual actors with diverse social practices. The main problem in the pluralist discourse is that scholars jump directly from the idea of Islam as a total way of life to a certain sub-group of Muslims, Islamists, allowing an Islamist definition of religion to stand as representative of all Muslims. That is, if we consider the discussion above about the heterogeneity among Muslims to be wrong. This “discursive jump” makes invisible all those modest Muslims for which pietism, rituals, or fundamentalism are irrelevant. In promoting Muslim rights under the rubric of pluralism, the pluralists are in fact ignoring – if not discriminating against – the majority of Swedish Muslims – a silent majority of quasi-secular, non-pietist Muslims, for whom Islamic institutions occupy only a minor role in their lives. The argument that it is Muslims who believe that Islam is a total

30 Her article, which can be downloaded from [http://www.islamstudie.dk/europa\\_islam.rasmus-sen.htm](http://www.islamstudie.dk/europa_islam.rasmus-sen.htm) is about “Euro Islam”, She does not tell us which source the 20% came from.

way of life, and therefore Muslims who are entitled to certain religious rights, can also be found outside Sweden (see, e.g., Pratt Ewing 2002), but (to the best of my knowledge) it does not dominate the discourse there in such a total way as it does in Sweden.

#### 4.4 The nationalists

The dominant perspective within the Swedish multicultural political debate is characterized by ideas of diversity, enrichment, and collective rights. Opposed to this is a political ideology based on a powerful assimilationist stance. According to these nationalist beliefs, immigrants, of whatever ethnic background or religious belief, should either become culturally like us – the Swedes – or else be deported from the nation-state. Within Sweden there are two political parties (that is, political parties which have accepted democracy ideologically) which are among the most prominent in the discussion about immigration in general, but are perhaps especially known for their strong anti-Muslim viewpoint.<sup>31</sup> One of the parties is the locally based (in Malmö) *Skånepartiet* (“The Scania Party”), which for several years has been active in local politics. The other party is *Sverigedemokraterna* (“The Sweden Democrats”), a party active at the national level and characterized by a powerful anti-immigrant, and anti-Muslim, ideology. A methodological problem when it comes to the representation of the ideology and statements about Muslims and Islam formulated by these actors is that there do not exist any extensive articles written by the members of the respective groups. I have instead used what has been said in various policy documents, and in political brochures.

The arguments these actors formulate about the nation-state, immigration, and how to cope politically with cultural difference are seldom criticized or reflected upon rationally. I must admit that it has been difficult for me as well to read what was said about multiculturalism because the arguments are too “emotional”. It is nevertheless important to distance oneself from subjective experiences when reading the arguments, and to try to cope with the representations in a more factual manner, in order to understand what their authors are up to. Most of those who think and live by the dictates of a multiculturalist ideology dismiss nationalist arguments as racism without further reflection on whether the arguments have any empirical or theoretical foundations which might be of relevance. Nationalists belong to the category, as Stoltz (2002) puts it, that takes an unacceptable position in the discussion about

31 In the public debate, all right-wing nationalist groups are defined as the same kind of xenophobic grouping: individuals or groups that criticize or say anything negative about immigrants are classified as cultural racists, racists, or xenophobes. Or as Nazis. I believe, however, that there is a qualitative difference between the groups which have accepted the liberal-democratic political system, and those groups which have not accepted it and have instead chosen some kind of underground political activity.

multiculturalism and multicultural society, and therefore should be excluded from the “political community” (ibid.: 55).

The nationalists, as Friedman (1998) has argued, are a target for guilt-by-association because arguments against them are always based on who the individuals are and with whom they have socialized. This approach, when it comes to nationalists, is well captured by Friedman when he says:

Rather than ask, “What does X say?” one asks, “Who is X? How can X be identified?” And the identification proceeds by means of associations. X was with Y. X had a connection with Y, therefore X is a Y [ibid.: 687].<sup>32</sup>

A typical example of how this logic is practiced can be found in the book *Extremhögern (The Extreme Right)* (Lodenius & Larsson 1991). In this case, the authors have framed the Sweden Democrats within an ideologically grounded “paradigm” where all types of Nazi and anti-multiculturalist groups are discussed. The chapter on the Sweden Democrats is constructed as an associational argument, where it is claimed that the party stands close to Nazi groups because some members of the Sweden Democrats have, in the past, socialized with individuals whom the authors classify as Nazis. In this section, I refrain from “associations” and instead read what the party says in the policy documents I have used. One can produce an analysis without recourse to any Nazi sympathies.

## 4.5 The homogeneous nation-state and religious rights

### 4.5.1 The Scania Party

During the 2002 election campaign citizens in southern Sweden received political propaganda from all parties in their home mailboxes. Here the Scania Party (SP) expressed its wish to implement a “Danish immigration policy, not for racist reasons, but for economic, humanitarian, cultural, juridical, and social reasons” (Scania Party 2002).<sup>33</sup> In this particular propaganda, the party also expressed its anti-Islamic attitude in a rough and straightforward way: “Islam should be removed because it has a perspective that is incompatible with democracy” (ibid.). This view is also expressed in a proposal to the local city government in Malmö, where the party argued in favor of a referendum for a total stop to all Islamic activities. In the proposal, it is stated that the party does not care what type of religion people practice. People of all reli-

32 The logic underlying guilt-by-association is well captured in the following quotation: “You think that 1+1=2. But, Adolf Hitler, Charles Manson, Joseph Stalin, and Ted Bundy all believed that 1+1=2. So, you shouldn’t believe it.” The quote can be downloaded from <http://gncurtis.home.tex-as.net/guiltbya.html>

33 “Danish immigrant policy” means a more restricted policy of integration in comparison to Sweden.

gions should be accepted, but when certain religions (in this case, Islam), also bring with them serious problems, even murder, then it is time, says the SP, to put an end to the possibility for Muslims to practice their faith.<sup>34</sup>

In the Scania party, we do not care if one person believes in God, another one in Allah, or if someone believes in nothing at all, etc. But when the practice of religion in everyday life bring violations of laws, severe violations, even murder, then we react. We also react when our Scanish customs are forced to make way for Islamic customs, because the practice of Islam is commonly intolerant. So-called honor killings have already been carried out in Sweden. Islamic schools have already been established here which offer a strongly divergent education concerning the position of the USA and Israel in the world. We react to the death sentence for Salman Rushdie. We react to women being forced to swim wearing the *hijab* and to the fact that they do not learn to swim properly due to the coercion of wearing the veil, and therefore risk drowning. Peas and pork, pork chops, pork brawn, pork sausage, Christmas ham, and other pork dishes are not served at Rosengårdsskolan in the autumn of 1998 because the Muhammedans are in the majority there.<sup>35</sup> But they are still not in the majority in the city of Malmö! Something must be done in time. The experience of Indian independence in 1947 is really an alarming example. We want to keep traditional customs in Malmö, and we want people here to live in peace and quiet. We hold nothing against Muhammedans as human beings. Absolutely not. We hold nothing against Hinduists or Buddhists, either. But we do not believe that the practice of the Muhammedan religion in daily life is compatible with the customs we have had here since times immemorial. Neither do we believe that Muhammedans have a right to remove our customs in favor of their own. If it is necessary for Muhammedans to practice their religion in daily life, they must move to an Islamic country. Or, to another municipality than our own. For the moment, Muhammedans have been victorious in Rosengård. But we will not sit in silence, while seeing Malmö become an Islamic city. Even the first one in Scania, Sweden, and the EU.

There are, of course, several things which could be said about the content of this text. Basically, the text is an interpretation of Muslims and their activities which is constructed from a mixture of local and global situations which are used to represent Muslims in general. The party prefers to use the term "Muhammedans", a term that in a contemporary political context is considered as cultural racism or orientalism.<sup>36</sup> Some aspects of the text have a specifically local bias. When the party talks about "murder", they are referring to two cases where two Muslim women were killed by their husbands. The discussion about Swedish pork dishes emanates from a decision by *Rosengårdsskolan*, a Swedish high-school (with a majority of Muslim pupils) within the Rosengård neighborhood, to serve only *halal*-slaughtered meat to the pupils. The image of Muslim women bathing and swimming fully dressed probably comes from an article published in a local newspaper about Muslim women going down to the sea at night, after Swedes have left the area.

34 Proposal Dnr 641/98, 1998-09-08: "Förbud mot islamisk verksamhet i Malmö, folkomröstning i Malmö.

35 The various pork dishes listed here are considered by the party to be typical Swedish foods. The school, Rosengårdsskolan, is a Swedish public school (not an Islamic private school) which is located in the center of the Muslim residential zone in Malmö, a neighborhood called Rosengård.

36 It was, however, commonplace to portray Muslims as Muhammedans in earlier times. In the book *Muhammeds religion* (1935) by G Raquette, it is this term that is used to represent Muslims.

The text above is grounded in a powerful anti-Islamic, Islamophobic stance, where Muslims are regarded as a threat to the stability of the city of Malmö. The language in the quotation used here gives an implicit feeling that public space has been invaded by Muslims. For the Scania Party, it is not a question of Muslims having the “right to be different”, but a question of Swedes uniting and standing up against an invasion of difference which, in the short run, leads to a cultural and democratic breakdown of the city and, in the long run, could lead to a political takeover. This is reflected in a line concerning *halal* meat in the school kitchen: “For the moment, the Muslims have been victorious in Rosengård. But they do not yet have a political majority in the city of Malmö!”. Issues that pluralists describe in terms of religious rights, such as the wearing of *hijab*, or Islamic institutions, are not issues for the Scania party. Their goal is just the opposite: to get rid of Islamic practices in the city of Malmö. They also point out that they believe that Swedish traditions are incompatible with Islamic practices. The party says that it is not against Muslims as individuals, but that they want their difference to be practiced elsewhere in the world: “If Muhammedans necessarily want to practice religion in daily life, they must move to an Islamic country”. In summary, the party wishes to preserve the Swedish public sphere – here represented in terms of the city of Malmö – as culturally homogeneous.

What we can also see in the above text is that the Scania Party uses the same kind of approach to the categories of Islam and Muslims as do the pluralist scholars referred earlier, although they have turned them upside down. Pluralist scholars, as I have tried to show, avoid all aspects of Islam that can be interpreted as somehow threatening, while the Scania Party highlights precisely those aspects of Islam that can be understood as threats, interpreting them as characteristic of all Muslims. In constructing their political arguments, both pluralists and the SP represent Islam/Muslims as a homogeneous group of believers, although pluralists point out that Muslims need to establish their own religious institutions because Islam-as-a-total-way-of-life demands it, while the SP regards Islam as profoundly dangerous, as an imperialistic political force aimed at taking over Sweden. For the Scania Party, Islamic institutions are a threat because they “pollute” a Swedish public space which should be kept free of cultural difference.

#### 4.5.2 The Sweden Democrats

*Sverigedemokraterna* are regarded by many observers as one of the most strongly xenophobic political groupings in the Swedish political landscape. No one in the political elite wants to have anything to do with this party or its members. During the recent election campaign of 2002, the Liberal leader, Lars Leijonborg, argued for the importance of challenging the SD party’s ideology in public debate, and for this he was condemned by several leading journalists and policy makers. In one of the tabloids, he was classified as “injudicious”. Sociologist José Alberto Diaz, researcher Masoud Kamali, and journalist Kurdo Baksi also wrote a short article in which they demanded the resignation of the producers of the TV program which broadcast the de-

bate between Leijonborg and the Sweden Democrats. They considered it scandalous that tax-financed television could be used as a platform for a xenophobic party to express a message built on “lies and disinformation” (*Aftonbladet*, May 2002).

The SD party is also represented differently in comparison to other parties in news articles in Sweden. In these articles, they are not presented as “the Sweden Democrats”, but as “the xenophobic party the Sweden Democrats”. For example, two news articles published on the same page in *Sydsvenska dagbladet* following the election campaign in Sweden in 2002, begin with the words “The xenophobic party the Sweden Democrats have...” (*Sydsvenska dagbladet* 21 September 2002). The SD party became famous in the 1994 election campaign when it put up posters in local trains with Muslims praying to God in front of a strong Swedish national symbol: a red cottage in the countryside. The text, “Vilket Sverige väljer du?” (“Which Sweden do you choose?”), has been used as an example of Sverigedemokraterna’s hostility towards immigrants and Muslims (Karlsson & Svanberg 1997: 122). The poster was a propagandistic argument used in an election campaign, but how does the party represent Islam in its policy documents? And what is its view of religious rights? On the homepage of the party, under a heading called “skolwebben” (“the school web”) the following quotation can be found.<sup>37</sup>

We support the idea that every individual has the right to believe what he or she wants, this is freedom of religion for us; at the same time there is always a limit for freedom. Sooner or later, one person’s freedom will clash with another’s. It is when belief is turned into action that we mean that there should be limitations on the freedom of religion. Muslims should also have the right to practice their religion, but Islam consists not only of a spiritual sphere; it also has an ideological dimension. The general opinion about Islam is that the religion gives complete rules for the whole of society. Realization of this ideology would mean a total transformation of Swedish society. It violates important democratic and humanist principles, and it would also violate Swedish laws and human rights.

About mosques, the party says the following:

When it comes to mosques, our opinion is that freedom of religion does not necessarily demand access to mosques. Muslims can, according to their own rules, conduct their religious rituals even if they do not have access to mosques. Experience also shows that the establishment of mosques means a great influx of Muslims to the place in question and creates a strengthening of Muslim identity at the place in question. This is a powerful obstacle to our wish for assimilation and creates more ethnic tension. We also support the Swedish Freedom of Religion Act up to the year 2000, where the first paragraph stated that “anyone can freely practice their religion unless he thereby does not cause disturbances in society or cause a public annoyance”. An orderly society and the safety of citizens should be obligatory principles and ought to have priority over the right to practice religion freely, at any cost. We know that the establishment of mosques has caused much general annoyance among non-Muslims. Accordingly, we believe that a minimum demand is the organization of a local referendum before the establishment of a new mosque, in order to determine the opinion of the citizens. We do not want to forbid those Muslims already in Sweden from having their beliefs, but neither do we wish to participate in making it easy to spread this religion in Sweden, since we believe that an Islamic expansion would be fatal to Swed-

<sup>37</sup> The party homepage can be downloaded from <http://www.sverigedemokraterna.se/>. When I asked for their views on Islam by e-mail, the quotations used above in the text were supplied to me.



ish society. Furthermore, mosques are used symbolically by the [political] establishment to support the multicultural society that we challenge. Sweden is first and foremost the land of the Swedes, and we therefore want an architecture and an atmosphere that makes Swedes in particular feel at home, safe, and in contact with their roots.<sup>38</sup>

The ideology, as represented above, is organized around a distinction between Islam as a private matter and as established in the public sphere; it is when Islam is turned into “action” – that is, moved into the public sphere – that the SD react. Hence, the Sweden Democrats accept the existence of Muslims in Swedish society as long as they practice Islam in private: basically, the party opposes the public manifestation of Islam. In doing so, they take the opposite standpoint of the pluralist “camp”. This stance is in harmony with their main goal of preserving the Swedish nation-state as ethnic and culturally homogeneous.

The negative stance towards the establishment of mosques reflects the nationalist idea of religion as something private. It reflects the SD idea of a homogeneous national public sphere. But their ideas concerned with the public institutionalization of Islam are also related to other notions of Islam. Like the pluralists, the SD have turned the particular content (Islamists’ definition of religion) into a universal idea (something all Muslims believe in), in that the party regards Islam as a total way of life, as something more than a belief in spiritual issues (it has an ideology concerned with the transformation of society)(see Zizek 1999: 175-182). The public manifestation of Islam in, for example, a mosque, is therefore understood as an expansion of the religion onto Swedish territory. Here, we have the same type of understanding as that of the Scania Party: Islam is depicted as a homogeneous actor with an ambition to expand onto Swedish territory, something that, in the long run, can be seen as a takeover of Sweden. The Sweden Democrats thus express the opposite idea compared with pluralist scholars in matters concerned with Islamic institutionalization. Pluralists see institutionalization as a step towards integration into Sweden, as something that will make Islam more Swedish, while the nationalists understand it as an expansion of Islam and, presumably, as a cultural and territorial takeover. According to the nationalist logic, to say *no* to Islamic institutions is to construct an early boundary in order to protect the Swedish nation-state from an invasion of difference. Hence, we are not dealing with a general anti-Islamic stance; a more precise way to put it would be to say that the party is anti-Islamic when it comes to the public manifestation of the religion, but not to Islam as a religion *per se*. Muslims who keep their religion to themselves are not regarded as a problem. Needless to say, the same is true for the Scania Party discussed above.

There is, however, another difference between the nationalists and the pluralists. Pluralists define the consequences of Islamic institutionalization as expressions of Islamophobia, as we have seen, or else they do not want to discuss the matter at all. Nationalists, however, both the Scania Party and the Sweden Democrats, use negative opinions among locals in their argumentation against the establishment of insti-

38 This text was sent to me by the party, but it can also be downloaded from <http://www.sverige-demokraterna.se/> under the title “skolwebben”.

tutions, i.e., mosques. That is, pluralists accept the institutionalization of Islam, but disagree with local reactions to this, while nationalists contest the institutionalization, but accept the validity of the local reactions. Thus, if we consider these two ideologies in the manner suggested by John Lye (1997) above, it can be said that nationalists avoid Muslim experiences, while pluralists try to keep native experiences in the dark. These actors have their own specific political aims in arguing as they do, but, when considered from a more objective point of view, would it not be more “equal” to take both kinds of experience seriously?

#### 4.5.3 Discrimination of natives

The nationalistic ideology is generally labeled as *right-wing populism*, *cultural racism*, *racism*, or *xenophobia* by academics arguing for cultural pluralism (see Sander 1996; Karlsson & Westerlund 1999). *Islamophobia* is, as we have seen above, another term used to classify anti-Islamic arguments. This morally-imbued classification is, of course, used by pluralist scholars and others in order to marginalize nationalists politically. Basically, I believe that it is dangerous to view nationalist ideologies as a kind of not-yet-enlightened perspective on the world, since that kind of stance obscures any possibility of understanding what lies behind the ideology. The Scania Party and the Sweden Democrats, as nationalist examples, may have few registered members in their respective parties but, based on my field-experiences among Swedes in Rosengård, the nationalist ideology seems to have a quite strong social base among native Swedes, an issue which will be further elaborated upon in Chapter Eight. One of the most important criticisms formulated by the SP is that native Swedes are the target of *negative discrimination*, while immigrants are treated positively by the authorities. Therefore, the Scania Party believes that immigrants are a privileged group when it comes to work, housing, and education. The SP quotes Proposition 1997/98: 16, which they criticize: “Swedes no longer have a common history”. According to the party:

Swedes are the subject of immigration in several ways. They have to cope with new forms of conflict and cultural clashes in their everyday lives, they are victims of a higher crime rate, they have to pay higher taxes in order to finance the costly immigration, they are robbed of their identity, their cultural expressions are discriminated against when preference is given to immigrant cultures, and they are also a target of a negative discrimination and other things [The Sweden Democrats, homepage].

It would be pointless to argue that the Swedish natives are empirically wrong in their experience, since this fear of extinction is just as real as the fear experienced by Muslims or other ethnic groups. However, a society that contains such fears of extinction on an individual or group level will, in the long run, have to deal with conflicts. Within the domain of inter-ethnic relations, as Donald Horowitz (1985) points out, it is relatively common for various actors to experience a “fear of extinction” (ibid.: 175). This fear should not be interpreted only in relation to Islam or Muslims. Basi-

cally, the Muslim presence in Sweden is just one among several aspects of a greater transformation of Swedish public space. Islam is given a specific focus within the national political discourse because Muslims belong to one of the most publicly visible groups (mosques, women in *hijab*, a general institutionalization). To participate in nationalist descriptions of contemporary Sweden is one way of expressing a general fear that public space is under a global attack from a host of different dangers.

This native experience is not unique to the Swedish situation. It seems to be quite common throughout Europe and the Western world. Michel Wieviorka (1993) has reported on similar arguments and experiences in France. He claims that, for many Frenchmen, migrants are perceived as acting “like invaders” or “like a ruling group” (ibid.: 57). It is not, he points out, the French who are racists in this native discourse, but the migrants, while the Frenchmen are seen as the real victims. Many French natives are also convinced “that migrants are much cleverer at obtaining public welfare benefits, that they pervert the whole system of the welfare state, which has not been created, for instance, for unemployed people with two or three wives and eight or ten children” (ibid.). The same type of experiences can also be found in the United States. Abby L. Ferber (1998) has noted that members of the contemporary white supremacist movement believe that their interests are not being represented in public, and that “the White people of America have become an oppressed majority. Our people suffer from discrimination in the awarding of employment, promotions, scholarships, and college entrances” (ibid.: 51).<sup>39</sup>

In sum: nationalist discourse is constructed in the same way as pluralist discourse. Nationalists have, however, turned the pluralist arguments and categories upside-down. What is regarded as good by pluralists, is regarded as bad and dangerous by nationalists. Both camps believe that Islam is a total way of life. The significance of this for pluralists is that Muslims need to establish their own public institutions in order that Muslim identity not vanish. The significance of the formula for nationalists is, on the contrary, that public institutions are part and parcel of an Islamic plot to take over Sweden from the Swedes. In both camps, we also find ideas concerned with a fear of extinction and – as with all the other issues – they produce opposite interpretations of it. Pluralists thus emphasize the fear of extinction experienced by Muslims and neglect the fear experienced by native Swedes, while nationalists do the opposite: neglect the fear of the Muslims and valorize native Swedish experiences. We could continue to list other factors, but I contend that the problem is that both of these camps are involved in a national political struggle about how to cope with the globalization of culture, in a general meaning of the term.

39 It is easy to be blinded by problems at home, as though xenophobia, (negative experiences of the Other) were something peculiar to the situation in multicultural Europe, while it seems to be a global phenomenon. In the book *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (1985), Donald Horowitz displays a “list” of various opinions about foreigners. Malays sometimes say that “Malaysia has far too many non-Malay citizens who can swamp the Malays the moment protection is removed”. In Assam, India, “the Assamese think that their individuality is in danger of being wiped out by foreign and non-Assamese elements”. Sindhis in Pakistan “do not want to be turned into Red Indians”. In Punjab, India, “Either the Sikhs must live as equals or accept virtual extinction”, and so forth (ibid: 176-178).

## 4.6 The Islamists

Which Muslim voice should be regarded as authoritative in matters concerned with Muslim identity? Which representations of Muslims/Islam should society listen to? Who is representative? Anyone dealing with persons who identify themselves as Muslims will certainly have to cope with this problem. This section discusses representations made by Islamists who are concerned with the situation of Muslims in Sweden. This too, however, is a problematic category. The general group of Muslims shows much variation, and this also goes for the category Islamists. There is not a single homogeneous group of Islamists in Sweden (or elsewhere in Europe), but several. Here I have, however, chosen to discuss a position formulated by Islamists active on national level. This includes religious actors such as the *Swedish Muslim Council* (the SMC in the following), because this is an organization which makes public political claims vis-a-vis society, because they have a consultative role in matters dealing with immigration and Islam in Sweden, and because it is the only Islamic actor which presents its ideology in the Swedish language. The views of this particular organization are certainly shared by other Muslims/Islamists outside the SMC, but they are also rejected by some, both other Islamists and Muslims in general. I have chosen to focus on *Att förstå Islam* (*To understand Islam*), a small book written in Swedish and aimed at the Swedish general public.

### 4.6.1 Carving out public space for Islam

The Islamists in the SMC and other national organizations are basically self-appointed representatives of Islam and Muslims. It is, however, important to understand that they are generally representative of those Muslims who fill the category of Muslim with a religious content. The main task that this organization has set itself is carving out a space for Islam in the public sphere. In the organization's program, published in *Att förstå islam* (pp. 62-73), the purpose of the national organization has been formulated. The writing here is characterized by something which is a global Muslim phenomenon: the fragmentation and ideological heterogeneity among all those who call themselves Muslims. The author of the program is trying to find a solution which will both unite Muslims into a single community and make this community of believers march along the same path. This is illustrated by what is said about *dawa*, the missionary work. The organization describes the problems of all those who work with spreading the word of God. Too many, it says, are preoccupied with the establishment of new organizations. This is not good, because the issue is of secondary importance. There are also too many attitude problems among activists, too much suspicion, and too much individualism (ibid.).

The way out of this predicament, according to the organization, is by doing two things. First, it is important to construct a "a global perspective in order to gather Muslims despite differences grounded in geographic location or language", and sec-

ond, it is necessary to “balance the responsibility between the duty to protect Muslims/serve the Muslim society in the countries of immigration and the duty to transfer Islam to the non-Muslim society” (ibid.: 65). Once these two problems are taken care of, according to the organization, it will be possible to fulfill the religious duties to make space for Islam and to call non-Muslims in Swedish society to this particular religion. Therefore, *dawa* workers are urged to expend their utmost efforts and focus their engagement on the following list of activities:

- Basic services, such as the opening of spaces for prayer, and the publication of prayer timetables
- Social, cultural, and educational care of Muslims: studies, lectures, conferences, trips, camp seminars
- Education: evening courses, summer schools, Arab studies, etc.
- To call (*dawa*) the Swedish population: radio programs, translations, personal contacts
- Official representation: this means caring for the highest interests of Muslims through official contact with municipal organs, enlightenment concerning religion, marriage, and divorce, school issues, etc.
- Financial issues: organization, guidance, and bringing about agreement on financial questions
- Economic aid from municipalities or the state for religious teachers who will instruct Muslim children in Islam and Arabic

These are the areas which are regarded as important in the work towards public recognition of Islam. The list could be summarized as a strategy for the expansion of Islam in Swedish society. Muslims should establish relations with politicians in order to lobby for making it possible to live according to *Sharia*. Muslims should also “enlighten” official representatives about Islam, and “call” the Swedish population to the religion. This list of activities is not part of the general knowledge of Islam among native Swedes. That the most influential national Islamic organization seems to view Swedish society and non-Muslim population as a religious target to be converted is not a publicly debated aspect of multicultural society because of multiculturalist ideology. Basically, this is so because it comes too close to the nationalist arguments *against* Muslim immigration.

It would surely be strange to interpret the comments of the SMC cited above as a political statement aimed at furthering Muslim integration into Sweden. To do so would be a mistake; it would mean not taking the Islamists in the organization seriously, and treating them as though they do not know what they are talking about. What the text clearly advocates is the insertion of the total Muslim group as a religious collective, and not a strategy to integrate individual Muslims into society. The SMC does not, for example, say that Islamic organizations should participate in Swedish life, but that the organizations should “protect Muslims and serve the Mus-

lim society in the country of immigration". The native majority society is basically regarded as a religious target to which Islam should be transferred. To interpret this as integration into Sweden would surely be an act of multiculturalist blind faith. A more accurate and truthful statement is to say that the SMC is a national organization whose goal is the Islamization of both Muslims and non-Muslims.

This organization regards itself as a national representative for Muslims vis-a-vis the state. But even though Muslims work locally for the establishment of Islam, there is no hierarchical command structure in the relationship between the SMC and the local organizations. People often know one another, or know about one another, but there exists a gap between the national organization and other Muslims; this is also why the SMC urges Muslims generally to overcome their disputes and try to activate their civilizational identification. It is also important to be aware that not only secularized Muslims, but also other Islamists, are critical of the activities and worldview presented by the organization. Other Islamists, especially those who desire to construct a European Islam, are critical of the fact that several of the activists in the organization belong to, or sympathize with, the Muslim Brotherhood, since this is regarded as a too hierarchical and patriarchal organization.

Another aspect of the work of the SMR is that it hands out the same kind of religious propaganda as do Islamists in other parts of the world. In *Islamic Dawah in the West* (1992), Poston points out that Muslims in the United States use a series of brochures published by *World Assembly of Muslim Youth* (WAMY) in Riyadh in their missionary work. The same publications are also used in Sweden where they are translated into Swedish. According to Poston, most of the brochures target young Muslims in order to arm them "with full confidence in the supremacy of the Islamic system over other systems" (ibid.: 137). Brochures 2,3, and 4, however, are aimed at a Western audience. These are entitled, in Swedish, *Vad de säger om koranen*, *Vad de säger om Islam*, and *Vad de säger om Muhammad* ("What they say about the Koran", "What they say about Islam", and "What they say about Muhammad"): herein several Western writers on Islam are quoted in order to make it possible for Westerners to identify with and deal with the texts.

## 4.7 Religious Rights from an Islamist perspective

How does the SMC represent the problem(s) of Muslims in Sweden? The general problem for this organization is represented as external to the Muslim group: it is a problem with the Swedish majority society. As formulated in *Att förstå Islam* (*To understand Islam*):

The greatest problems for Muslims have been constituted by the authorities and the surrounding majority society. They talk about freedom of religion, about the concepts of culture and religion,

but in a Swedish way, which is completely alien to the Muslims. Swedish society thinks too Swedish [ibid.: 6].

While the target here is the Swedish public sphere in its totality, in the discourse of the organization more specific public areas are also described. It is noted that Muslim women often confront problems when wearing *hijab*, that Muslim men have problems carrying out the five daily prayers, that Muslims doing military service experience difficulties in practicing Islamic rituals and norms, and that imprisoned Muslims confront problems related to the body and Islamic practices in general (ibid.: 70-71).

In 1999 one of the leading “national” Islamists pointed out that Sweden was too homogeneous in aspects concerned with law. In an interview, Mahmoud Aldebe argued that Muslims wanted to have parts of the *Sharia* recognized in Swedish courts (*Aftonbladet*, October 1999), because contemporary Swedish law was problematic for Muslims. “If a Muslim woman wants a divorce, she must first go through this in a [Swedish] court and after that have an approval from an imam in order to have the divorce legal according to Islam. If a Muslim jurist participates in the negotiations, this is not necessary” (ibid.), the organization pointed out. This was called “modernizing” the Swedish law, and also included other aspects of family regulations as stipulated by Islamic laws (ibid.). The Swedish Muslim Council has defined the greatest problem which faces Muslims in Sweden as the prejudices, “Islamophobia”, and attitudes vis-a-vis Muslims that can be found in the majority population. “In daily conversations, and in learned discussions about Muslims, concepts and terms are used that are untrue, wrong, and loaded with negative associations” (*Salaam*, 2/98). The majority society is also, according to the organization, the actor that construct boundaries between *us* and *them* (ibid.).

The SMC argues, as do the pluralist scholars referred to above, that there is a lack of religious rights in Sweden (Aldebe 1997). In the year 2000 Church and State were formally separated in Sweden, but before that the SMC had pointed out that Muslims felt discriminated against by this relationship. The organization said that it was necessary to equalize the relationship between the Swedish state and all other religions by separating the two.

Freedom of religion can not be said to be a reality as long as the state sponsors the church. If Sweden wants religious rights in a full sense of the word, it is necessary to say a clear and distinctive “no” to the Swedish church being favored. All Swedish congregations must be treated on an equal basis [ibid.].

The organization wants Sweden to practice freedom of religion, as they mean that this is formulated in the human rights treaty; to also include the establishment of purpose-built places for the practice of religion. “We Muslims”, the organization says, “are a large minority in Sweden, and the laws of religious rights should be applied in its widest meaning” (*Salaam*, 2/98).

In line with this, a most serious problem (as presented by this organization) is the relationship between Muslim children and the Swedish public schools. Since Muslim

families in Sweden “live as a minority group among a majority of Swedes ... Muslim children will be affected in the development of their personality and religious belonging” (ibid.). In order to come to terms with this problem, the SMC argues for two kinds of social separation: one *strong* and one *weak*. The strong model is a more complete break with Swedish institutions, since it is about the establishment of an Islamically-organized public sphere which would exist in parallel with other institutions in society. In order to control the construction of Muslim identity, the organization thus believes (as do several other Muslim organizations in both Europe and the United States) (Kepel 1995), that the solution to the problem of Muslim identity is to build a separate system of schools, daycare centers, and religious institutions that are run by religiously-educated individuals. The weaker variant concerns Islam within the already established Swedish public sphere. Here the organization argues for an Islamization of literature, religious education, and generally greater opportunities for Muslim pupils to preserve and develop a religious lifestyle (ibid.: 68-69).

This representation of what ought to be included in a widened concept of religious rights is not considered, by the Islamists in the SMC, to be a division or separation of Muslims and Swedes. On the contrary, it is understood by them – as it is understood by pluralist scholars – as integration into Sweden. I have discussed aspects of institutionalization with other Islamists active on the local level in Malmö, and they would certainly agree to the ideal of Islamic institutionalization. They seemed aware, also, of the problem of segregation, but accepted this almost as a social fact impossible to change. The answer I received during interviews, is similar to the answers Roald (2002) obtained in her interviews with Muslim intellectuals. According to Roald they claimed that “as long as severe segregation in daily life continues to be a characteristic of Swedish society, the national constellation of children in the public schools in the immigrant areas will be the same as in Muslim schools with regard to the immigrant children’s language and intellectual development. [...] The difference between the public schools and the Muslim schools is one of Muslim leadership and environment only” (ibid.: 114-115).

Basically, separating Muslims from non-Muslims is not conceived of as a problem by Islamists. On the contrary, it is seen as something desirable, as a political goal. Establishing a parallel Islamic public structure is, however, not a question of ideas alone. A few years ago a group of moderate Islamists in Sweden established the *Islamic Swedish Academy* (ISA).<sup>40</sup> It is an organization whose ambition is intellectual *dawa*; something reflected the publication of the politically “affiliated and neutral” magazine, *Minaret*, in Swedish. The association has also been active in the establishment of Islamic education at the university level. Working together with the college in Ersta and Sköndal (outside Stockholm), the ISA has organized a six-week course in Islamology that begins in the autumn of 2003; the course will be followed by a semes-

40 To establish an *Islamic Swedish Academy* is to establish a parallel institution to the prestigious *Swedish Academy*. Members of the Islamic Academy board are, for 2002, Mohammed Knut Bernström, Jacob Boethius, Mefail Deribas, Abd al Haqq Kielan, Abdulwahid Pedersen, Soumaya Pernilla Ouis, Yüksel Peker, Anne Sofie Roald, Jan Samuelsson, Monjia Sonnius, Bo Habib Werne, Mohammed Yussif Widhe, and Mohammad al-Yakoubi ( *Minaret* 4/2002).



ter-long course in religion later the same year (*Minaret*, 4/2002). The need for Islamic education is expressed by the imam Abd al Haqq Kielan:

Why does the Academy start its own Islamic education? There is already Islamologi? But the Orientalists and the practicing Muslims have different perspectives on Islam, and it is about time that our own practicing university teachers organize courses where we Muslims are holding the magnifying glass [ibid.].

Besides this, ISA is also an actor in the organization of a specific Swedish-Islamic education for *imams*. This has been an Islamist demand for quite some time in Sweden and is grounded in the problem of religious leadership: foreign-educated *imams* lack, it is often argued, culturally-specific knowledge about Sweden and that makes them less competent to perform religious work (see also Sander 1996). One part of this education is supposed to take place at the university mentioned above, while the rest part should take place at the *Minarah-institute* (ibid.). This institute was established by Sheik al-Yakoubi and imam al Haqq Kielan with the goal of enabling Muslims to perform *dawa* in the West. As Sheik al-Yakoubi says:

The most important priority for Muslims in the Western world ought to be establishing institutions that mediate sacred knowledge, and supporting those who have decided to dedicate their lives to serve our *din* [religion, Islam]. [.]. *Dawa* (to call for Islam) has various parts, whereof one is knowledge, another one wisdom, a third one honesty. These three can not be acquired at universities of a Western type – the only legitimate source is ulema, who is inheritor to the Prophet [ibid.: 5].

Al-Yakobi here formulates a prejudiced and stereotypical understanding of “universities of a western type”. It is, however, typical for the multiculturalist debate in Sweden to let all prejudiced statements formulated by members of the Muslim group pass in silence. And, if the attitude to universities of a western type, as it is formulated here, is representative for many Muslims (which I doubt), it is relevant to ask how Muslims may get an education which will lead to integration rather than to a strengthened belief in God?

#### 4.7.1 Individual versus collective rights

This discourse is grounded in a certain definition of the category *Muslim*. From a distance it is possible to understand this category as quite heterogeneous, comprising a variety of identifications. the SMC, however, uses a more narrow perspective, describing a Muslim as a person who has “accepted God as the highest authority and who strives for a complete restructuring of his/her life in order to make it comprehensible with the revelations of God” (Att förstå islam). To this it is added that “a Muslim also works for the construction of social institutions that mirror the guidance of God” (ibid.). Hence, as do the pluralists, the organization subscribes to the idea of Islam as a total way of life for the individual, where religion is perceived as including both private and public spheres. This type of definition, as we shall see be-

low, is one way of representing the category of Muslim. That this is one type of definition, and that other definitions are regarded as problematic, is well-illustrated by the fact that the SMC regards it as a problem when the category Muslim is represented by well-integrated Muslim individuals, or non-Muslims, as they prefer to formulate it (Aldebe 1997).

According to the SMC, the problem is that majority society regards “a well-educated, secularized Muslim with a low religious profile as more integrated and less troublesome”. Hence, “certain carefully chosen individuals who have succeeded in their everyday life are lifted to the forefront as idols, not because they are proud to be Muslims, but because they have become totally secularized. As if this were not enough, Muslims are requested to follow in their footsteps” (ibid.). When this religious identity confronts the Swedish non-Islamic society, a problem of community appears. Accordingly, the SMC claims that a “believing Muslim or a non-practicing Muslim with a maintained feeling of Muslim community can not fuse into society as long as this society is not grounded in the Muslim model” (*To meet with Muslims in everyday Sweden*). Thus, Islamists in the SMC argue that all Muslims in Sweden belong to a homogeneous Muslim minority (Aldebe 1997). The definition of what kind of Muslim identity is the building block of this homogeneous religious minority is the one presented above: the individual who perceives Islam as a total way of life. The Islamists in the SMC understand the category of Muslim in the same way as do the pluralist scholars referred to earlier. The organization seems to be aware of the definitional problem connected to the question of who is a Muslim, but demonstrates, of course, no interest in trying to problematize the issue. Instead, they distinguish a large group of Muslims as “non-Muslims”.

In sum, the discourse of the Islamists is identical in its basic contours to the one conducted by pluralists. Both groups claim that Muslims should be regarded as a religious collective of believers, and that this collective understands Islam as a total way of life. Because of this all-embracing notion of Islam, both pluralists and Islamists argue that Muslims are in need of religious rights that make it possible to construct “institutional completeness”. No social consequences are linked to this (such as ethnic/religious separation/segregation). On the contrary, the public institutionalization of Islam is regarded as politically desirable for the integration of Muslims in Sweden. A difference between the two camps, however, is that while pluralists deny, or consciously leave out, the phenomenon of Islamism and the notion of *dawa* (that is, the spreading of Islam to non-Muslims), it assumes a central position in an Islamist understanding of religion. For pluralists it is a virtue to leave out all aspects of Islam that can be understood as threatening to society in front of Swedish readers. For Islamists, however, it is as a virtue to expand public opportunities for Islam in Sweden. Both pluralists and Islamists have a problem in common: how to cope with the fact that a large group of modest, and secular, Muslims does not fit into their respective discourse. Islamists and pluralists understand Islam as an all-embracing societal system, and in their political projects to make space for Islam in Sweden they ignore the heterogeneity of the Muslim group and all the problems that are related to the goal of spreading Islam in the Swedish cultural setting.

## 4.8 The interpretation of difference, or, who is a cultural racist?

So far in my discussion, I have kept various actors apart from one another in order to illustrate how each represents certain Muslim problems. Here I would like to highlight what is said in three quotations: one is from a member of *The Sweden Democrats* (*Sverigedemokraterna*) and another was expressed by an Islamist in *Sveriges muslimska råd* (*Swedish Muslim Council*, the SMC in the following). The third quotation is by a *pluralist scholar* who has been involved in the public discussion of Muslim issues in Sweden for more than ten years. I will focus on how these three actors understand difference in general. Let me begin with a quote by the *Sweden Democrat* (SD, in the following), originally formulated during a group interview conducted by Jonathan Friedman in the mid-1990's:

I think it is natural that people from Arab countries make contact with each other in Sweden. It is self-evident. If I would move to an Arab country, I would naturally try to look up Swedes because it is closer to my heart to socialise in a way that makes it possible to preserve your traditions and the like. It is not possible for me to become Muslim overnight. I think it is very naive to say, like Viviann Franzén, [a politician] in [the party] Ny demokrati, that if it is not good enough here, they can move away. Because you can never demand from a person who carries a cultural heritage which differs radically from the Swedish heritage, that they can adapt from one day to the next. They feel proud and want to preserve their heritage, just like we want to preserve ours. That is why I do not believe in the multicultural.

The second quote is taken from an information sheet published by the Islamist umbrella organization the SMC in the early 1990's. It is entitled *To Meet With Muslims in Everyday Sweden*:

It is not only language that creates a barrier between the Muslims and Swedish society. At the bottom line, the basic difference between Swedish society's demand or habit for assimilation, and Islam as a religion with its own laws, culture, morality, and societal system, is also a source of several misunderstandings. This difference is expressed clearly among Muslim converts in the West. Many of these emigrate, or want to emigrate, to a Muslim country, since after they have accepted and grown into Islam, they have come to experience themselves as strangers in their own home country. The values they are used to having have undergone a radical change, and the nationalistic feeling for the home country has been altered compared to the type of national belonging that exists in the Islamic nation. The Islamic nation should not be understood as any of the Muslim nation-states, but instead as the nation that is talked about in the Koran, and to which every Muslim has his/her primary belonging. Even if a Muslim seems to manage quite well in Swedish society, the above-mentioned facts mean that a devout Muslim, or a non-practicing Muslim with an intact feeling of belonging to the Muslim community, can not melt into society as long as this society is not, in its totality, grounded in the Muslim model.

The third quotation is taken from an article written by the pluralist scholar Åke Sander (1996), where he argues that Muslims need religious rights in order to establish an institutional completeness to cope with their fears of extinction:

This is, according to Swedish Muslims, their situation in Sweden today: By being forced to be equal in, and to assimilate to, the Swedish public sphere and its culture, norms, and value system, they are subjected to this kind of circumstantial handicap. They are deprived of the necessary conditions of being able to choose an Islamic identity, of choosing what they consider the good or the right life: an Islamic social structure with a relatively high degree of institutional completeness. Children born to Muslim parents in Sweden, therefore, run the risk of losing their Muslim identity before they can even find it, for the simple reason that their culture, their way of life, and their social structure are necessary conditions for being able to choose an Islamic identity.

In the general public discourse about cultural difference in Sweden, the SD party and its members and sympathizers are usually classified as xenophobic or racists by pluralists like the scholar quoted above. The SMC is not defined as an Islamist organization, but is commonly regarded as a Muslim umbrella association involved in representing all Muslim interests in Sweden vis-a-vis the state. No public representations in Sweden define the SMC in terms of racism and/or xenophobia. In public, it goes without saying that Muslims, or other immigrants, are not racists: it is the Swedish majority society which contains racists; a racism of which immigrants are regarded as victims. A reasonable hypothesis is that these three political actors have differing intentions and goals with the various arguments about difference quoted above. The SD quotation is included in a general ideological framework where the notion of difference (as used in the quotation) may be understood as an argument against immigration in general: it provides an explanation of why ethnicity and religion are a problem in contemporary Sweden. The SMC quote is also an argument directed to Swedish readers, but here difference is used as a way of explaining why Muslims have such great problems becoming part of society. The pluralist quote, originally written in English, also uses the notion of difference, but here more as a plea for making it possible for Muslims to be able to really practice their difference in Sweden.

Striking in the interpretations of difference in these three quotations is that all three actors agree on how to understand the general problem of difference in Swedish society. The “racists” represent Arab/Muslims as being so different that they can not, or will not, become integrated into society (“they feel proud and want to preserve theirs”). The Islamists believe that Muslims are so different that they can not become part of the established (secular) Swedish society (they “experience themselves as strangers in their own home country”). Even the pluralist scholar, despite having an anti-racist viewpoint, regards Muslims as being so different in comparison to Swedes that Muslims must be given an opportunity to operate separately from Swedish public institutions (they need “to construct an Islamic social structure”). The distinction among these three political antagonists really concerns how to *value* difference, and is not about difference *per se*. Roughly speaking, difference is dangerous for the racist, a fact of life for the Islamist, and a preference for the pluralist. All of the discourses reflect the idea that Muslims are so different that they will/must live separately from Swedes. For the pluralists and Islamists this is desirable, for the nationalists it is inevitable. These different valuations of Muslim difference are illustrated in the following table.

|              | cultural<br>homogeneity | group<br>rights | Islamic<br>institutions | Islam as<br>"a total way of life" | segregation |
|--------------|-------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| Islamists    | -                       | +               | +                       | +                                 | +           |
| Pluralists   | -                       | +               | +                       | +                                 | +           |
| Nationalists | +                       | -               | -                       | +/-                               | -           |

In view of the overlap in their ideas of difference, it is not altogether clear which of the actors discussed above can be defined as cultural racists. All of them think of Muslims as so different that they cannot be integrated into the majority society. From the view of public opinion, it is obvious that the SD party are the cultural racists, but if we read what the actors actually say, the issue becomes more complicated. Michel Wieviorka (2002) points out that the basis of contemporary cultural racism in France is the incorporation of Muslims into an ideological framework where "certain cultural differences" are seen as "insurmountable, and that there is no room for these people in society, since they will never integrate successfully into the dominant culture" (ibid.: 139). Wieviorka probably has a specific group of nationalists in mind when saying this, but when we consider the logic in the quotations above, it is evident that even the most anti-racist pluralist argues that Muslims and Swedes should be separated socially, if Muslims are to preserve their difference in society; and preserving that difference is seen as desirable.

## 4.9 Summary

### 4.9.1 How to value Muslim difference

In this chapter I have presented a general outline of how three actors in contemporary Sweden represent Muslims/Islam in public discourse. The main intention of the chapter has been to make a comparison between pluralists (intellectuals in favor of maintaining diversity through a separation of Muslims and Swedes), nationalists (right-wing politicians in favor of assimilation), and Islamists (political entrepreneurs also in favor of a separation between Muslims and Swedes). What is striking is that all three actors show a common stance toward what is regarded as Muslim difference. Pluralists argue generally that Muslims are so different compared to other groups in society that they [Muslims] need to construct their own institutional structure. Na-

tionalists also claim that Muslims are different in comparison to other groups; however, in their arguments this is a threatening difference, and therefore represents a right which should only be protected in private. Islamists also focus on the difference between Muslims and others. In their representations, Muslims are seen as being so different that they need to build their own Islamically-grounded institutional structures. When it comes to an approach to Muslim difference *per se*, the three actors are basically in conflict concerning how to *value* Muslim difference, and not about whether Muslims are/should be seen as different. The problem, however, is that pluralists do not value Muslim difference as positive. The consequences of using general arguments such as they do is that they value the differences which are highlighted by Islamists. In doing so, the pluralists overlook the voices of all the modest and secularized believers.

Pluralists and Islamists reject the argument that the Muslim difference is dangerous, i.e., that Muslims should be regarded as a threat, and that the institutionalization of Islam is to be perceived as an expansion of the Islamic faith. This is, on the other hand, a notion which grounds the nationalist ideology, though not in any straightforward way. If one reads what the nationalists say in their texts, their main goal is preserving the nation-state's public space as Swedish (in agreement with their understanding of this concept), and, in line with this aim, it is conceivable for them to allow Muslims to practice their own differences in private. While pluralists and Islamists claim that Muslims ought to have a right to practice Islam in both private and public, nationalists draw a (symbolic) boundary between private and public: the Swedish nation-state's public sphere ought to remain Swedish in all of its aspects. This is of vital importance when it comes to Muslims/Islam, since the nationalists understand the (public) construction of Islamic institutions as a dangerous expansion of the Islamic faith, something which ought to be stopped.

#### 4.9.2 Cultural homogeneity

The three actors adduce various factors to explain the Muslim predicament in society. Pluralists contend, in line with the multiculturalist ideology, that the main problem is that the Swedish nation-state is too (culturally) homogeneous. This homogeneity is not seen by pluralists simply as an outcome of the Swedish people's history, but also as a moral problem. Pluralist discourse is thus grounded in an implicit assumption that the cultural homogeneity is wrong, and therefore should be dismantled in order to establish a culturally heterogeneous society. Nationalists fear that the breakdown of cultural homogeneity will lead to serious problems in society. For Islamists, it is also cultural homogeneity that is given primacy in the understanding of Muslim problems, and it is necessary, according to them, to transform society in order to make space for Islam. Hence, pluralists and Islamists argue for a general transformation of Swedish society, while the nationalist discourse is constructed to provide protection for what nationalists believe to be a necessary prerequisite for society's survival.

There are also, however, more theoretical problems involved in the arguments about homogeneity which are avoided by all three actors. All three actors operate with a homogeneous understanding of the categories of Muslims and Sweden, as if these were also homogeneous as empirical phenomena. The category Muslim is defined implicitly (by all three) as a person who subscribes to the idea of Islam as a total way of life. Since the discourse of Muslim difference referred to here is an ideological struggle concerned with coping with globalization, simplifications are understandable. But there are also problems involved when this type of definition is used. First of all, there is the problem of which Muslims are encompassed by the definition? The pluralist/Islamist argument for the Muslim right to be different excludes all those Muslims who see Islam as other than a total ideology in both private and public contexts. The pluralists and Islamists have unwittingly collaborated in constructing an argument which, in its basic contours, well suits the political interest of Islamists, a Muslim sub-group. Secondly, reducing the definition of the category Muslim to this particular idea of a fundamental believer also reproduces the stereotype of this category of citizens that currently prevails in society at large. It is not stereotypical thinking itself that is analyzed or broken down, however, but only, as stated above, ways of valuing difference. Thirdly, the problem for nationalists when this definition is used is that all Muslims are thereby reduced to Islamists, Muslims whose political ambitions include the expansion of Islam.

#### 4.9.3 The multiculturalist ideology

Another conclusion to be drawn is that a multiculturalist ideology makes it possible to make demands vis-a-vis the state which, if they are implemented, may lead to discrimination among Muslims. The focus on difference that is stipulated by multiculturalist ideals – in this case a difference defined in the formula “Islam as a total way of life” – marginalizes all those Muslims who disagree with this definition. They are, in fact, defined as non-Muslims by both Swedish pluralists and Islamists. It may also, if this is the definition (which I believe it is) of the category Muslim which commands ideological hegemony among non-Muslims in general, make it more difficult for modest believers when they try to find a position in the nation-state’s established public sphere. What seems to be the case is that a Muslim minority definition is used by both pluralists and Islamists in an ideological struggle for religious rights where the ambition is to include all Muslims.

The multiculturalist ideology, in its positive evaluation of cultural difference, makes it possible for a historically new political actor to use difference in a political struggle to separate various groups of citizens. This can be understood from the discourse of Muslim difference used by the pluralists/Islamists discussed in this chapter. The chapter also points out a problem related to multiculturalist hegemony: one of the central values in the ideology (regarding difference in a positive way, in opposition to what is understood as nationalist definitions) puts large groups of anti-racist, progressive social researchers and Islamists in the same camp. Pluralists, in their ea-

gerness to act according to the hegemonic multiculturalist ideals, provide a specific religious group with political arguments. In summary, a “tolerant” ideology may be used in a political struggle for “intolerant” values. An important aspect of this is that the multicultural ideology stipulates that Islamism, since it is a politically controversial aspect of multicultural society, ought to be kept out of sight. That is why we now turn to a discussion of why Islamism is avoided in the discourse of Islam as a Swedish phenomenon.



## CHAPTER 5

# Constructing a Positive Image of Islam

In Chapter Four I discussed how pluralists, nationalists, and Islamists represent Muslim difference in Sweden. In this chapter the discussion will continue to explore representations of Muslims, but here the focus is on that part of Islam in Sweden which is left out: *Islamism*. In the following my intention is to do three things. First, even though, as we saw above, pluralists argue that Muslims should be defined as a religious collective of believers who understand Islam as a total way of life, pluralists also argue for the importance of understanding the heterogeneity of persons identifying themselves as Muslims. Heterogeneity is used as an argument against nationalists who use the most militant Islamists to stand as representative for all Muslims. However, that heterogeneity which is used in these arguments is a specific type of diversity which does not include any Islamic issues which might be interpreted as problematic for a multicultural society. It is a heterogeneity which does not include issues such as the political aspects of Islam, or ethnic/religious segregation. Second, my intention is to give an account of why Islamism is such a problem for many Swedish pluralists. Thus, what will be shown is that the discourse of Islam in Sweden is, for pluralists and other multiculturalists, basically a question of a politics of identity. For most pluralist scholars, the underlying goal of describing Islam to Swedish readers is to construct a counter-image to the negative image they believe dominates representations of Islam in Western media. A third intention is to argue that it may be, from a multiculturalist perspective, seen as a morally honorable project to take a stand for Muslims, but that this political project will have certain consequences for understanding the globalization of Islam. Fourth, it will be shown that scholars are involved in the writing of a “new” Swedish story, where the signifier “Blue-and-Yellow Islam” is an important ideological instrument. This category, inspired by the colors of the Swedish flag, seems, however, to be a signifier of unstable content.

## 5.1 What is a Muslim?

A problem in the public representation of immigrants from Muslim countries in Sweden is how the category of *Muslim* is defined and used. There is a politics of language involved in the discussion about Muslims in Sweden which is characterized by implicit ideas of how Muslims are, or are supposed to be, represented publicly (see Eickelman and Piscatori 1996; Friedman 2003). Hence, there are morally right and wrong ways to think and talk about Muslims in front of a Swedish-speaking audience. Anyone expressing the wrong ideas in public is in danger of being defined as a racist, and thereby also risks being expelled from the community of right-minded multiculturalists. For example, during the election campaign of 2002, Christer Ewe, a right-wing politician from the city of Kristianstad, said (on national television), "Muslims are good at giving birth to many children and taking advantage of the [welfare] system". These words triggered a nation-wide moral panic where Ewe became a symbol for a hidden racism. Instead of debating his representation of Muslims rationally, and trying to discuss what was problematic with it, his party associates experienced a fear that his racism would be transmitted to them (via guilt-by-association), so they purged Ewe from the party (Pedersen 2002; Werner 2002).

The fact that representing the category Muslim in the "wrong" way in Sweden is an action that is associated with great moral and social problems certainly influences what various actors choose to say in public about Muslim immigrants. One important idea which must be established in the native majority population is that of Muslim heterogeneity. The argument is that Muslims are a tremendously heterogeneous group of persons, in all senses of the word, but there is a particular kind of heterogeneity that is presented publicly. Basically, the heterogeneity which is emphasized is a politically-accepted type of heterogeneity where all variations that might be understood by native Swedes as hazardous for Swedish citizens are left out of the description. That the idea of Muslim heterogeneity is important to spread to the Swedish public generally was shown clearly during 2002 when the two books, *Insikt* and *Jalla*, were published (both are written in Swedish).<sup>41</sup> *Insikt* is published by the Islamic Center in Malmö (at the great mosque located in Rosengård), and *Jalla* is a product based on an initiative from the Swedish national government.<sup>42</sup> Both of these books have a similar postmodern structure, wherein a variety of different "voices" are given space to formulate their specific experiences of Islam and Swedish society. The content was clearly chosen in order to show the great heterogeneity of Muslims and Islam but, typically, neither of the books discuss those political aspects of Islam in Sweden that are of greatest concern to native Swedish citizens, such as the relationship be-

<sup>41</sup> Both of these books are undated. *Jalla* can be downloaded from the net at the site <http://www.utrikes.regeringen.se/projekt/jalla/jalla2.pdf>. *Insikt* is published by the Islamic Center in Malmö (at the great mosque located in the Rosengård neighborhood).

<sup>42</sup> *Jalla* was criticized by the Swedish newspaper *Östgöta Correspondenten*. The paper argued that a serious discussion about Islam must deal with gender, penal laws, the mixture between religion and society, and the notion of holy war. But, the paper stated, doing so runs counter to the main purpose of the government project aimed at giving Swedish students a positive view of Islam.

tween Muslims and democracy, Islamism, problems related to Islamic institutionalization, whether practicing Muslims are commanded by their faith to make way for an expansion of Islam in the West, the problem of Islam as a total way of life, etc.<sup>43</sup>

Among pluralist scholars there is also a high degree of consensus about the great heterogeneity among Muslims. Even though more than a decade has passed since it was formulated, the following “slogan” expressed by Sander (1990) is a good illustration of a value with which most pluralists would agree:

[Muslims] manifest tremendous ethnic, political, religious, etc, differences, differences often magnified, more noticeable, and more complex in the migration and diaspora situation. Any description that neglects or conceals these differences is scientifically unsound, does violence to reality, and does not help the Muslim minorities in any way [ibid.: 106].

It is often pointed out that Swedish Muslims come from a variety of countries; in contemporary Sweden we can find people, as Stenberg (1999) says, from Muslim countries such as Lebanon, Iran, Syria, Pakistan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and the former Yugoslavia (ibid.: 66; see also Svanberg & Westerlund 1999; Roald 1999). To this ethnic heterogeneity can be added other distinguishing features, such as education and social class. Another politically-accepted type of heterogeneity is that of variations based in certain broad, Islamic traditions; in Sweden, for example, most Muslims are Sunni, some are Shia, some Alevites, others Sufists, and a small group of believers belong to Ahmadiyya. This kind of information makes up, for example, more than one third of the content of the book *Blågul islam?* (1999). Under the main heading “Movements and organizations” (my translation from Swedish), Shia, Ahmadiyya, Alevism, and something called Euro-Sufism is discussed (Thurfjell 1999; Hamrin 1999; Svanberg 1999; Westerlund 1999). The term “Cyber-Muslims” is also used to describe a category comprising those young Muslims who use the Internet for discussions about Islam, and for spreading the word of God (Schmidt 1999).

Pluralist scholars also use other categories to illustrate Muslim heterogeneity. Sander (1997) has discussed the number of Muslims in relation to how often people

43 In *Insikt* it is, for example, possible to read articles about a Muslim driving a Harley-Davidson motorcycle, how a Muslim experiences the Swedish medical system, the relationship between men and women, and how diverse concepts can be interpreted; but it is also possible to read texts with more profound religious content (2002: 2–3). Some of the texts in this book will surely be accepted by Muslims generally, but some of the authors may find it more difficult to be recognized as Muslims, at least in the eyes of conservative readers. The Swedish author and anthropologist C.-J. Charpentier (the driver of the Harley-Davidson) says, for instance: “I drive a fat, black Harley-Davidson that is rebuilt. It has a displacement of 1340 cubic centimeters, and has been made broader and lower. Basically because that gives the cycle a hotter look. When I have parked for the night I like to listen to rock with something in my glass. And it is definitely not juice! [...] I refrain from eating pork and I visit a mosque when one is in reach. But I do not pray five times a day and I do not fast when I am in Europe.” (*Insikt* pp. 15, my translation from Swedish). *Jalla* basically consists of short texts written by young Swedish Muslims who try to explicate their experiences of Sweden. This book, however, is different from *Insikt* because it does not contain so much religious material. *Jalla*’s main concern is with how young Muslims, both modest and secularized, think of themselves and their relationships to men/women and society at large, while *Insikt* is more concerned with specifically Islamic issues. This difference in approach is almost certainly due to the fact that *Insikt* is published by the great mosque in Malmö, a political actor involved in the representation of Islam in Sweden.

practice Islam and visit mosques. In order to understand how many Muslims can be described as “religious”, he determined distinctions between four different groups: ethnic, cultural, religious, and political Muslims (ibid.: 184–185). An ethnic Muslim, according to Sander, is someone born in a context dominated by a Muslim tradition, independent of whether he or she practices Islam. A cultural Muslim is defined as a person who has “internalized” a Muslim cultural tradition; someone who thinks with the help of Islamic categories. Religious Muslims have certain religious beliefs and practices, while being a political Muslim means that one believes that Islam is an all-embracing system for society: a “total way of life” (ibid.).<sup>44</sup> The concepts formulated by Sander have been used by other pluralist scholars dealing with Islam in Sweden (see, e.g., Alvall 1998; Roald 1999; Stenberg 1999). Sander has also produced a more finely-tuned scheme of classification for pointing out religious variations among Muslims in Sweden. In it he represents Muslim religiosity in terms of atheists, agnostics, liberals, the silent and indifferent, cultural Muslims, ordinary believers, pietists, normativists, and ritualists (Omsäter 1995: 77–78; see also page 79 in this thesis). Samuelsson (1999) also points to the difficulty of identifying Muslims in Sweden. He claims that the concept of an ethnic Muslim has become accepted, but he has also introduced the term “actively believing Muslim” (my translation from Swedish) in his description of Muslims in Sweden, without, however, defining in detail what the term means (ibid.: 27)<sup>45</sup>.

In this section, I do not intend to discuss all of the above categories in detail. It is certainly impossible to reach consensus about these categories. Muslims in general can be discussed in innumerable ways, depending on what aspects of being a Muslim one chooses to emphasize. The goal in this section is to show the importance – for both pluralist scholars and others involved in the discourse of Islam in Sweden – of arguing that Islam is a heterogeneous phenomenon, and to illustrate that Muslims come from all over the world and take diverse positions concerning Islam. Because of the moral and political problems involved when someone desires to speak about Islam publicly, this heterogeneity is described in a way that avoids all aspects of it which could be interpreted as hazardous for society: it is a morally and politically approved diversity. The general picture of the Muslim group is characterized by a proclaimed heterogeneity: all kinds of relationships between the individual and God find their place in the Muslim group. We may, however, also ask: in this “rainbow”, where are the Islamists?

44 As he says: “...that is, if (s)he – usually in the spirit of al-Maududi or Sayyid Qutb – sees Islam as a total way of life for the individual as well as for society at large” (Sander 1997: 184–185).

45 The heterogeneity of Muslims is also an issue for scholars in other parts of Europe. For example, W.A.R. Shadid and Van Koningsveld (1995) believe that European Muslims can be divided into four general groups: confessionals, believers, liberals, and agnostics (ibid.: 3). Maria Adele Roggero (2002) also writes about Muslim heterogeneity (in Italy), using yet another classificatory scheme. She speaks of Laicism/secularism, Private devotion, Orthodoxy/communitarianism, Militancy, and Brotherhoods (ibid.: 134).

## 5.2 Omissions

It was claimed in Chapter Three that ideological descriptions of the world tend to keep certain phenomena in the “dark”. This has also been argued by Foucault (1993 [1970]) when he pointed out that discourses always include certain taboos (ibid.: 7). In Swedish pluralist discourse, certain aspects of Muslims, Islam, and multicultural society are not represented as part of the Muslim problem. More generally, it is possible to argue that the pluralist discourse is constructed in opposition to what may be called “the Islamic threat”, in the sense that all aspects of Islam that can be interpreted by native Swedes as threatening are eliminated from the discussion, either denied outright or removed to another part of the world. My intention here is not to provide an extensive description of various pluralist discursive taboos, but only to point out that something which other political actors in Sweden and elsewhere in the Western world regard as problematic about multicultural society is not even being discussed in Swedish pluralist discourse.

### 5.2.1 Islamists are out there, not here

An obvious problem for a pluralist is how to deal with the political aspects of Islam, such as Islamism or fundamentalism, since these are characteristics of Islam associated with negative phenomena such as the expansion of Islam, fanaticism, terrorism, etc. They are characteristics used by Western nationalists in their argumentation against Islam. In the pluralist discourse most authors leave out threatening issues, but those who do take up the issues usually deny the existence of an Islamic threat. Sander (1996), for example, explicitly denies that any Muslim ethno-religious mobilization in Sweden is “part of a worldwide offensive move masterminded by some global Islamic fundamentalist movement” (ibid.: 271). Muslims in Sweden, he says, “do not mobilize in order to Islamize Sweden and the Swedes, they mobilize in order to receive recognition, to establish their identity and to ensure their survival as a distinct ethno-religious group” (ibid.). Sander argues that Muslims in Sweden, while involved in a kind of political mobilization, are not Islamists but Muslims (ibid.). To use the word “Islamism” as a term referring to Muslims in Sweden is very problematic for pluralists and other multiculturalists.<sup>46</sup> The term is seldom or never used in the

46 Among scholars generally it is today common to use the four concepts of traditionalism, secularism, modernism, and fundamentalism when dealing with Islamic tendencies (see, e.g., Rippin 1993). There is also a debate among scholars about the problem of religious fundamentalism; is this a relevant concept to use to understand political Islam, or is it better to use the term Islamism? Some, such as the anthropologist Henry Munson, Jr. (1988), prefer to say fundamentalism because the word Islamism is a “clumsy neologism” (ibid.: 4). Others, such as Sidahmed and Ehteshami (1996: 3), point out that it is more appropriate to talk about Islamism than about fundamentalism because “...the line of demarcation that sets the Islamist leaders and followers apart from their co-religionists is their political activism rather than a dogmatic or literalist attitude toward Holy Scripture” (ibid.). The French scholar Gilles Kepel (1997 [1994]) has, in a number of books, discussed the phenomena of Islamism in both Europe and in the Middle East. In the book *Jihad* (2002), he argues

public debate about multicultural society, and the phenomenon of political Islam does not generally exist as a possible variant of Muslim heterogeneity inside the Swedish nation-state. Most pluralist scholars avoid the term. On the whole, Muslims in Sweden are represented as neutral, religious actors, devoid of politics.

I have tried to discuss Islamism publicly in Sweden on two occasions during the past three years, and the general reaction have been a compact *silence* and arguments constructed *ad hominem* claiming that, because I am a 40+, white, European male, I was disqualified from saying anything about the issue. In the autumn of 2002, for example, I participated in a Swedish conference on immigration and ethnic research held in the city of Norrköping.<sup>47</sup> The workshop I took part in was called “Citizenship and Human Rights”, where papers discussing integration and transnational citizenship were “welcome”. In my own paper, I discussed which Islamist groups are active in Sweden; I also argued, in line with Tibi (2002), that multiculturalism (religious rights) can be used instrumentally by politically extreme groups (Carlbom 2003). We were about ten scholars (anthropologists and sociologists) in the workshop, and when my paper was presented most of the participants sank into their chairs and stared down at the tables in front of them. The general reaction was, as noted above, silence, but those who did speak attacked me personally as being immoral *per se* (white, male, European, middle-aged, and so forth). One of the more dominating of the participants claimed that, since I was not myself a Muslim, I was not in a position to discuss Islamism or any Islamic issues. I needed to find a group of religious authorities, this scholar contended, who could speak about these things, before the argument would be morally legitimate. Another scholar argued that now was not the right time to discuss Islamism, after September 11, since it was “too controversial”. Symptomatically, however, when we had a break from the public context of the conference table, this same scholar claimed – in private – that it was important to discuss Islamism, especially after September 11.

At an annual meeting of Swedish anthropologists I also presented a paper similar in content to the one just discussed. In this paper it was argued that Swedish scholars and Swedish Islamists hold the same position on religious rights. This presentation took place in front of more than fifty scholars (no exact count of the audience was made) and the general pattern of reactions was the same as that described previously. Most were silent and those who did speak (as I remember, three people) claimed that my approach was wrong and said that they did not wish to discuss Islamism as an aspect of multicultural Sweden. One of the attending anthropologists was also upset

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that Islamism had its peak during the 1970s and 80s, but that the movement has weakened during the last decade; he also shows some of the transnationalist networks that have existed within the Islamist movement. The anthropologist Lars Pedersen has, in *Newer Islamic Movements in Western Europe* (1999), discussed Islamist movements in three different European nation-states: Denmark, France, and Germany. In the book he contends that the solution to the theoretical problem inherent in the conceptual pair Islamism/fundamentalism is to understand fundamentalism as the foundation of Islamism. “As such”, Pedersen says, “the Islamists can be said to be fundamentalists, while the reverse does not necessarily follow.” (ibid.: 15)

<sup>47</sup> The homepage, where themes and papers are published, can be downloaded from <http://www.nor-nod.se/temaetni/Pages/konferens/>

when, in order to highlight the ideological content of what certain Islamists argue, I had talked about religious “propaganda” instead of talking about religious information. My interpretation of the scholarly reaction to this word is that it was difficult for an anthropologist to think of the Other in terms of ideology and propaganda. For many anthropologists the Other is not involved in politics; the Other only wants recognition for his/her different culture.

My point here is that many scholars in Sweden (anthropologists and others) have difficulty in talking publicly about multicultural society in another manner than that stipulated by the values of a multiculturalist ideology. Hence, these incidents illustrate a more general approach to Islamism, as the subject is discussed among pluralist scholars and other actors in Sweden. In texts written in Swedish, and aimed at a general Swedish public, there may exist discussions and descriptions of Islamism, but not as something taking place within the boundaries of the Swedish nation-state; Islamism is located somewhere else, often in the Middle East. A reader trying to understand Muslims in Sweden receives an impression that Islam in Sweden is completely different from Islam in other Western nation-states. That is, in the pluralist discourse, the general solution to dealing with Islamism is to locate this phenomenon outside of Swedish national territory, while describing Muslims within Sweden in more politically-neutral terms. Thus, the general tone of pluralist discourse indicates that Islamism does not exist as a phenomenon in Sweden. Some examples will illustrate this statement.

A typical example of how Muslims are represented in Swedish books about Islam in Sweden can be found in Stenberg’s *Muslim i Sverige, lära och liv* (*Muslim in Sweden, teachings and life*) (1999).<sup>48</sup> Herein the author discusses the role of Islam among Muslims, using the concepts of secularism, modernism, traditionalism, and fundamentalism/Islamism. In the text, it is stated that discussions about religion take place among a variety of different individuals and groups, not only among Islamists. No geographic location is mentioned where these different trends can be observed; the description is elevated above particular contexts and into the more abstract “Muslim world” (ibid.: 57–58). It is pointed out, however, that “the Muslim world” mentioned in the text should be understood as a world of ideas, “where information, interpretations, and knowledge are spread, and not as a geographical part of the world” (ibid.: 58) (my translation from Swedish). This last remark can be understood, speculatively, as meaning that Europe and Sweden are part of the four trends, but there is no specific mention of this. The question of the geographical location of the Muslim world is uncertain because the text begins with a map showing “the world of Islam” – here defined as North Africa, the Middle East, and the southeastern parts of Asia (ibid.: 12).<sup>49</sup> When the discussion moves to Muslims in Sweden, the focus

48 The Islamologist Leif Stenberg is an expert on Islamist rhetoric. In the article *The Revealed Word and the Struggle for Authority* (1998 [1996]), he analyzes how Algerian Islamists in *Front de la Libération Nationale* (FLN) use Islamic terminology in their political struggle to Islamicize the public sphere.

49 The author also says that Islam is a religion which encompasses large geographical areas, but only places outside of Europe are defined as parts of the world of Islam (Stenberg 1999: 13–14).

changes. In Sweden, there is great Muslim heterogeneity, but no Islamist or fundamentalist activity. Muslims in Sweden are basically described with reference to their Swedish organizations; that is, by the Swedish and not the Muslim names (ibid.: 65–84). Ritzén (1991) has also used the four concepts of traditionalism, secularism, modernism, and fundamentalism as a typology of “the main trends of Islam” (my translation from Swedish)(ibid.: 24). The book where the terms are used is entitled *Muslimerna i Sverige* (*Muslims in Sweden*) and it is published by the *State Board of Immigration* (now Board of Migration). As in Stenberg’s book mentioned above, Ritzén’s discussion of the four trends focuses on the Muslim world outside Europe; both the Libyan leader Mohammad al-Khaddafi and Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran are discussed as actors in the process of re-Islamization (ibid.: 31). Islamism is something that takes place outside the boundaries of the Swedish nation-state; it is a phenomenon located “out there” in the Third World. No other article in this collection mentions either Islamism or fundamentalism. The texts about Muslims in Western Europe and about Muslims in Sweden consist largely of organizational name-dropping: Muslims in Sweden are generally described in terms of organizations with Swedish names. *Islam i Sverige* (*Islam in Sweden*)(1999) is a kind of textbook, written in Swedish, the aim of which is to represent Muslims and their activities in Sweden. Its author, Samuelsson, discusses Islamism/fundamentalism in a manner similar to the way other scholars talk about this political phenomena in front of a Swedish public. The perspective found in this book replicates the language of other authors. Islamism, as a political phenomenon, is located in geographical locations other than Sweden: in Iran, India, Pakistan, and Egypt (ibid.: 56–60). There is also a brief description of *the Muslim Brotherhood* (*al-Ikhwān al-Muslimun*) in Syria and Egypt, and it is mentioned that this organization has branches in seventy different countries. When the description moves from the European periphery towards Sweden, Islam and Muslims are described in a completely different way. The general tone in the text is that outside Sweden and Europe, Muslims are involved in all sorts of political activities, but once they come to Sweden they become “actively practicing believers” (my translation from Swedish) but not Islamists (or fundamentalists), members of organizations with political goals, agnostics, or secularists (ibid.: 87). In a textbook called *Islam in everyday life and in the world* (1994), Christer Hedin provides yet another example of a Swedish scholar’s refusal to admit the presence of Islamism in Sweden. Hedin discusses concepts such as Islamism, fundamentalism, and *integrisme*, but this is not done in any more specific context than a location somewhere in the Middle East (ibid.: 102–114). When the description is taken to Europe, the word Islamism is removed and replaced by other terms. Several authors mention the Muslim Brotherhood as an important Islamist actor, as does Hedin, but not as a political party active in Western Europe: the Muslim Brotherhood is part of reality in Egypt and elsewhere. He also mentions, in a chapter about Islam in Europe, the Turkish *Süleymanli* movement (who Lars Pedersen [1999] describes in terms of Islamists, see footnote 46 in this thesis); Hedin describes this group as a movement for religious “reforms”. According to Hedin, in 1981 this movement controlled more than two hundred Islamic congregations in Germany, and was (at the same time) forbidden in Turkey because



it worked politically for Islam (ibid.: 125).<sup>50</sup> Generally, pluralist researchers and others do not talk about, or even study, Islamism in Sweden. In most of the literature aimed at a Swedish public, it is a nonexistent phenomenon within the boundaries of the Swedish nation-state. Muslims here are defined in other terms.<sup>51</sup>

### 5.2.2 Islamist representations of Islam

When it comes to the representation of Muslims/Islam in Sweden, Islamism, as pointed out above, is not generally regarded as a phenomenon found in Sweden. At the same time, however, Islamists are given textual space by Swedish scholars, and by the state, to present Muslims and Islam publicly to the larger Swedish audience. This contradictory circumstance can be illustrated by various texts. For example, in 1991 the *Swedish Board of Immigration* (now *Migrationsverket*) published a book entitled *Muslims in Sweden*, where various scholars present Islam for a native Swedish audience. Four extracts of fifteen are written by Mahmoud Aldebe, religious entrepreneur active in Swedish national Islamic organizations (Ouis 1996: 21). In the book, he is given an opportunity to explain what Islam means, who is a Muslim, the meaning of the mosque, and what it is to live as a Muslim in Sweden (Aldebe 1991: 9-16, 35-38,

50 The above contention, that there is a difference in how Islam is represented to Swedes by researchers in Sweden, is reinforced if we also take a look at what Swedish researchers say about Muslims when the language in which they are writing is English. In the book *Women in Islam* (2001), Islamologist Anne Sofie Roald has a broad and informative discussion about the ideological stances towards women which can be found among various Islamist groups in Europe. The book, which is written in English, contains a quite detailed presentation of different Islamist trends: Sufi orders (*habashi*), the Tabligh movement, Islamic Jihad, the Muslim Brotherhood, The Islamic Liberation Party, the Salafi trend, and what she defines as the post-ikhwan trend (ibid.: 34-57). Another example of an English text is Åke Sander's article *Islam and Muslims in Sweden* (1990). This article, which presents a long list of both internal and external problems faced by Muslims in Sweden, also mentions the phenomena of Islamism without using the word. In one paragraph, there is a short discussion about groups of Muslims in Sweden "who argue for a reformation of Islam" (ibid.: 107). "Those" who want this are using a "fundamentalist" ideology, but their aim is not described, as it often is in the literature dealing with Islamism/fundamentalism as a political phenomenon whose goal is the Islamization of the public sphere. The text referred to here is written in English and is aimed at English readers, but Sander has never discussed these phenomena in the Swedish public sphere.

51 However, Islamism has, in fact, been mentioned as an aspect of the Swedish-Islamic reality. To the best of my knowledge, this was the first, and so far the only, public representation of Islamism as a phenomenon existing in the Swedish nation-state that I have found in the discourse to which I refer here. The way it was discussed also shows how difficult it is to say something publicly in Sweden about political Islam because of the values inherent in the multicultural ideology. The lines I have in mind here can be found in the introduction to the book *Blågul islam?* (1999) where Svanberg and Westerlund point out that some of the Muslims who have been engaged in a political dialogue with Christian Social Democrats, "are Islamistically inspired" (ibid.: 22). According to the authors, this means that [Muslims] emphasize the importance of Islam permeating the entire social life of a society (ibid.). It is also stated that some of the Islamists in Sweden are "inspired" by the internationally important organization, the Muslim Brotherhood; that Swedish Islamists have close international contacts; that they are moderates; and that they have ambitions to "anchor Islam in a Swedish context" (ibid.: 23). The way Islamism is represented here shows the ambiguity towards the phenomenon that grounds the entire pluralist discourse: the Muslims referred to are not Islamists, but are "inspired" by Islamism. The other text aimed at Swedish readers is a discussion by Roald

44-50, 51-54). In other scholarly texts as well, Islamists are given opportunities to represent their faith without any opposition from either scholars or other groups of Muslim believers. Pia Karlsson (1999) has, for example, given textual space to Mahmoud Aldebe's description of the importance of the mosque without reflection concerning the political role of Islamism (ibid.: 200).<sup>52</sup>

A further example of how an Islamist perspective is represented as the true interpretation of Muslims and Islam in Sweden can be found in Hedin's article "Islam på svenska" (1999: 215-235). Hedin discusses the book *Att förstå islam* (n.d.) in a certain way. He does not present the book as a particular interpretation by one Muslim, as an Islamist voice. Rather, he discusses the content as characteristic of Muslims and Islam generally. It is true, as Hedin states, that the book contains a presentation of some fundamental Islamic thoughts about God, and views on how to practice an Islamic lifestyle; it is also true that the book contains a chapter on what Westerners say about Islam, and a chapter about *halal* food. But the book also contains – and this is not referred to by Hedin – a chapter about Islam in Sweden (this is the chapter upon which I focused above). This latter chapter contains criticisms of Swedish society, suggestions about how to solve problems for Muslims, and a description of how Muslims can better make way for a public expansion of Islam in Swedish majority society (pp. 62-73). For Hedin it is more important to represent certain unusual and exotic ideas about what happens when pork is consumed than to take seriously Islamist ideas concerned with Islamic enclavization (Hedin 1999: 225).<sup>53</sup> My point here is that Hedin takes a typically pluralist cognitive stance in avoiding all aspects of Islam in

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(1999) about Muslim female activities in Sweden. This text also reflects an ambivalence towards the phenomenon of Islamism. In a general description of female leadership and large Islamist organizations, Roald points out that the Muslim Brotherhood has claimed that it is possible for women to take up leading positions, but that a woman can never be the leader of a country (ibid.: 124). The consequence of this policy-statement, according to Roald, is that the Muslim Brotherhood has made space for women in their organizations all over the world. "Even in Sweden", Roald claims, "associations and organizations that stand close to the Brotherhood have admitted women to leading positions, as in, for example, the Swedish Muslim Council" (ibid.: 124). This statement is also evidence of a certain ambivalence. The Swedish Muslim Council is not described as an Islamist organization by Roald, but as an organization that "stands close" to the Egyptian party. However, the fact that scholars use vague descriptions of the relationships between Islamists in Sweden and their ideological counterparts in the Middle East may also be understood in terms of problems of gaining access to data. The activities of the Muslim Brotherhood are surrounded by a great deal of secrecy, a situation which, presumably, is also the case with other Islamist organizations.

52 It is not self-evident that all Islamists agree to the necessity of establishing purpose-built public mosques. During fieldwork one Islamist belonging to the Salafi trend stated that "I think it would be more in accordance with Islam to avoid the construction of expensive mosques. The first generation of Muslims called to Islam from the roof of a mud-house".

53 The chapter left out in Hedin's description of the book is a chapter which the Islamic organizations on the national level publish on their homepage (<http://www.islamiska.org/s/sverige.htm>) as a description of what Muslims in Sweden are working for. Thus, although it seems important for Islamists to publicly reach out with these ideas, they are not taken seriously by Swedish scholars. This homepage is also used by Swedish citizens as an example of the negative attitude Muslims have toward integration (see <http://www.bgf.nu/islam/index.html>).

Sweden that may be interpreted as problematic, or that might indicate that Muslims constitute a threat to society.<sup>54</sup>

### 5.2.3 *Dawa*

Another aspect of Islam that could be interpreted as a threat is the notion of *dawa*, that is, an Islamic type of missionary work performed mostly by Islamists; this is closely related to Islamism and to what might be called the expansion of Islam. Most pluralist authors in Sweden avoid this topic, even though Islamists themselves have no problem with talking about it in public. But the pluralists who comment on *dawa* tend to downgrade its importance in the Muslim community here. It is considered to be an activity performed by specific organizations that have Muslims – not non-Muslims – as their primary targets (Svanberg & Westerlund 1999). As expressed by Svanberg and Westerlund (1999)(my translation from Swedish):

A number of international Muslim organizations work with a small-scale activity of enlightenment (*dawa*) in Sweden. This is seldom or never directed at the non-Muslim environment, but is focused on the Muslims themselves [ibid.: 18].

Samuelsson (1999) claims that missionary activity does not have the same meaning in Islam as in Christianity, and he says that the *dawa* which are conducted by Muslims in Europe are of negligible importance. He states that “All statistics show that [missionary activity by European Muslims is negligible]. This also goes for Sweden” (ibid.: 176). He does not, however, back up his statement with any specific statistics. As mentioned, *dawa* is generally performed by Islamists, but in the discussion conducted by Svanberg and Westerlund (1999), the active *dawa* organizations are not represented as Islamist organizations, even though some of the organizations mentioned clearly belong to what might be defined as political Islam, such as the Turkish organization *Avrupa Milli Görüş Teskilatlari* (The European Union for a New World-view)(ibid.). What is not said in Svanberg and Westerlund’s description of *dawa* is

54 In the scholarly discourse about Muslims/Islam in Sweden there are, however, those who do present Islam as a threat to Sweden, even though these voices are rare or peripheral when seen in relation to the pluralist core of texts. For example, Elsa Sjöholm (1992) has argued that Islam poses a threat to basic Swedish values concerning the idea of equality between men and women (ibid.: 79-87). Her main assumption is that all religions worthy of calling themselves religions represent their ideas as absolute Truth. Anyone outside the specific religion in question is therefore under a potential threat from those within that religion who claim that they act in the name of God (ibid.: 79). She argues that Islam, through aggressive Muslim states and immigration of Muslims to Europe, has become a new imperialistic threat to the West. In the middle ages it was possible for the Western world to push back Muslim imperialists, but today it is impossible to exclude strangers with a different religion because of the humanist ideology which reigns in the Western world. As she says: “We have created a policy of immigration that makes us receive persons, whose religious ideology expresses contempt for our values. This is the Catch 22 of the western world; if we deny these people the right to come to us, we go against our own proclaimed humanism, and if we allow them to come, we slowly cut off the limb we sit on” (ibid.: 80).

that this type of activity is not restricted exclusively to specific organizations but is performed by most Muslims who conceive of Islam as a life-project.

Pluralists represent *dawa* as a phenomenon related to specific missionary organizations, and Islamic organizations in Sweden as examples of how Islam is becoming more Swedish. If one examines what Islamists themselves say, the notion of *dawa* is put in another light. The SMC – not regarded as being part of the *dawa* organizations that the pluralists have in mind – argues that one of the most important aspects of their religious work is the active formation of a Muslim community in Sweden (and not that “Swedification” as such is important). To make way for well-organized missionary (*dawa*) activity aimed at both Muslims and non-Muslims, the SMC claims that one of the most important activities for Muslims in Sweden is to unite, and that “all Muslims in Sweden must make it a first-hand priority to work for Islam in Sweden” (ibid.: 63). When it comes to *dawa*, the SMC argues that it is an important “duty” for Muslims to “transfer Islam to the non-Muslim society”. The Swedish population should be called to Islam using “radio programs, translations, personal contacts, etc.” (ibid.: 65). In his thesis, Otterbeck (2001) claims that the SMC/IIF is part of the larger, global, Islamic *dawa* movement which have been around since the 1970s.<sup>55</sup> His argument is based on an analysis of the (Swedish) Islamic magazine *Salaam*, which is published by religious activists who are either members of, or are close to, the SMC/IIF. The magazine, according to Otterbeck, “is a *dawa* product in the most basic meaning of the word” (ibid.: 231). He claims that this is also noticeable in the selection of authors that the editors of *Salaam* have chosen to cite. The most popular Islamic writers are “al-Banna, S. Qutb, Mawdudi, al-Qaradawi, M. Qutb and M. al-Ghazali”, a group of authors whose work “make up the original 20<sup>th</sup> century Islamic fundamentalism” (ibid.: 179).

The SMC expresses its general policy in the text quoted above, but *dawa* is also a local practice that takes place in organized fora. During fieldwork I participated in an evening course which was a collaboration between *Nykterhetsrörelsens bildningsförbund* (NBV) (*The Organization for Sobriety Educational Association*) and a group of young Islamists active in various Islamic projects at national and local levels. The course was organized as a series of lectures by various Muslims, and was open to both Muslims and non-Muslims. The main theme of the course was “Islam – True and not True”. The participants consisted mainly of young Muslim men and women (mostly men) who already had converted to Islam, or were about to do so. During one lecture an Islamist from Malmö’s largest Islamic association, *Islamiska Kulturföreningen* (*The Islamic Culture Association*), was invited to talk about the existence of God. In his lecture he argued a) that Islam had formulated certain biological truths about humankind before science had done so, and b) that it was possible to demonstrate the existence of God using logic, or rational thinking. When such logic had been applied, and God was accepted as an invisible, non-human entity, (he claimed that) all Islamic be-

<sup>55</sup> He argues that the “Islamic movement” was constituted by three central actors: the Saudi Arabian Rabita, the Pakistani political party Jama’at-i Islami, and the Muslim Brotherhood (Otterbeck 2001: 254). With money from the oil industry, the Islamic movement constructed an influential, globally-transmitted *dawa* discourse during the 1970s and 80s (ibid.).

lievers had a duty to perform *dawa*. “Do we all agree that God exists – one God, with a complete set of characteristics!?” was the rhetorical question with which he ended his lecture. Most of the participants agreed with this sentiment.

That *dawa* is a duty for all pious Muslims in Europe is, for example, argued by Ramadan (1999). He points out, under the rubric of “freedom”, that to perform Islamic *dawa* (to somehow spread the message of Islam) is a duty for everyone who wishes to call himself a Muslim. Ramadan rejects all kinds of compulsion regarding spreading the word of God, but argues that:

the notion of *dawa* is based on one principle, which is the right of every human being to make a *choice based on knowledge*, and this is why Muslims are asked to spread the knowledge of Islam among Muslims as well as non-Muslims [ibid.: 134].

That *dawa* is a duty to performed by all Muslims is also argued by the scholar Bernard Lewis (1994). In the discourse about Islam, Lewis is depicted as an *orientalist* (Milton-Edwards 2002), as one of the scholars who are on the wrong side (that is, on the Huntington side), but here we may note that both Ramadan and Lewis understand the duty of Muslims in the same way: both argue that (all) Muslims should work to spread the word of God to both Muslims and non-Muslims (see Lewis 1994: 13).

What has been said about *dawa* here reveals another aspect of representations of Muslims/Islam. In the words of Therborn (1988), the discussion of *dawa* is an example of how Swedish pluralists (because of the hegemony of multiculturalism) are *restricted* from speaking freely about this phenomenon because it may be interpreted in terms of an Islamic threat: it risks evoking associations with the expansion of Islam in the Western world. Muslims are, however, free both to practice and speak about *dawa* publicly: no one will attack them for being involved in a project to Islamize the West. An attentive reader may have observed that I have put the word *pious* in front of the word *Muslims* above: this is done in order to avoid being criticized as someone who makes too-extensive generalizations about Muslims. Lewis is regarded as an orientalist by other actors in this discourse because he generalizes, and thereby also stereotypes, Muslims (see Milton-Edwards 2002). Ramadan, on the other hand, also generalizes about Muslims in a way which makes it possible to define him as an orientalist, but in the discourse of Islam he has been put forward as an important figure in the construction of “European Islam”. In sum, Swedish pluralist scholars keep *dawa* hidden because of the dictates of a multiculturalist ideology. Lewis is regarded as an orientalist because he makes overly extensive generalizations about Muslims (and discusses the “wrong” things in his texts). Even though Ramadan approaches Islam in the same way as Lewis, it is difficult to describe him as an orientalist because he is a Muslim (Islamist).

### 5.3 Scholarly interpretations

How are we supposed to understand the avoidance of Islamism as an aspect of contemporary multicultural Sweden? It is possible to argue that, to a certain degree, this might be a question of knowledge. Scholars who ground their research in various types of texts about Islam as a general phenomenon will certainly have problems understanding what kind of actors exist “out there” in local contexts. In writing this chapter, I asked some of the Swedish scholars involved in representing Islam to the Swedish public why Islamism as a Swedish phenomenon is kept in the dark. The answers varied in length and content, but some of the scholars pointed out that the lack of knowledge about the phenomenon makes it difficult to say anything about it. One of the scholars said, “[a] foundation for discussing Islamists or Islamist movements in Sweden is too weak”. Another scholar stated: “Most of those who work with Islam in Sweden do not work in a way that makes it possible for them to deal with, know, or wish to map out Islamist groups. Therefore, they cannot not provide well-founded information about Islamists”. “Ultimately”, another scholar argued, “there is a lack of research concerned with the different forms of Islam in Sweden”.

All the scholars consulted, however, were of the opinion that it is self-evident that Islamists exist in Sweden. Even if there is a lack of detailed knowledge about the phenomenon, they agreed that Islamism itself does exist. Another line of thinking in the answers was that I was wrong in my statement/question about Islamism and the public sphere. One researcher said (my translation from Swedish):

I am not sure that you are correct when you assume that [scholars] avoid Islamism when Islam is represented in Sweden. When we make study visits to mosques with students, [we visit] mosques that could be described, perhaps, as Islamic. Islamologists have also, in texts and speeches, pointed out that representatives of Muslim organizations in Sweden belong to moderate parts of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Another one of the scholars argued against my statement/question because

if one uses a wide definition, I would like to argue that this [Islamism] is the only form of Islam that is discussed when one talks about Islam in Sweden. Here I refer to the type of Islam which is represented by, for example, prominent “media Muslims” who ground their thinking in the idea of Islam as a total way of life.

This answer can be understood, I think, as though the Islamist definition of Islam as a total way of life can be reproduced as the difference that makes a difference between Muslims and non-Muslims because the multiculturalist ideology causes intellectuals to deny the existence of Islamism.

The answers I was given by the scholars showed a certain degree of complexity. On one hand, it was argued that there is insufficient knowledge to say something about Islamism. On the other hand, it was pointed out that the existence of Islamism as a phenomenon in Sweden is self-evident. Finally, it was also claimed that Islamist Islam is the only type of Islam which is discussed in contemporary Sweden. If this last state-

ment is correct, then it is possible to argue for the opposite position compared to what is claimed about the lack of knowledge; that is, that there exists *more knowledge* about Islamism than about other forms of Islam. Whatever the case, the scholars interviewed also claimed that many scholars other than those interviewed had political reasons for representing Islam uncritically or in overly-benevolent terms. For example, one of the scholars noted that:

some of those who could say something about [Islamism] (if they know anything about it) choose, I guess, to avoid the issue for political reasons because [Islamism] may be interpreted as an obstacle to integration.

Another argument, other than the lack of knowledge, which came out of the interviews for avoiding Islamism in Sweden is that it is a marginal phenomenon: most Muslims are non-Islamists. Statistically this is true. But when issues of political influence, and the presentation of Muslims/Islam are considered, it is the Islamists who dominate. It is possible to argue that this is so both locally and globally. In various European nation-states, Islamists are the sub-group which dominates public representations of Islam and Muslim issues. Islamists, especially militant groups, also assume prominent positions when it comes to representations of Islam: it is their political activities which hold definitional hegemony in the global descriptions of Islam/Muslims. This has also been observed by Malise Ruthven (2001), who claims that “the very western prejudices about which Muslims complain ... that ‘Islam is an inherently violent religion’ is testimony to the success of those self-styled *mujahiddin* in getting their point of view across” (ibid.: 59). In Sweden, this metonymic issue, of letting the part (Islamism) represent the whole (Islam and all Muslims), is discussed in terms of a “negative media picture”. The Swedish state describes the essence of this negative media picture when it argues that it stems from an idea based:

on a myth that Islam represents a threat to the Western world. This myth is grounded in an idea about Islam as a homogeneous phenomenon, where it is not only the case that political aspects of Islamic activism stand out as Islam, but it is also the case that it is the most extreme and violent interpretation of political Islam that represents Islam and Muslims in its totality [ *Sweden Against Racism*].

The claim that the media image of Islam is negative has become a well-established truth in the pluralist discourse of Islam in Sweden (and elsewhere). In fact, it is so well-established that no authors bother to confirm its validity with any evidence. Is it, for example, the case that the negative image of Islam is *caused by* the media representations, or do the media only *report on* negative activities when Muslims are involved? Generally, however, it is enough to produce the phrase, since pluralist scholars know its meaning automatically.

### 5.3.1 A counter-image

Here I would like to argue that avoiding discussion of Islamism as an aspect of Islam in Sweden reflects a political project devoted to establishing a positive public image of Islam, in comparison to the negative picture provided by news media. The problem for pluralists is not to determine whether there exist Islamists in Sweden (and if so, to understand their role in relation to other Muslims or the state), but how to use the negative media picture as a foil by means of which they can advance their own ideas. During an interview with one of the scholars prominent in the pluralist discourse of Islam in Sweden, the idea of a negative media picture was used as a jumping-off point for understanding why scholars in general avoid Islamism (in Sweden) in their discussions. This scholar argued:

Many researchers have an ambition of establishing a more positive image of Islam than the image provided by the media. They want to construct an image where Muslims are represented as harmless.

The importance ascribed by pluralists to the negative media picture, and how this picture influences relationships between Muslims and Swedes, is discussed in several texts. Gudmar Aneer (1999), a theologian from Uppsala, claims that “one of the greatest obstacles for good relations between Muslims and Christians or the larger part of Swedish society is the media picture of Islam” (ibid.: 255). Svanberg and Westerlund (1999) also contend that the media (and popular orientalism) have been endemic in the production of an “imaginary Islam” (ibid.: 12) which represents Islam as something “strange and at the bottom line divergent from the Swedish, European, or Western cultural pattern” (ibid.: 11). Constructing a positive image of Islam may, of course, be interpreted as morally desirable, but it is also an unscientific project in the sense that it is built on avoidance of politically-sensitive Islamic issues and on a refusal to discuss and debate aspects of Islam which do not fit into the multiculturalist project. It may also be seen as morally honorable to take a stand for Muslims and argue that it is a myth that Islam is an “inherently violent religion”. But such statements tell us nothing about why it is important, in the first place, to establish a positive rather than a negative image of Islam.

If one considers what Therborn (1988) says about an ideological order's *affirmations* and *sanctions*, it can be argued that the ambition of constructing a positive image of Islam is based on a fear of being classified as a racist, or as someone who stigmatizes Muslims generally. Most pluralist scholars subscribe to the multiculturalist ideal, as formulated by John L. Esposito (2002: vii), that the “long-regarded other [Muslims] must now be appreciated as part of the fabric of Western societies, a neighbor and a fellow citizen”. This normative approach, accepting Muslims as part of Europe, guides many pluralists in their writings about Islam/Muslims. It is regarded as a morally good idea, since it stands in opposition to how nationalists (who are *a priori* defined as racists) approach the subject. Hence, arguing for an acceptance of Islam, and attempting to construct a positive image of that religion, are the activities of a morally good person. In the context of multiculturalism, that means someone who



is non-racist. This has also been pointed out by Friedman (1999). He claims that the contemporary multicultural context is characterized by:

an increasing dependence on other people's recognition of one's selfhood, in other words, of increasing narcissism. In such situations relative identification becomes more important than the content of communication [1998: 679].

Friedman argues that it is important for many scholars to avoid being defined as racists and to stand on the "right side", rather than trying to conduct a rational debate. To stand on the right side in the discourse of Islam, is to argue in favor of religious rights for Muslims, and to use scientific authority in aid of a political project designed to establish a positive image of Islam in the minds of all Swedish citizens. The construction of a positive image of Islam is therefore part of, as Nader (1995) phrases it, a hegemonic practice of "mind control" of Swedish middle class readers.

It could, on the other hand, be argued that it is important for all humanist actors (scholars *and* others) to be part of the battle against racism. Since racist ideas seem to be gaining ground in Sweden and elsewhere, it is necessary to build an ideological fence against it and, in the case of Muslims, show a better side of Islam. It is hard to dispute that racism is an evil, but it can be argued that the omission of Islamism from the debate is also grounded in a kind of racism in which the Other is looked upon from a distanced position. In other words, avoiding potentially negative aspects of Islam and constructing instead a positive image of the Other, also means avoiding taking certain Muslims seriously. As I have tried to show in earlier chapters, pluralists regard Muslim difference as positive – as long as the Muslims practice differences which fit into a pluralist ideological scheme of differences they approve of. This can be illustrated by the way pluralists deal with what Islamists in the SMC have argued for several years. To the best of my knowledge, no pluralist or student interested in Islam in Sweden has taken seriously what is argued by this national organization. Instead of working to construct a positive image of Muslims/Islam and keeping certain things hidden, it seems that a more humanistic ideal worth fighting for would include taking various actors in the multicultural society seriously. This stance is well-captured by Sennet (1998), who contends that "when you really care about the other, at the point where you say 'oh nonsense, utter garbage!' then you are taking the other seriously" (ibid.: 131). As Johnsdotter (2003) has argued:

the process of integration would benefit from a lesser amount of forced "tolerance", and a stronger emphasis on debate and even confrontation. In verbal conflicts between people lies the seed of mutual understanding and compromise, essential elements of social relations (ibid.: 8).

Hence, instead of trying to protect Muslims from criticism – as I believe many pluralist scholars do when they attempt to construct a positive image of Islam – it would be a lot more equal to treat Islamists as adult individuals who know how to debate and are perfectly capable of arguing for their own standpoints. A verbal duel with Islamists would also provide an opportunity to involve this group of Muslims in political discussions about how to structure a multicultural Sweden. A lot of emphasis has

be been placed on the participation and cooperation of immigrants in Swedish society. Thus far, however, they have been patronized by that society. If Muslims are supposed to be treated as equal partners, it is about time we start to take them seriously.

### 5.3.2 Ethnic and/or religious segregation

In the general discourse on multiculturalism in Sweden, ethnic and other types of segregation have been, and are, presented as among the most serious of obstacles to the integration of immigrants (see, for example, *Delaktighet för integration*, 1999; SOU 1996: 55). In the pluralist discourse segregation is not, however, discussed seriously as a problem at all, even if most Muslims live in urban ghettos. Karlsson and Svanberg (1997) argue, to the contrary, that Muslims are already integrated into Sweden where they, whether they want to or not, “live a Swedish life” (ibid.: 122). According to these authors, Muslims follow the same patterns as all other citizens: they pay taxes, produce, consume, and follow the laws of the community (ibid.). Sander (1990) has argued for the opposite position, that Muslims need to become more segregated. He contends that one of the “main problems faced by Islam and Muslims in Sweden” is that Muslims are too “dispersed” geographically (ibid.: 114). This means that Muslims are prevented from “achieving the institutional framework (completeness) needed to ‘defend’ themselves from the onslaught of Swedish society with its thought and life patterns – particularly its social morality: its mini-skirted women, its ‘decadent’ night life, its tolerance for alcohol and promiscuous sexual relationships” (ibid.). This also entails “the lack of a Muslim neighborhood as a ‘safeguard’ of Islamic thought and life pattern” (ibid.).<sup>56</sup>

This type of argument may be regarded as relatively extreme in the general pluralist discourse, but, on the whole, Swedish scholars involved in the debate seem quite reluctant to think about Muslims/Islam in relation to problems connected to any kind of social division between Muslims and Swedes, whether these divisions are called segregation, enclavization, or separation. Most pluralist scholars mention aspects of ethnic/religious divisions, but they do not analyze or discuss them. This is reflected, for example, in the above-mentioned censorship by Hedin of how Islamists in the SMC argue for separation of Muslims and Swedes. But other scholars also avoid the topic in their presentations.

Another example can be found in an article about Islamic private schools where the historian Bo Johansson (1999) argues that it is “indisputable that [Islamic private schools] segregate in a limited meaning of the word, since they minimize the children’s opportunities for contacts with Swedish and other non-Muslim children during school hours” (ibid.: 189). However, after having pointed this out, Johansson immediately jumps on the normative train and argues that the schools are a “powerful expression for integration” (ibid.). The normative argument ends up with the conclusion that Islamic private schools “will make Islam more Swedish because, if placed

<sup>56</sup> This argument echoes how most Islamists formulate the problems for Muslims in Sweden and the rest of the Western world.

beside Islamic organizations, mosques, cemeteries, and press, they are an expression of the institutionalization of Islam as a Swedish religion” (ibid.: 191). How does this correlate with the Islamist contentions that a problem for Muslim children is that their personalities are in danger of becoming too Swedish if they are socialized in Swedish schools (see *Att förstå islam*)? The pluralist advocates of Muslim schools conveniently overlook the fact that it is not only during school hours that Muslim children (in Islamic private schools) are prevented from having contacts with Swedish children. During the other hours of the day, Muslim children tend to socialize with children from their own ethnic group. During fieldwork in Rosengård, for example, our son attended a class in a school where several of the pupils were Arabic-speaking. They were about six or seven years of age, and were born in Sweden, but they did not understand the Swedish language well enough to carry on an everyday conversation about the weather.

In summary, a general problem in the pluralist discourse is that representations of Islam/Muslims are based in a multiculturalist ideological framework about religious rights. In this normative project, scholars leave out, or trivialize, all factors that could be understood as problematic in any way. One can certainly argue for the right of Muslims to establish what is called *institutional completeness*, but even though this seems to be a humanistic ideal worth fighting for, there are nonetheless certain *social consequences* related to these rights which are never analyzed, or are consciously overlooked by pluralist scholars. Islamic institutions are often established in urban neighborhoods where many Muslims reside. This means, of course, that ethnic segregation becomes more than a question of people having their private lives in one area and their public lives in another (as was the case for immigrants up until the 1970s). It means that private and public life for immigrants merge, and become *ethnified*. The pluralists, in their eagerness to establish collective rights for Muslims, ignore Muslim heterogeneity, ignore the potential consequences of the expanded rights, and attack those who discuss them for being Islamophobics.

## 5.4 An empty signifier: Blue-and-Yellow Islam

A prominent argument in the discourse about Islam in Sweden frames Muslim activities in a nationalist perspective which is characterized by diversity. In Sweden, this is a normative project rather than an empirical one: even though there is a lack of empirical studies about which ideological positions are being constructed by Muslims in contemporary Sweden, most pluralists take it for granted that everything which is taking place exemplifies the construction of a *Blue-and-Yellow Islam* (the colors of the Swedish flag). The following section provides a typical example of the kind of “knowledge” which is presented when one follows the dictates of multiculturalist ideology. The description below of how Sweden is constituted with respect to Muslims/Islam can thus be read as the ideologically opposite perspective to how nationalist

groups represent Sweden. While nationalists value a homogeneous definition of the Swedish nation-state, the pluralists in this section celebrate a heterogeneous definition of Sweden.

#### 5.4.1 Muslims in Sweden or Swedish Muslims?

When it comes to the identification of Islam and Muslims in Sweden, it has become common among researchers and others to talk about Blue-and-Yellow Islam. This can be regarded as a sub-category to the concept Euro-Islam, in the sense that it also gives an impression that (certain) Muslims are involved in constructing a typically Swedish type of Islam. It is also possible, however, when we examine how the idea has been used, to state that it is an idea shrouded in vagueness. It is not altogether clear, based on research done so far, to see what exactly it is that characterizes Swedish, or Blue-and-Yellow Islam (BYI, in the following). The category has a content which shows similarities with that of the broader category of Euro-Islam, but, on the whole, BYI is (at least so far) used in *normative*, rather than analytical, arguments about Islamic activity in Sweden.<sup>57</sup> The category could be described as an “empty signifier” (Žižek 1999), in the sense that it has no fixed content. No one knows what Blue-and-Yellow Islam and/or Swedish Islam is. Hence, no one has yet been able to construct a fixed ideological content with which to fill the category. Pluralists who use it can be seen as involved in attempting to construct ideological hegemony for a particularistic content not yet found, or essentialized in a logically coherent representation.<sup>58</sup>

There exists a mixing between what could be defined as *Muslims in Sweden* and the construction of *Swedish Islam*, as I will try to show below.<sup>59</sup> Scholars often use the category normatively when they extrapolate what may happen to Islam in Sweden in the future, but it is rare to find serious attempts to delineate exactly what BYI is. When Stenberg speculates about the future for Islam in Sweden, he says that there do not exist any religious interpretations of how Islam in Sweden is affected by the local context, but his “opinion is that a Swedish Islam is taking shape”, especially among the second generation of Muslims. However, Stenberg indicates nothing

57 When it comes to the concept of euro-Islam, much research remains to be done. The concept is used in different ways by different actors. Bassam Tibi (2002), sometimes said to have coined the term, uses it as a label for a liberal, secularized version of Islam. Tariq Ramadan (1999) uses it, on the contrary, as a term for describing how to practice an Islamist version of Islam which can fit European societies. Anne Sofie Roald (2001) has claimed that it is former members of the Muslim Brotherhood who work for the establishment of a European Islam. Hence it is far from clear exactly what content the concept has, or will have. It is also far from clear which actors are working for the establishment of a religious practice influenced by a European secular context.

58 The islamologist Jonas Otterbeck (2001: 251) argues, however, against the idea that there exists a typically Swedish Islam.

59 The category of *Blue-and-Yellow Islam* is used by many actors in contemporary Sweden (even though no one knows exactly what it is). My impression is that it is most often used by Islamists, and not by common Muslim men and women. I have also discussed Blue-and-Yellow Islam in a church in Lund, *Västerkyrkan*, together with an Arab-speaking Muslim man. He argued that the category should be understood in terms of the construction of a new religious “law school”.

about the content in the term “Swedish Islam” (1999: 125). This is typical of what can also be found among other Swedish scholars. Johansson says, in an article about Islamic private schools, that these schools most certainly “will make Islam more Swedish, because they are, besides Islamic organizations, mosques, cemeteries and press, an expression of the institutionalization of Islam as a Swedish religion”, but he provides no reasons (besides that certain Muslims have the ambition to construct schools) for why schools will necessarily make Islam more Swedish (1999: 190). In a discussion about the “Swedish Islamic popular movement” and the “ecological movement”, Ouis (1999) claims that cooperation between these two movements could be possible, but that so will be the case is not “self-evident” (ibid.: 245). Basically, the idea of BYI is used as an ideological tool to include Muslims generally in a new Swedish “imagined community” (Anderson 1983). If this ideology was once characterized by ethnic homogeneity, the new version is said to be of a country characterized by a profound ethnic and religious heterogeneity. A quite good illustration of how this ideology is structured, can be found in the book *Blue-and-Yellow Islam* (1999: 9–31), where the introduction could be read as a manifesto for how people *should* think about Muslims in Sweden. What is striking about this introduction is that every type of (non-threatening) Muslim or Muslim activity is included in the category BYI without any problematization at all. Because the ambition is to classify, rather than analyze, Muslims in Sweden, the description of Islam in Sweden becomes quite confused. I will quote some lines here in order to illustrate some of the problems with this perspective.

In the Introduction it is stated that Muslims in Sweden are going through a generational change; that is, young Muslims born in Sweden are in the process of constructing a Blue-and-Yellow Islam. In the introduction it is also stated that there has existed a continuous Muslim presence in Sweden for the last 50 years: “The activity has been growing slowly and as time has passed it has been institutionalized and in the end it has been consolidated” (ibid.). It is also argued that:

the Arab group, who arrived later [than the original labor migrants], has been [the group], that has most of all participated in establishing Muslim institutions in Swedish society and has most clearly had the ambition to perform as *Muslims in Sweden* and *Swedish Muslims* [ibid.: 10].

In addition, Iranians, immigrants from Kosovo, Bosnians, and Somalis have arrived in Sweden; they all constitute (in accord with the main argument in the text) examples of groups included in the category BYI. Members of the last-mentioned group, the Somalis, have had:

great difficulties in becoming integrated in the Swedish labor market and have, to a great extent, been isolated in Swedish society. Among Somalis there has been a growing influence from Saudi Arabian interpretations of Islam. They [the Somalis] have a tendency to bring out Islamic difference in order to safeguard culture and group community [ibid.:].

According to the authors, all of these different Muslim groups, with their diverse outlooks on religion, could thus, together with converts (native Swedes who have converted to Islam), be said to constitute a Blue-and-Yellow Islam:

Together with converts, this first generation of native-born Muslims are creating a Swedish Islam that is constituted in a Swedish social structure and in a Swedish environment; a type of Islam that for these reasons could be called Blue-and-Yellow. As an established religion with an own infrastructure, Islam can, with the same right as other minority religions, today be looked upon as a native religion, something that was also argued by the former foreign minister Lena Hjelm-Wallén in June 1995 during an international conference about the relationship between the Muslim world and Europe [ibid.: 9–10].

“Could be called” and “looked upon” are expressions which illustrate that the category BYI, – and the related idea that Islam in contemporary Sweden is a native religion – are used by these researchers in order to classify Muslims and Islam in general as a Swedish religion, independent of what the people in question themselves say and do. Needless to say, several issues remain unclear in this classificatory adventure.

Who are, for example, the actors trying to construct such a Swedish Islam? Are they young Muslims born in Sweden, or are they first-generation Arabs who arrived during the last ten to fifteen years? On one hand, a Swedish Islam is said to be constructed by the Muslim second generation; on the other hand, it is being built by that Arab group which has “most clearly” stood out as Swedish Muslims. Nothing is said about whether it is the first or second generation of Arabs who are involved in this: it is up to the reader to fill in the gaps with his/her own imagination, as this more comfortable, integrated Islam takes shape. Is it appropriate to define Somalis who, as the authors say, try to isolate themselves from Swedish society, as Muslims trying to construct a Swedish Islam? Svanberg and Westerlund state that some Somalis are influenced by a Saudi Arabian type of Islam, but prefer to describe these Somalis as Muslims involved in building BYI. These examples come from the book’s “Introduction”, but the whole text is characterized by its slippery character. My point here is not to argue that it is wrong *per se* to use the category BYI, or that it is inappropriate to define certain religious trends taking place among Muslims as a construction of a Swedish Islam. My point is to highlight the analytical gaps that underlie the use of this category by certain scholars. They describe every act performed by Muslims in Sweden as Swedish, or as a BYI-type of Islam, without making any effort to show what kind of ideological content this type of Islam has, or trying to distinguish between what BYI is and what it is not. If there exists a BYI-type of Islam, then there also must exist a Danish, Finnish, Norwegian, Macedonian, Vietnamese, etc., type of Islam. What is it, precisely, that is the difference among these? The only synonym I could find for BYI is *unthreatening Islam*, but this, of course, brings us back to the multiculturalist message in which anything threatening is overlooked, neglected, or marginalized.

In summary, in this section about Swedish Islam I have tried to show that scholars use the category BYI in such a generous fashion that it becomes almost meaningless; if everything is a matter of Swedish Islam as soon as it passes the border to Sweden, why bother to use it at all in descriptions of Muslims in Sweden? BYI does have an ideological advantage which overshadows its analytical weakness: it can help demonstrate that Muslims in Sweden are an accepted part of the multicultural nation-state; it is, thus, used as an ideological tool to integrate Muslims and Islam as part of a re-

formulated national ideology. This is not surprising, however, since the logic that organizes the thinking – or, perhaps better, the specific perspective – in this introduction is in accord with the logic that *everything which we today experience as Swedish comes from the outside*. All Swedes are at the bottom line immigrants, so why bother ourselves with trying to analyze or understand anything as problematic in this great multicultural nation-state?<sup>60</sup>

Most scholars quoted here do not problematize the term *Swedishness*: they take the content of the concept for granted. A discussion of “what is Swedish” is not our task here, but what seems to be the case is that the scholarly use of the term stands in opposition to how the Sweden Democrats and other nationalists use the term. In other words: pluralists argue for an open definition of what should be considered as Swedish while nationalists argue for a more closed concept. Needless to say, neither of these perspectives is right or wrong *per se*. The question is one of establishing ideological hegemony and paving the way for the domination of one definition over the other. However, similar observations to those I have made in Sweden have been carried out by Wikan (2002) in a Norwegian context. She says:

Liberal intellectuals often argue that “Norwegian” no longer means white Protestant native; it encompasses all other nationalities and religions that are found in Norway today. From an idealist perspective, that view is fine. But for many immigrants it goes against the grain: they want no part of this Norwegian identity, though some of them may in fact have Norwegian citizenship; they want to be able to stand apart and resist an influence from the host society [ibid.: 153].

It is certainly not a problem *per se* to use the signifier BYI when describing Islam in Sweden. But, as Wikan points out, there is a danger that the struggle for ideological (multiculturalist) hegemony may universalize a particular content, thereby overlooking all other particularities. There may exist Muslim actors who try to construct a typically Swedish (or Norwegian) Islam, in comparison to other Islamic constructions. This particular type of construction risks, however, being drowned in the general ideological perspective which is occupied with defining everything that happens among Muslims as an example of Blue-and-Yellow Islam, or Red-Blue-and-White Islam (to use the colors of the Norwegian flag).

60 One of the authors of the introduction, Svanberg, has used this perspective before, in the book *I nationalismens bakvatten* (Svanberg and Tydén 1999), where he stated that in Sweden very few things are “authentically Swedish” (ibid.: 98). Everything “Swedes” consider Swedish comes from other places. The list is long: cows (Netherlands and Great Britain), pigs (Chinese), grain (Asia), ginger bread (Denmark and Germany), meatballs (“the continent”), crayfish (America, China, Spain, and Turkey, but taught to eat by the French), coffee (Turkey, but introduced by the French), beer (Germany) (ibid.: 101–102), and, as said above, Muslims (Asia, the Middle East, Africa). For an anthropologist this is problematic, basically because the scholars who perform these acts become actors in the process of Muslim integration, rather than distanced analysts of the problem of Muslim integration: it becomes more important to show acceptance of Islam than to analyze and criticize the phenomena of Muslim integration.

### 5.4.2 The idea of equality

Roald (2003) has tried to discover if there is a process among Muslims which can be interpreted as the construction of a Swedish Islam. She has argued that Sweden is a very egalitarian society, where both men and women have wide-ranging opportunities to participate in both the private and public spheres. The ideology of equality (*jämställdhet*) was created by the bourgeoisie and then spread to the working class; today this ideology is one of the cultural models which makes up the homogeneity (and hegemony) of Swedish society (ibid.: 6-9). Roald's main argument is that the idea of equality is not a native property alone but has also become an important Muslim idea in the construction of a Swedish Islam. She illustrates this by pointing out that Muslim women have started their own organizations, partly in opposition to the male organizations that already exist. Thus, Roald argues that the Muslim women's organizations are *in themselves* examples of a "Swedish" way of acting:

As Muslim women have had some difficulties with achieving responsibilities within Muslim communities, and as they also have felt that the male leadership has tried to control female activities within big organizations, the establishment of independent associations might be regarded as culturally a "Swedish" reaction to male domination. On the other hand, women's organizational patterns reflect a tendency toward Muslims acting in a "Swedish" way, as Swedish society has a tradition of women establishing their own organizations [ibid.: 14].

This argument is fundamentally a general statement about how Muslim women have become culturally "creolized" when they practice a type of Islam which is influenced by the idea of equality. Yet the examples used to illustrate this cultural mixing are taken from the world of Swedish female converts. Elsewhere in the article, it is stated that other Muslim women, mainly Arab women, follow their husbands' religious ideologies and organizational patterns, rather than their own religious convictions (ibid.: 13). This article is also problematic when it comes to descriptions of which Muslims are doing what. The category of female Muslims or "Muslim women" has been given a general definition, encompassing all female Muslims, while in actuality it seems to be the case that only a very limited number of Muslim females are involved in building a Swedish Islam (converts and a few other immigrant women).

What are we supposed to do with all the other Muslim females, and men? Are they also participants in the construction of a Blue-and-Yellow Islam? According to several other Swedish scholars, Muslim and Islamic organizations are *per se* examples of how Muslims generally are involved in this kind of religious process, while Roald argues that the female organizations are constructed in opposition to male organizations which are practicing a traditional version of Islam far from any Swedish influences. What seems to be the case here is that Roald is trying to turn particular female Muslim activities into an example that is representative for all Muslims in Sweden. In summary, the article provides an excellent example of how the multiculturalist ideology dictates what is considered good to say about Muslims.



### 5.4.3 The second generation: Muslims with and without Islam

Regarding heterogeneity among those defining themselves as Muslims, authors are seldom explicit about exactly who is involved in building a European Islam (Blue-and-Yellow Islam, etc.). Roald (2001) claims that former members of the Muslim Brotherhood are involved in the construction of a European Islam. However, in the general discourse it is common to see claims that it is the second generation of Muslims who are involved in this process (Vertovec and Peach 1997: 38-42; Time 2001). The assumption here is that this generation of European Muslims are Muslims who have been raised in a cultural context which differs from their parents' upbringing in societies where the majority was Muslim. This has produced a need, it is claimed, to create new religious interpretations in order to make it possible to be European Muslims rather than Muslims in Europe. In this process, the second generation realizes that their parents have mixed cultural traditions with religion and thus find it important to reflect upon this. "Many young South Asian Muslim women [in Britain]", as Vertovec and Peach (1997) state:

are conceptually establishing a firm distinction between "religion" and "culture", which were realms largely indistinguishable for their parents [ibid.: 40].

This way of looking at the process is awkward, unless it is only South Asian parents – or other first generation Muslim immigrants – who practice "culture". Perhaps it is more correct to say that the second generation is exchanging one type of cultural influence for an influence based on Western cultural patterns. That a European Islam may be found among the Muslim second generation is also suggested by the head of the Islamic-Christian Center for Studies in Copenhagen, Lissi Rasmussen (2002). She argues against, however, the idea that Euro-Islam should be a secularized interpretation of the religion, since a "secularization could lead to a loss of tradition in the same way as has happened for Christianity" (ibid.: 3).<sup>61</sup>

Generally, however, the second generation of Muslim immigrants is a quite broad category which certainly shows the same heterogeneity as the Muslim group in general, and it is by no means certain what kind of Islam will be dominant in the future. Among the so-called second generation we therefore find both secularized Muslims and believing or practicing Muslims. This is well-illustrated by the book *Jalla* (2002). Here Ceylan Holago, a "Muslim without Allah" (my translation from Swedish), says

I have great respect for all religions but Islam comes closest since I have my roots in Turkey. But I am not a believing Muslim. [...] I have no problem with having sex before marriage but respect those who choose to wait with that (ibid.: 14).

Nadia Jebril, on the other hand, is a young Muslim woman who practices Islam and who says that:

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61 Rasmussen's article can be downloaded at [http://www.islamstudie.dk/europa\\_islam.rasmussen.htm](http://www.islamstudie.dk/europa_islam.rasmussen.htm)

I have chosen not to have a boyfriend and to wait instead with a relationship until I meet the right person, something I have chosen because of my religious convictions [ibid.: 106].

It is possible to argue that an implicit assumption in the concept of Euro-Islam is that it will become more liberal than other Islamic interpretations. The Swedish convert Ulf Ibrahim Karlsson, however, points out that he believes in a religious radicalization among young Muslims in Sweden, without specifying further what that might mean. This radicalization would, according to Karlsson, “follow the same pattern as in many other western countries” (*Insikt*, undated, pp. 14)(my translation from Swedish). Schiffauer (1999) has argued that among the second generation of Turks in Germany there has been a movement toward political Islam. According to Schiffauer, “a considerable number” of young Turkish men from the second generation have joined the Islamist Cemaleddin Kaplan Community, a politically radical group that broke out of the National View, the European branch of the Refah (Welfare) Party (ibid.: 3).<sup>62</sup> Schiffauer claims that the young men can come to terms with personal crisis via the Islamization of their identity and the contradiction between Germany and Turkey in which they have found themselves. As Schiffauer puts it:

By turning to Kaplan he [the young man] finds an Archimedian point which allows him to do three things. 1) With Kaplan he can articulate at the same time opposition and loyalty with the Turkish community in general and his parents in particular; 2) At the same time he can find an intellectually satisfying diasporic identity; 3) He can develop convincing strategies in dealing with the discrimination of German society [ibid.: 10].

Hence my point in this section is to demonstrate that it is difficult to know what kind of religious interpretations may become influential among second generation Muslims. For some Muslims growing up in the West, Islam might be influenced by European ideas of equality between the sexes. For others, Islam could be used to make political claims vis-a-vis European nation-states. The only thing that can be said with any certainty is that it is not self-evident that the notion of Euro-Islam will be a liberal religious ideology, or that the term will mean the same thing for all those using it.

#### 5.4.4 A case: Bellman became sober when he converted to Islam

During fieldwork I became acquainted with some members of the Islamic youth movement, a movement which is basically an urban phenomenon. This movement, which has been of peripheral interest in my work, consists of young believers from the Muslim second generation and converts (Swedish and others). Most of the persons I met were practicing believers who were involved in various Islamic activities on both national and local levels. Several were also active participants in the cyber-Islam that Garbi Schmidt has discussed (1999: 107-122). In this youth movement

<sup>62</sup> The aim of the Kaplan group was to organize an Islamic revolution, with Iran as a model. According to Schiffauer, Kaplan intended to avoid compromises with the system because the price became too high for Islam in that case that. Instead, the revolution and the reestablishment of the caliphate in Turkey should be made possible via an Islamic grassroots movement [Schiffauer 1999: 3-4].

there exist, in addition to theoretical discussions about Muslim identity, persons who attempt to spread the message of Islam through music. During fieldwork I was given a music cassette entitled *Shabab al-islam* (The Muslim Youth). On the cassette, the singer, Abd al-Qadir Habib, presents eight songs with an Islamic content in Swedish and English (Carlбом 1998: 72). The music is inspired by the Orient, and most of the texts are focused on Muslim identity in one form or the other. Celebrations to God, global Muslim community, arguments for the importance of the Koran and practicing Islam, and the building of Muslim confidence, are among the themes taken up in the lyrics. An example of the latter is the verse:

To be a Muslim means/To be friendly and positive/To be a Muslim means/To be honest and creative/To be a Muslim means/To be strong and active/To be a Muslim means/That you keep your promises/That you help those in need [ibid.: 73].

Another aspect of *Shabab al-islam* is that some songs are Islamizations of classical Swedish folksongs. For example, the psalm *Den blomstertid nu kommer* (which has traditionally been sung by millions of Swedish children in church on their last school day prior to the beginning of summer vacation) has been given a content which celebrates God and argues that he should be feared for his omnipotence. Another Swedish tune, *Ack Värmeland du sköna* (here called *Fråga mig icke*), illustrates how geographic space is dissolved by Islam: landscape and nation-state are uninteresting to Muslims because they belong to a transnational community and religion. Another song which deals with the relationship between Islam and Sweden is called *Bellman*, in reference to the one poet who has celebrated alcohol. In the following text he seems to be, however, participating in a meeting at Alcoholics Anonymous (AA).

Bellman became a sober man when he found Islam  
 Bellman became a sober man when he found Islam  
 Only drinking beer and liquor/he sways to and fro  
 Bellman became a sober man when he found Islam/(Of course!)  
 Bellman became a sober man when he found Islam  
 And the little girl Sara/Wanted to party  
 Was attacked late in the day/By a very drunk man  
 Bellman became a sober man when he found Islam  
 Bellman became a sober man when he found Islam  
 Bellman became a sober man when he found Islam  
 Why should you drink alcohol?/Why do you hurt your body?  
 The body is a responsibility/Do not waste that  
 Bellman became a sober man when he found Islam

This text illustrates what many Islamists say about a Western lifestyle which includes the use of alcohol: it leads to social problems, rape being one of these. The text is also, however, an Islamization of a historically-famous person in Sweden, and, as such, it is also a way to take a position relative to Sweden. Is this a case of Blue-and-Yellow Islam? A journalist, Bitte Hammargren, reported on an my article of mine (Carlбом 1998) in *Svenska dagbladet*, one of the most influential morning papers in the Stockholm area (*Svenska dagbladet*, July 1999). In her comment, she framed the case with-

in a multiculturalist ideological understanding. She claimed that this was an example of how Muslims try to become integrated by a “boundary transgression” activity. “Integration needs a new way of thinking”, she claimed, “and that was discovered by Aje Carlbom in Rosengård”. To challenge – from an Islamic point of view (as in the lyric above) – a Swedish understanding of Bellman and alcohol may be understood as a way of becoming integrated. But what kind of integration are we talking about here?

One of the men participating in the Islamic youth movement described, in an interview, how he experienced the relationship between Islam and Sweden; he is also one of those young Muslims who see music as a part of his religious practice. Basically, music is for him part of a larger Islamic life-project, and one of the most important aspects of this project is inviting people, independent of ethnic or other differences, to God. Because he loves God, he believes that it is important to work toward the Islamization of other people, of Sweden, and – in the long run – of the whole world. His ambition in creating Islamic pop music is to reach young people and a broader Western audience. He describes his musical vision like this:

My vision with music is to try and reach out with a Western/European style. I want to have Swedish clothes, blue-and-yellow, and sing about contemporary problems in the Western world. The world I live in. For example, alcohol is a problem that many will agree is bad. I would not say so much about Islam; that would be implicit. Somehow I would like to make ordinary youngsters think: this guy says something different.<sup>63</sup>

He further argues that “out there” exist a lot of people who would not listen to him if he called them to Islam (preached about religion) in a more conventional manner. As a Muslim, he says, he has had to confront a choice between, on one hand, following traditional Islamic forms or, on the other, renewing the call to Islam and thereby making it more likely that young people start practicing religion. He has based his assumption on the way black American hip-hop and rap artists have inspired young people to look for Islamic answers.

One possibility is to regard this as an example of how certain Muslims are involved in constructing some kind of Swedish Islam. Making Western-style music with an Islamic content may be regarded as a kind of mixing – “hybridization” (Mandaville 2001) – between Islam and Swedish cultural forms. On the other hand, it might also be felt as though certain Islamists are trying to Islamize parts of Sweden. Even though this form of spreading the message of God is historically new for the actors involved, there seems to be no relativization of the religious ideas themselves. In the lyrics about Bellman there is no relativization of the Islamic imperative that alcohol is forbidden. It is not said that Muslims should begin to consume beer or wine, or that it doesn’t matter whether Muslims drink alcohol or not: it is Bellman who is religiously transformed – he converts to Islam. Thus, it is not Bellman who influences Muslims. On the contrary, it is the Muslims who transform Bellman.

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63 Quotation from a taped interview with Aje Carlbom in Rosengård.

## 5.5 Summary

In this chapter I have shown that Islamism, and aspects of this phenomenon such as *dawa* (Islamic missionary activity) are avoided by contemporary multicultural Swedish society. There are intellectuals who argue that this should be understood in terms of research priorities, and a lack of knowledge about Swedish Islam generally. My argument, however, is that a more plausible reason for why Islamism is dismissed is to be found in the hegemony of a multiculturalist ideology which stipulates that cultural difference is supposed to enrich society and not threaten it. The scholars quoted in this chapter, who to a great extent have determined the knowledge of Islam for Swedish middle-class readers, are involved in the political work of making space for cultural diversity in society by promoting certain aspects of social space while denying those aspects that do not fit into their political project. Throughout this thesis I have shown that the argument which says that there is insufficient knowledge about Islamism in Sweden to say anything about it, fails as an argument against discussing Islamism. There has existed knowledge about Islamism for a long time, knowledge which has been either ignored or denied. The main problem here is that scholars have taken into account the “ideological order of power, control, and domination” when expressing themselves publicly about Islam/Muslims. The fear of being the target of sanctions – symbolic or material – is a reality all actors must cope with in the Swedish multiculturalist ideological order, a situation underlined in this chapter via the use of two empirical examples.

Another omission in the discourse discussed in the chapter concerns the phenomenon of ethnic/religious divisions of (urban) space. My conclusion as to why this is avoided in the discourse, in addition to the fear of sanctions, is that it is difficult to find intellectual space for this phenomenon in arguments grounded in the multiculturalist ideology (and, to a certain extent, in the ideology of human rights). In order to argue with full force for the establishment of religious rights for Muslims, it is necessary to leave out all factors that might obstruct the implementation of these rights. The problem for pluralists is that the social consequences of religious rights are often pointed to by nationalists who use these as arguments against the establishment of Islamic institutions. Nationalists are used by pluralists as the enemy, rather than being seen as agents whose arguments are accepted as statements as worthy of criticism/discussion as are any other statements about multicultural Sweden.

Instead, a multiculturalist ideology forces many scholars to formulate *normative* arguments about what will happen to Muslims/Islam in Sweden. This has been shown in the chapter in a discussion of Blue-and-Yellow Islam, where all Muslims, regardless of what they are actually doing, are included in a new nationalist ideology characterized by diversity. Generally, pluralist arguments take it for granted (without any critical reflection or empirical analyses) that all Muslims, without qualification, are involved in constructing Islamic interpretations which are suited for life in a Swedish context. What *Swedish* means is not discussed, but in pluralist discourse the term implies liberal interpretations of Islam.

The avoidance of Islamism due to fear of sanctions/or stigmatizing Muslims is understandable, but it also has certain intellectual consequences. One of these consequences is that scholars hand over the definition of what is to be studied to groups outside the academy. Research is based on various choices of what to study. When these choices are grounded in a fear of symbolic or other sanctions, this becomes another example of how a multiculturalist ideological hegemony undermines the resolve of individual researchers, who become dependent on others for their choices of what to study and what to say. Another conclusion to be drawn is that even if scholars refrain from discussing or studying Islamism, or other politically contested phenomena, those phenomena will not disappear. This means that, in the case of Muslims and Islam, Islamists will continue to assume hegemony in the definition of what Islam is, and how it should be practiced. In summary, refraining from a study of Islamism amounts to a passive hand-over of the representation of Islam to a political group who sign on to questionable democratic ideals. It is politically distasteful, and, in so far as social scientists consciously refrain from studying something out of fear of personal consequences, it generates a serious ethical issues as well. This avoidance of matters may have an opposite outcome to the one stipulated by multiculturalism. Instead of a weakening of Islamophobia, it may strengthen it, since no one is there to criticize representations being made by groups who are, in fact, not at all representative of the majority of practicing Muslims.

## CHAPTER 6

# Muslim Institutionalization

That Muslims should have the right to establish their own institutional structures is a central theme in the discussion about Muslim integration. Most writers (both researchers and Islamists) take for granted that it is necessary for Muslims to establish their own institutions, since this is a central aspect of religious freedom for Islamic believers. In Sweden, scholars have criticized Swedish laws on religious freedom for being too narrow in scope. Since Islam is, it is argued, a complete way of life, it is important that Muslims have the opportunity to manifest and practice their beliefs in both the private and public domains. The social implications of granting religious rights is seldom problematized, however. In which fora, will these rights be practiced? Which Muslim actors will take advantage of the rights? What long-term social effects for Muslims and for society will result from giving Muslims the right to establish their own public institutions? These questions, I contend, are crucial for an understanding of Muslim integration in Europe.

Muslims have, through the years, established various types of social institutions and organizations in Sweden and elsewhere in the Western world. It is important to distinguish between, on the one hand, Muslims organizations where the prime issue is not religious activities but more general, cultural themes, and, on the other, organizations whose prime activity is working for Islam. In this chapter I will try to show that Islamic institutions can impede Muslim integration into Swedish society. The institutionalization of Islam on Swedish territory, I argue, seems to function in a manner opposite from that prescribed by standard wisdom, where it is claimed that religious institutions are necessary for the integration of Muslims into Sweden. Instead, independent religious institutions may contribute to the construction of a permanent outsider status for Muslims. The contradiction arises because Muslim institutions have been established by groups who seek to protect Muslim identity from influences from the majority society and block Muslim integration into it. Hence, these institutions are shields rather than integrating links. The argument in this chapter is inspired by the theoretical model discussed in Chapter Four wherein Breton (1964) argued that the integration of immigrants could move in three different di-

rections. My argument takes up what pluralist scholars, for multiculturalist reasons, leave out when they use Breton's concept of institutional completeness. The pluralist scholars who use the concept use it to argue for a Muslim religious right to establish institutional completeness (and that this is an example of the construction of a Swedish Islam). My argument is the opposite of that of the pluralists: Islamic institutions are primarily established in order to isolate Muslims from society, and once they have been established, they may function in ethnic and religious integration rather than in native integration.

In this chapter, I will first present a short description of national Islamic organizations. After that, I move to the local level in Rosengård, where I describe the social functions of mosques (purpose-built and para-mosques) in the urban context I examined during fieldwork. An argument that runs through the discussion is that Islamic institutions, i.e., mosques, are established by Islamists with different ethnic backgrounds and religious ideologies who have as a prime goal the Islamization of Muslims in the neighborhood.<sup>64</sup> Second, it is argued that an important aspect of understanding of Islamism is recognizing that many Muslim men are socially marginalized from structures that could absorb them and provide a context for the construction of meaningfulness. Marginalization, in combination with the experience of cultural chaos due to migration, is central to an understanding of why some men turn to Islam for the construction of a general existential order. A third ambition in the chapter is to show that Muslims are part of a very heterogeneous ideological structure. Thus, the voices of some Muslim criticism of Islamism (and isolationism) will also be heard in what follows.

## 6.1 National organizations

As they have in other European countries, Muslims in Sweden have established both *national* and *local* organizations. Nationally, since the 1970s, relatively many groups and organizations have been constructed, have split apart, and have been reconstituted. In 1974, the first organization, FIFS (*Förenade islamiska församlingar*), was established; a few years later this organization split into SMF (*Svenska muslimska förbundet*) and ICUS (*Islamiska centerunionen i Sverige*) (Alwall 1998: 184-187; Svanberg 1994: 398-400). Alwall (1998) states that the split was caused by a combination of problems related to power, personal conflicts, cultural differences, and different religious outlooks (ibid.: 184). The main reason for the fragmentation of these organizations, according to the editor Söderberg (1998), is internal rivalry among certain Islamists in Stockholm (ibid.: 184). Roald (2002) points out that the main division between the organizations has to do with their sources of funding.

<sup>64</sup> This may sound like a paradox, but, as I have said elsewhere in the thesis, many Islamists are of the opinion that "ordinary" Muslims need to improve their religious practices.



Today, there are four organizations working with political-religious questions on a national level. In addition to FIFS (*Förenade islamiska församlingar*), SMF (*Sveriges muslimska förbund*), and IKUS (*Islamiska kulturcenterunionen*) the Bosnian immigration which reached its peak in Sweden in the mid-1990s has also made an organizational imprint nationally. Bosnian Muslims are organized in BHIRF (*Bosnien-Hercegovinas islamiska riksförbund*). In order to simplify their relationships to the state, these organizations have constructed umbrella organizations which deal with certain questions. FIFS and SMF have centralized their work in an organization called SMC (*Sveriges muslimska råd*, of which BHIRF also is a member), and the IKUS umbrella organization named IRIS (*Islamiska rådet i Sverige*) also organizes the two nationally-active Islamic youth organizations SMUF (*Svensk muslimska ungdomsförbundet*) and IUF (*Islamiska ungdomsförbundet*). Members of IRIS also include IKF (*Islamiska kvinnoförbundet*) and SIR (*Sveriges imamråd*). Over and above these organizations, FIFS and SMF have constructed a group called IS (*Islamiska samarbetsrådet*), which basically deals with the *Commission for state grants to religious communities* (SST) (Alwall 1998: 184-187).

The most publicly active of these organizations is SMC, whose members are connected to *Ikhwan al-muslimum* (the Muslim Brotherhood). SMC is consulted as an organ of supreme competence by the Swedish state and other agencies dealing with questions of immigration or religion. SMC is also one of the Islamic-political actors that has been involved in publishing texts about Islam and Muslim problems in Swedish society during the last ten to fifteen years. They publish *Salaam*, the main Islamic-Swedish magazine, and have been involved in producing information material about Islam directed at a Swedish audience (Alwall 1998: 185-186; Roald 1999, ms). This umbrella organization has established a political dialogue with *Broderskapsrörelsen*, which is the Christian wing of the Social Democratic Party (Svanberg & Westerlund 1999). A couple of years ago, SMC also politicized its work more explicitly when the organization created a committee called IPK (*Islamiska politiska kommittén*) which, according to one of the founders of the committee, Ahmed Ghanem, was a result of the growing need among Muslims to establish contacts with political parties in Sweden (Salaam 2/98).<sup>65</sup> SMC has a higher and more publicly aggressive profile than the other umbrella organization, IRIS, a "Turkish" organization which is related to the Turkish *Süleymanî* movement. While SMC wishes to be recognized for ideas concerned with the establishment of a relatively well-developed Muslim public sphere in Sweden, IRIS has had a lower political profile. Alwall (1998) argues that IRIS, for the most part, is concerned with the administration of Koran schools for children and teenagers (ibid.: 186).

In summary, it can be noted that national Islamic organizations are characterized by a fragmentation which is due to ethnicity, religious ideology, and economy. The Swedish situation is similar to religious structures in other parts of the world. So far, Islamists have failed to establish an organization which can represent the interests of

65 This type of activity, creating relationships with established political groupings, is pointed to by Olivier Roy (1994: 46) as one of the strategies by which Islamists in the Middle East attempt to influence national elites.

all Muslims. The SMC, the umbrella organization for some of the national groups, claims that it is the public representative for all Muslims. But what actually seems to be the case is that it represents Muslims who sympathize with the Egyptian party known as the Muslim Brotherhood, not Muslims in general.<sup>66</sup> A problem seldom reflected upon in Sweden is that if an organization like SMC is recognized as a public representative for all Muslims in Sweden, then a large majority of Muslims are represented by a non-elected Muslim sub-group. Neither is there any space in the SMC's policy for all those Muslims who do not consider Islam a total way of life. National organizations have split into various new organizations. This is also the case for associations at the local level, to which we turn now.

## 6.2 Purpose-built and para-mosques

Pluralists claim that Muslims in general need to establish religious institutions, and that this is an aspect of the construction of a Swedish Islam. What will be illustrated below is, however, that this general pluralist argument needs to be challenged in order to gain a more realistic understanding of Muslims/Islam in Sweden. It is not ordinary Muslims alone that work for the institutionalization of Islam, but Islamists with various ideologies. Hence it is possible to argue that this fact puts institutionalization in another light, since many Islamists have an ambition to isolate themselves from the majority society – in the sense that they try to avoid “Swedification”. This, however, is hidden behind the multiculturalist ambition to make room for an Islamic practice (a Blue-and-Yellow Islam) which is empty of politics, and therefore harmless.

### 6.2.1 The grand mosque in Malmö

In connection with the settlement of Muslims throughout Western Europe, there has been a growth in the number of mosques in many cities. For contemporary Sweden, this expansion of the Islamic faith has meant that four purpose-built mosques have been established. The first of these was built in Malmö in the beginning of the 1980s; after that, mosques were established in Trollhättan, Uppsala, and Stockholm (Karls-son & Svanberg 1995).<sup>67</sup> A mosque can be defined as a large building built expressly for prayer and other religious activities, while all other spaces for prayer (and other religious activities which take place in large mosques) can be distinguished as, for ex-

<sup>66</sup> According to the Swedish newspaper *Svenska dagbladet*, the large mosque in Stockholm is close to the Muslim Brotherhood ( *Svenska dagbladet*, July 8, 2003). In July, 2003, this mosque was the host when the European Islamic Council for Fatwa and Research held one of its meetings. Among the participants at this meeting were Sheik Yusuf Qardawi, known for his Islamic program on the TV channel al-Jazira, and Rashid Gannouchi, leader of the forbidden Islamist movement al-Nahda, from Tunisia (Hammargren 2003).

ample, basement prayer halls. Herein I prefer to use the terms *purpose-built mosques* and *para-mosques* to describe the two kinds of mosques that exist in Sweden. This gives, I believe, a better understanding of the internal ideological differences that exist among Muslims. The term *basement prayer hall* implies that Muslims start their religious careers in basements and, as time passes, eventually construct publicly-visible, purpose-built mosques. This assumption, as will be shown later, needs to be rectified when it comes to Malmö/Rosengård. In fact, the opposite situation is the case for the city of Malmö: here the large mosque was established first and, as more Muslims have moved into the city, the number of small para-mosques has increased.

The large, purpose-built mosque is found in the southern part of Rosengård, close to the highway. The white-washed building is located on a large lawn, within walking distance from the surrounding concrete buildings. The mosque is frequented on a daily basis, mostly by men visiting to pray or spend time to talking with friends and fellow believers. On Fridays, the parking lot outside quickly becomes full. The mosque serves various purposes in addition to offering a place for prayer. Sometimes conferences are organized, and a Koran school is conducted in the evenings and on the weekends. The mosque also has its own, Islamically-oriented, family counselor (DN 2001). One of the most time-consuming activities for the mosque administration is guiding Swedish visitors in both the building and the religion of Islam. The estimated number of non-Muslim visitors is around 15,000 each year (Ouis 1996: 22). This particular mosque was built in 1983-84, and the construction was made possible by the work of Bejzat Becirov, a labor immigrant who, in 1973, established *Muslimska Församlingen*, one of the first Islamic organizations in the city of Malmö. Because the local religious entrepreneurs lacked sufficient resources to complete the mosque project, they were forced to rely on foreign investors. Eventually the mosque was financed by two main actors: the Libyan organization *Jamiat al-Da'wa*, who provided 1.44 million Swedish crowns, and the *Muslim World League (al-Rabita)*, who funded construction for 1.5 million crowns. Some writers argue, however, that when these two Islamic organizations found out about one another, both refused to finance the project (Sander 1991: 73; Vogt 1995: 133). In the end, the operation of the mosque was taken over by *The Muslim World League Islamic Center of Malmö* (ibid.).

Söderberg points out that the mosque board-committee originally was supposed to have only Swedish members. Ten years later two new members were, however, signed up for the board: His Excellency Mohammad Bin Nasir Al-Aboudi and His Excellency Mohammad Mahmoud Hafiz, both of the Muslim World League (1998: 68). The main reason for this change, according to Söderberg, was that the mosque ran in to financial difficulties (ibid.: 69). In an interview, Bejzat Becirov carefully pointed out that the mosque works hard to stay independent from MWL. According to Söderberg, MWL sent an *imam* to work in the great mosque, but he was refused permission to do so (ibid.: 70). During the last few years, the great mosque has ex-

67 Karlsson & Svanberg wrote their book in 1995, when only two purpose-built mosques had been established in Sweden, in Malmö and Trollhättan. The book is, however a useful handbook over mosques in Sweden and how they have been dealt within various municipalities. Another schematic overview over Islam in Western Europe is offered by Kari Vogt in *Kommet för å bli* (1995: 217-233).

panded its activities. Two minarets have been added, and there is now an Islamic private school, *Ögårdsskolan*, alongside the mosque. The grand mosque also has plans to open its own medical center, where it will be possible to perform circumcisions of boys (*Sydsvenska Dagbladet* 2002).

Ouis (1996) has argued that the mosque in Malmö is an illustrative example of the globalization of Islam, because it is, to a large extent, financed with money from the oil industry in Libya and Saudi Arabia. *Muslim World League* (MWL), one of the financiers, is mentioned regularly in the literature as one of the globally-active political actors who work for the worldwide expansion of Islam (Eickelman & Piscatori 1996). According to Roy (1994), MWL was established by Saudi Arabia in 1962 to spread a Saudi Arabian version of conservative Islam (ibid.: 116). The organization, also called *Rabita*, “subsidizes mosques and Islamic institutes throughout the world, and pays the salaries of *imams* at many mosques in Europe” (ibid.). The MWL is thus an Islamic organization which is obviously embedded in global and local political structures. Pluralists, however, in their eagerness to consider what is right and good according to multiculturalist ideology, never discuss Muslim politics. They tend to view mosques as politically and religiously neutral spaces, somehow isolated from disputes. Alternatively, mosques are seen as arenas for integration.

In other parts of Europe, such as Great Britain, large mosques seem to be organized by both moderate and extreme Islamic groups. For example, the North London Central Mosque in Finsbury Park is operated by the radical *imam* Abu Hamza al-Masri, who claims that the attack of September 11 on the USA “was done in self-defense” (*Time*, February 3, 2003).<sup>68</sup> In Sweden the large mosques are, however, generally administrated by moderate Islamists. The large mosque in Malmö is operated by “euro-Islamists”, and the large mosque in Stockholm by actors who are close to the Muslim Brotherhood. Religious fundamentalists of various kinds have organized their activities in para-mosques. This may not always be the case, however, since neither religion nor politics are static phenomena: in the struggle for religious hegemony it is possible that the large mosque in Malmö could either become dominated by fundamentalists or continue to be administrated by Muslims with a liberal religious outlook. Future developments are dependent on which religious actors succeed in establishing local religious hegemony.

### 6.2.2 An arena for ethnic and religious integration?

When it comes to the religious and social functions of mosques, it is common for researchers to point out that the main function is to provide a space for prayer and to serve as a place where the fundamentals of Islam are maintained (Karlsson & Svanberg 1997: 101-102). Karlsson (1999) further elaborates on this function by point-

<sup>68</sup> According to *Time*, Finsbury Park was founded by Bangladeshi worshippers in 1996 with support from Prince Charles. In the beginning, it was an ordinary mosque for 1500 men, with offices, a shop, and a small prayer room for 100 women. When the anti-Western Abu Hamza began preaching at the mosque, his radical messages split the local Muslim community ( *Time*, February 3, 2003).

ing out that locales for prayer are an important aspect of the Muslim experience of belonging to a group. According to Karlsson, the mosque is an aspect of the public manifestation of Islam. She quotes the Swedish entrepreneur Mahmoud Aldebes' description of the three main functions a mosque: as a holy place, as a cultural distributor, and as the core of a social network (ibid.: 200). Werbner (1994) describes the social function of mosques for local British Muslims as a "central foci of communal activity", because Muslims are brought together there in order to organize various collective activities, such as, for example, internal fund-raising and the formation of political alliances (ibid.: 113-114).

In addition to being a place for Muslim prayers and other social activities, the mosque is also a politically contested space which is used in two different ways, as discussed in Chapter Four, by pluralists and nationalists. Pluralists generally argue that the mosque is a fundamental aspect of religious rights for Muslims. That is, Muslims need the right to build mosques in order to practice Islam in the full sense of the word (see, e.g., Alvall 1998; Karlsson and Svanberg 1997). In line with this idea, pluralists often emphasize that mosques are positive for the process of integration of Muslims in Europe. So argues also, for example Lykke Nielsen (2001), in an article about the establishment of mosques in Denmark. Her point is that building mosques "may be a promoting factor for integration of Muslims" in Denmark. She asserts that this is, in fact, the case, because women are expected to become more active participants in the religious life of mosques, and because Danish will become the *lingua franca* in the multiethnic space of the mosque (ibid.: 21). Söderberg (1998) also claims that the mosque should to be understood as a positive force for integration because there Muslims can test the lifestyle of life as a Swedish Muslim (ibid.: 189). Karlsson (1999) uses this same kind of argument in her discussion about mosques. She also claims that the mosque ought to be interpreted as an arena for integration rather than isolation.

An alternative image to the mosque as a fortress, an oasis, or an isolation cell screened off from the surrounding society, is the image of the mosque as an arena for integration. Here various Muslim communities may be created, but also a Muslim belonging across internal boundaries and into a non-Muslim majority culture. Also, non-Muslims can turn to the mosque for information and discussion [ibid.: 209].

Both Lykke Nielsen and Karlsson produce typical multiculturalist statements in their interpretations. The reader is asked to perceive the mosque as an arena where various things *can* happen, while ignoring what actually *is* happening. Their arguments provide little evidence of what is taking place in the mosques, offering instead an interpretation of what *might* be the case in the future. Another problem is related to the concept of integration: it is quite unclear what is meant by this term. Seen in light of Breton's discussion (see page 72), it is possible to understand the meaning of the concept as it is used by Lykke Nielsen and Karlsson: as an example of simultaneous ethnic and native integration. In other words, as if Muslims are involved in a process where they become integrated into both ethnic and Islamic institutions at the same time as they are becoming part of the native majority society.

Given that mosques are part of the discourse of multiculturalism and religious rights, it is difficult to discuss the institution from a critical point of view. Anyone doing so runs the risk of being declared a racist. Here I will argue, however, that, in addition to all its other functions, a mosque can also be a problem for the process of Muslim integration, if that integration is understood as a social process directed toward established Swedish institutions. For Muslims, it may certainly be important to establish mosques in public – as manifestations of Islam, places for worship, vehicles for the Islamization of non-Islamic space, places for the construction of community, etc. But to understand Muslim integration in the full sense of the word, it is also interesting to problematize the establishment of mosques from a contextual point of view. In the city of Malmö, the social function of the mosque is in line with the suggestions concerning religious institutions formulated by Breton (1964), as an aspect of ethnic/religious integration rather than integration into the native society.

One way of looking at the mosque from a local perspective is to understand the institution as one among several institutions. To be a Muslim in Rosengård, or in any other Muslim enclave, means that one lives in a social context in which it is possible to choose from a variety of “Islamically” grounded institutions within walking distance from home. Muslim families are surrounded by other Muslim families (friends, relatives); people do their everyday shopping from other Muslim businessmen (*halal* food, clothes, hairdressing, etc). They can put their children into Islamic daycare centers, schools (or into public schools with a majority of Muslim children), and Koran studies. The great mosque, then, is one institution among several in this Islamically-grounded web of institutions. Perceived from this angle, mosques can be understood as nodes in a social process where Muslims become integrated into a Muslim structure, rather than into a Swedish one. During interviews with Muslims, the mosque has been mentioned as one of the most important factors contributing to decisions to move to the city of Malmö. The mosque is thus seen in the local context as *part* of a parallel public sphere (seen in relation to public institutions in Swedish society).

Here we find have an assumption built into certain scholars’ arguments but which is – because context is left out of the discussions – rarely an object for reflection. Karlsson (1999), for example, points out that the mosque in Sweden becomes a “micro society” where Muslims organize “feasts, marriages, family counseling, social service, education and centers for information” (ibid.: 200). In the book *Religionsfrihet i Sverige* (1997), it is stated that the construction of mosques is part of a more elaborate process of Muslim organization which also includes the establishment of a whole “infrastructure of overarching institutions” such as educational opportunities for *imams*, cemeteries, schools, daycare centers, media organs, and information centers (ibid.: 102). Samuelsson (1999) argues that the establishment of Islamic institutions may be understood as a strategy to construct an Islamic life-space which is grounded in paradoxical signals from the majority society. On an official level, he says, society wants to integrate Muslims, but in their everyday lives Muslims confront “a wish for segregation on behalf of the majority society” (ibid.: 160). As we can see, pluralist scholars have incorporated the idea of Muslim institutionalization in their

approach, but without problematizing the issue in terms of the construction of a parallel public sphere. Instead, they tend to think about this Muslim society in society as if it were a “natural” thing for Muslims (or other groups) to do in order to save and reproduce their cultural heritage (Johansson and Uddin 1994: 1).

### 6.2.3 From a purpose-built mosque to para-mosques

In the discourse about the establishment of mosques in Sweden, it is often stated that there is a kind of evolutionary process involved: the institutionalization of Islam started in small prayer halls (para-mosques), located in basements, and, as time passed, Islam has become more and more publicly visible via the construction of architecturally “correct” great mosques. This type of logic is quite often summarized symbolically in phrases such as “the road from musalla to mosque” (Alvall 1998; Sander 1995). This logic fits well with a kind modern thinking where “evolution” starts in simple forms and ends up, after the passage of time, in more advanced ones. When analyzed empirically, however, this description turns out to be incorrect – at least in Rosengård. The large mosque was established in Malmö in 1984. As more and more Muslims moved to the city – and to Rosengård – religious conflicts among and splits within groups have followed suit; in line with this, the number of mosques has increased. What seems to be the case is that the relation between large and small mosques is due to *internal* ideological disputes among Islamists, rather than being a matter of Muslims generally beginning their religious careers in basement prayer halls and eventually building “real” mosques out in the open.

It is a well-known phenomenon among Muslims in Malmö that there are certain tensions between groups with various Islamic ideologies and modest Muslims “outside” of politics. In an interview with me the Director of the Great Mosque, Bejzat Becirov, described a similar experience to one had by one of the founders of the *Süleymani* mosque in Augsburg. Because of political conflicts among the Muslims visiting the Great Mosque in Malmö, the leadership was forced to ban all political discussions and concentrate on religious and social services. As described to a Swedish journalist:

We have been tremendously strict and not allowed any political activity in the mosque. Because of that, no factions have found sanctuary here. They have established their own small congregations [Wirtén 1997: 62].

What happened was that Muslims from the city of Malmö, and from other parts of Sweden, met in the Great Mosque, where they established social relations and realized that they shared a religious outlook on the world. Here they had an opportunity to form, as Werbner says above, alliances and groups, and since they did not sympathize with the religious activities of the Great Mosque, these groups established their own organizations and para-mosques, located in basements. The local leadership in the Great Mosque is often criticized by Islamists in the small mosques for being too

liberal on religious matters. For example, in an interview, a politically-active Muslim from Malmö pointed out that

I am afraid that Islamic center [the large mosque] practices a too-liberal Islamic understanding. The risk with this is that it becomes too adjusted to Swedish society, and thereby it also loses its Islamic profile. The mosque administration has not realized that there exists a large group of pious believers who are knocking on the door with the ambition of re-Islamizing this institution.

This logic in the sequence of institutionalization shows similarities with the logic of institutionalization in other parts of Europe. In an article about religious fundamentalism in Augsburg, Germany, Schiffauer (1997) shows the genealogy of how various Muslim groups have evolved over the last few decades. In the beginning of the 1970s, the *Süleymanî* movement established a “general mosque” – a mosque which laid a social foundation for the breakup of Turkish Muslims into various political groups. One of the founding members of the general mosque initially stated that “we do not want any politics here, we want to restrict ourselves to religious services” (ibid.: 157), but that proved to be, according to Schiffauer, an illusion. Through the years, the Muslim community in Augsburg fragmented, a breakup that was sometimes orchestrated in the form of coups. From having a general mosque, the Muslims in Augsburg ended up having five organizations/mosques by the end of the 1980s. Nowadays the *Süleymanîs* are accompanied by groups such as *Diyanet*, Grey Wolves, *Millî Görüş*, and the *Nurcu* movement (ibid.). The sequence of the establishment of mosques in Malmö and Augsburg appears, however, to differ from how mosques were established in Birmingham, England. According to Kepel (1997), there was a rapid growth of mosques in the city during the 1950s and 60s, when Muslims from Pakistan established small mosques in their local neighborhoods. In order to come to terms with the fragmented Muslim community (which was due to ethnicity, segregation, and “diverse interpretations of Islam”), the Muslim community established a purpose-built mosque in the 1970s (ibid.: 104-105).

In Sweden, these organizations are classified as positive from an integrational point of view. The state has paid quite a lot of money to various cultural organizations because of their assumed functioning as meeting places for immigrants from the ghettos. This is good for the process of integration, it is said, because here people can meet and discuss cultural differences, break their isolation, and perhaps construct community (see SOU 1998: 25, pp. 108). Waardenburg (1996), from a Swiss perspective, argues for the establishment of politically-active Islamic organizations, since these can be instrumental in the process of emancipation and integration of Muslims (ibid.: 148-153). These positive assumptions, however, tend to overlook the internal factors among Muslims which are related to the construction of religious organizations. A great deal of the religious activity among Muslims is concerned with an internal struggle for local religious hegemony. Hence, the community that is being established in the small mosques concerns a limited number of Islamists who are constructing a political-religious community. In sum, the result of establishing religious micro-communities is that the larger group of Muslims is fragmented into various subgroups who encompass different Islamic outlooks on the world.



#### 6.2.4 Islamization of local space

Roy (1994) has pointed out that Islamists in the Middle East have tried to “re-socialize” urban space in the cities. Problems of impoverishment and overpopulation in major towns have, according to Roy, made life chaotic, especially for young people. It is difficult to live according to traditional values, and the processes of modernization are not developed enough to offer people new opportunities. That is basically why Islamists have tried to implement Islamic alternatives in these neighborhoods. In order to cope with a harsh urban situation, Roy points out that Islamists have used

the mosques as their bases of operation with sports clubs, mutual aid cooperatives, foundations to provide dowries for destitute young girls, reading circles, political sermons, and so on [ibid.: 56].

This is a description of urban space in the Middle East, but the same type of social activities are also conducted by Islamists living in Europe. In Rosengård mosques also try to re-socialize or, perhaps more correctly, to Islamize urban space.<sup>69</sup>

Islamists living in the neighborhood work on a daily basis, with the mosque as their local center, toward the implementation of Islam. Their activities and methods show similarities with the ones reported by Roy. They offer places of prayer for residents living both inside and outside the neighborhood. It is common that they have small libraries which basically contain the Koran, the Hadith, and various interpretations of these religious sources. Sometimes they sell traditional clothes, or small amounts of food. Some of the mosques (or organizations) also issue certificates for Muslim women in need of proof that they are practicing Muslims who must wear *hijab*, when they apply for ID-cards or a drivers' licenses. Another important aspect of their work is the arranging of various activities related to the socialization of children. Important here, of course, are Koran studies and helping children with homework after ordinary school hours. Sports activities are also on the menu, especially basketball and soccer. Samuelsson (1999) argues that the activities performed by these organizations can be interpreted as “a social service inside their own group”, and that “it would probably be economically profitable for society to supply the organizations with more resources in their preventive work for children and youth” (ibid.: 47).

The activities described so far can be seen as an indirect *dawa*, the Islamic form of missionary work. The mosques, however, also practice a more direct kind of missionary work, where Muslims in the neighborhood are visited in their homes and invited to the organization for a small talk over a cup of coffee; sometimes leaflets are handed

69 A couple of years ago, I stated in the most influential morning paper, *Sydsvenska dagbladet*, that Rosengård had gone through a process of Islamization in recent decades. The article was read by certain Islamists in Malmö who contacted me to discuss my use of the word “Islamization”. A man I subsequently met argued that two problems were related to the use of this word. First of all, seeing the word could arouse fear in Swedes who read the paper. They might get a wrong impression of what was going on in the neighborhood. Secondly, Muslims could also get the wrong impression. They could begin to believe that they practice Islam in a “correct” way, while in fact, the opposite is true. According to the Islamist, the problem is that most Muslims practice Islam in a very bad way.

out in Muslim homes. These activities are primarily directed towards Muslims. The active Islamists are of the opinion that the majority of Muslims in the neighborhood do not practice Islam sufficiently well, and are therefore in need of religious guidance. It is important to keep in mind, however, that the number of activists performing these activities is small; while I was doing fieldwork, they seemed to receive a relatively weak response from non-organized Muslims in the neighborhood. Most Muslims I talked too were negative toward the politically-inclined groups. One man, a secularized Muslim from the Middle East, was skeptical about these organizations since he thought that their activities showed similarities with the process of Islamization in Egypt. A similar structure to that described here is described by Roy (1994) in an examination of Islam in France. According to him, in France Islam is locally organized around a small mosque and, as he says, “there is always the tension of divergence between moderates and fundamentalists in the background” (ibid.: 57).

Even though Islam might be interpreted as a common cosmological denominator for the Islamists performing these activities, it is important to understand that there also exist boundaries among the activists. One type of boundary is concerned with religious ideology. Generally, three Islamist groups struggle for the souls of Muslim residents in the neighborhood. Islamists belonging to or sympathizing with the Egyptian political party *the Muslim Brotherhood* have their own organization and mosque which are accommodated within *The Islamic Association of Scania*. They compete with the *selafists*, a group of Islamists inspired by a Saudi Arabian style of Islam and who perform their activities within the organization known as *The Islamic Cultural Association*.<sup>70</sup> These two represent the largest ideological trends, but in addition there is also a Sufi group called *Habashis* who are working to implement Islam. At the time of the fieldwork, this group did not, however, organize their work within a cultural association; instead, they had chosen to start the Islamic private school *al Salaam*, which was located outside the neighborhood. In Rosengård it is also possible to find Islamists who sympathize with *Hizb ut-Tahrir*. During fieldwork this group of radicals did not have any organized activities, or their own religious association. Another ideological trend represented in Malmö is what Roald (2001) defines as the *post-Ikhwan* trend. This trend is supported by individual, non-organized Islamists who were once members in the Muslim Brotherhood but who have left this party. This trend is disparate, but some of its sympathizers seem to be involved in the construction of a *euro-Islam* (see Roald 2001 for a description of various Islamist trends in Scandinavia).<sup>71</sup>

70 During research I was also a target of *dawa*, something not at all unusual. I was one of the few Swedish contacts these Islamists had, and they wanted me to have a (from their point of view) “correct” image of Islam. After one visit at an Islamist association, I was given a video where an *imam* argued that Islam had discovered how nature works long before natural science had done so. I was also given a Koran package: a Koran and interpretations of the text made by (as I remember it – the package was stolen by a car thief) *selafists*. When we left the Swedish Muslim Council in Stockholm, after interviews with activists, our bag was full of religious propaganda published by the IIF.

71 During fieldwork I tried to conduct a telephone interview with a man who belonged to *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, but he simply said “no” and hung up the phone.

Another instrument, in addition to religious ideology, involved in the creation of boundaries is ethnicity or nationality. Generally it is possible to make a distinction between organizations dominated by Arabs of various nationalities (Iraqis, Lebanese, and Palestinians), and Turkish, Pakistani, and Somali organizations (see, for example, Roald 1999: 123-124). For instance, the Muslim Brotherhood, the Habashi, and the Selifists generally attract Arab-speaking individuals, while the other ethnic groups have their own religious associations.<sup>72</sup> Among Somalis it is possible to find several cultural and Islamic institutions dispersed throughout the local neighborhoods where the Somalis reside. Another boundary-creating device is gender. As Roald (*ibid.*) points out, most of the religious organizations say that they have female activities, but in Rosengård there is a single religious organization open to Muslim women. A main activity of women in this organization is developing female interpretations of Islam; activists here believe that it is important that women establish their own religious interpretations rather than being dominated by what they experience as male models.

These organizations (and mosques) seem to have a positive social function for the integration of practicing Muslims into Islamic circles, but a negative function if understood as part of a process toward greater integration into Swedish institutions. In the latter case, these institutions have an important supportive function in a process of ethnic segregation. When Muslims arrive as newcomers to a city where there exist several religious organizations, immigrants seek out these rather than native (Swedish) institutions. An illustrative example of this is the great mosque in Malmö. This institution, established by a labor migrant who came to Sweden in 1962, has functioned as an attractor for Muslims coming to Sweden as political refugees, or as marriage partners, since the 1970s. Many Muslims have had a desire to live close to a mosque and, therefore, after having moved to Malmö, have settled close to this institution. In the local neighborhood, the small mosques function in the same way as the great mosque: as public meeting places where Muslims can become integrated into a meaningful religious and social context. They are open all day, so that people may come and go, and they also organize Koran schools for children. The proximity of the mosques – in the middle of Muslim neighborhoods within walking distance from home – is certainly positive for individual Muslims, making it easy to find religious and social community. On the other hand, this closeness also means that unemployed Muslims are seldom forced to confront urban Swedish society outside of their segregated neighborhood.

In the pluralist discussion about Islamic institutionalization the social problems related to the construction of local mosques are seldom, or never, discussed. Muslim internal politics, such as Islamism, are hidden behind an ideological desire to include

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72 One Islamist outside of the structure of local associations complained during an interview about the ethnic character of the activity that was performed by the associations. He, a Swede, had tried to become a participant in one of the associations but had been treated badly by the active Islamists: "My ambition was to work for Islam. But they confused culture and religion. My impression was that they understood Arab cultural ideas as Islamic ideas. Anyway, I was not welcome to participate in the association".

Muslims in the Swedish nation-state, and in the idea that Muslim institutions lead to integration into Sweden. Svanberg and Westerlund (1999), for example, compare the establishment of Islam in Sweden with the Protestant “free church” structure, and point out that the difference between the two is that Islam is a religion which has depended on immigration (ibid.: 9-25). The problem is that, while the Islamic situation may show the same surface structure as the Christian free church situation, immigration makes a crucial difference. Muslims are foreigners in Sweden, with no Swedish contacts and a lack of Swedish cultural competence. When they socialize and construct community with other Muslims, they meet other foreigners and not Swedes. On an everyday basis, Islamic institutions are used by culturally and religiously different persons who are marginalized with respect to the Swedish contexts, rather than by the Swedish majority population. There is nothing culturally or historically Swedish about these Islamic organizations: they are, if one considers the actors involved, essentially foreign institutions located on Swedish territory. The only ethnic Swedes who may use the mosques are converts, and these are very few in number. Therefore, religious institutions as such do not lead to integration into Sweden. None of the scholars who celebrate these institutions as important for integration into the Swedish society have presented any evidence of what such integration looks like.

### 6.2.5 The takeover of a Swedish residential organization

In the discourse about Islam in Sweden, and in statements about how Muslims have become “Swedified”, it is common to exemplify these processes with reference to the construction of Muslim organizations (Stenberg 1999: 80–84). Svanberg and Westerlund (1999) argue that the organizations illustrates how Islam is becoming “Blue-and-Yellow”, or Swedish (ibid.: 10-11). One of the organizations which is used as an example of how Islam has been established “in a relatively firm structure and consolidated its position as a vital religious community among other religions in Sweden”, is a residential organization in Rosengård which was established in the late 1990s (ibid.: 22). This organization is used as one example among others, and is described as a “Muslim residential organization, *Al Siraj*, with only Muslim members and with activities characterized by Muslim rules of conduct” (ibid.). According to some of the members in the organization, the activities resemble those of a Swedish youth-recreation center, a goal of which is to “build bridges between different cultures” (*Vår bos-tad* 10/96). One of the leaders, Ismail Jallal, argued that:

many children in this neighborhood [Rosengård] are born in Sweden, but of foreign descent. We want them to preserve their foreign identity, but also to become of use for Sweden. In order to cope with this it is necessary that they learn how the Swedish society functions. We can be helpful in this, and do something for ourselves and for society [ibid.].

This quotation can be understood as a typical “multi-culti” discursive formulation, since it captures with precision one of the central ideas of multiculturalist ideology.

The most appealing ideas for Swedish readers are those suggesting that children preserve their cultural differences and learn about Swedish society while the leaders of the organization do something for society. What appears to be the case, however, is that none of the goals in the quote were ever realized, something that will become evident below. This organization has been discussed and analyzed by Popoola (1998), who has done fieldwork in that part of the neighborhood called “Romano Platso” by the residents. This part, *Herrgården* (the official name), is often used to exemplify the worst aspects of Rosengård, and is a place where, in 1997, 95% of a population numbering 4,462 persons received their main income from social welfare (*Områdesfakta för Malmö* 1999, Malmö stadskontor, pp. 188–189). The majority of residents in Herrgården have their origins in Arab-speaking countries (Iraq, Lebanon) or in the former Yugoslavia (Bosnia-Herzegovina) (ibid.).

This organization was, according to Popoola (1998), an ordinary Swedish tenants’ organization – *Hyresgästföreningen* (HGF) – whose goal was to work for a “meaningful culture – and leisure-time activity”; the organization also aimed for “understanding and cooperation between neighbors in order to obstruct racism and xenophobia” (ibid.: 191). Gradually, this organization, called *Al Sorag* (Great Light), became dominated by male Arabs who excluded the Romanis from the organization’s activities by introducing Arabic as the official language and Islam as the main activity. In the beginning, young people had played an important role in these activities, but, as the months passed, Islamic activities *per se* became more important. As Popoola says:

The religious content became clearer and the participation of children was not as self-evident as it had been in the organization in an earlier period. Prayers became part of everyday life and were given enhanced space at the expense of other activities [ibid.: 197].

People in the neighborhood (other Muslims) became more and more annoyed by these activities, by the calls for prayer and the political slogans (ibid.). The organization began slowly to modify the activities originally described as goals and began instead to work against certain institutionalized and dominant values of the majority society (by requesting a ban on alcohol, for example); their activities were also marked by the introduction of Islamic rules of conduct (ibid.: 196).<sup>73</sup>

The activities of this organization provide a good illustration of the problems involved in using concepts such as *Muslim* and *Islam* as general categories. It is certainly possible to represent the organization, as the Swedish scholars quoted above do, as a Muslim organization involved in establishing a Blue-and-Yellow Islam. But this pluralist description of the organization bears little resemblance to what certain Islamic actors do in their everyday lives. Continuing to follow Popoola’s description, we see

<sup>73</sup> According to Popoola, Al Sorag was also used as a place of residence for male Muslims during visits to the neighborhood. The organization also organized summer camps for young Muslims in cooperation with *The Islamic Cultural Organization* (*Islamiska kulturföreningen*), one of the largest Islamic organizations in Rosengård. During these activities, Popoola points out, the organization established contacts with other actors from around Scandinavia; they took photos from the camps showing trans-generational activities, barbecues, and men holding small and large guns in their hands [Popoola 1998: 195].

that the Islamization of activities in the organization gradually began to annoy other Muslims in the neighborhood (ibid.: 195). Several of the Muslims who took charge of the organization's activities came from the locally-based *Islamic Cultural Association* (*Islamiska Kulturföreningen*), an organization which belongs to the Islamic *Salafi* trend; Islamists active herein produce fear and irritation in the neighborhood among other Muslims with more modest beliefs.

The actors in these Islamic organizations do not practice what Tibi (2002) would call an open or secularized Islam. On the contrary, this is a group of believers who have an ambition to isolate themselves from society and purify their minds from what is seen as Western ideological pollution. A main point made in an interview I conducted with one of the Islamists involved with this branch of believers was that social order in society only could be upheld by the practice of a "pure" faith. Understanding the actions of this category of Muslims as examples of Blue-and-Yellow Islam – as is done by the Swedish scholars quoted above – means taking for granted that the surface of a phenomena also illustrates its content; unless we are also prepared to define resistance movements among Muslims toward European nation-states as examples of the construction of European Islam. To once again quote an idea formulated by Tibi (1997), *al Sorag* provides an illustration of how certain Islamist groups in Europe try to "hijack" organizations and transform them into "purified" religious organizations. This activity is quite the opposite to how pluralists in Sweden understand Islamic institutionalization.

### 6.3 Islamic private schools

An important question in the Western European discourse on Islam and institutions is whether Muslims should have the right to establish their own schools. As said in the beginning of this thesis, certain Islamists have such a goal on their political agenda, as do several Swedish scholars who argue for the implementation of collective religious rights for Muslims. In the following, I will not be concerned with whether or not it is right to give Muslims opportunities to establish their own schools. Instead, I wish to demonstrate that, from a social point of view, there are certain consequences involved in establishing independent Islamic schools. The main issue in discussing these schools is deciding whether they integrate or segregate Muslim children. Generally, pluralist scholars in Sweden contend that the establishment of independent schools is an example *per se* of Muslim integration into Sweden. By establishing schools Muslims show that they wish to establish themselves in the country. The focus in this argument is well captured by Johansson (1999) when he says (my translation from Swedish):

First, they will make Islam more Swedish because, aside from Islamic associations, mosques, cemeteries, and the press, it is an expression of the institutionalization of Islam as a Swedish re-

ligion. Their existence [the schools] is an expression of the ambition among Muslims to live and be active in Sweden as Muslims and as Swedes. [ibid.: 191].

As we can see here, the debate on Islamic schools is framed within the same ideological argument as that concerning the establishment of other Islamic institutions. According to this argument, Muslims participate in society by acting within their own cultural and religious contexts. This is certainly a problematic argument if publicly-expressed Muslim intentions are taken into consideration. The SMC claims, for example, that they wish to protect Muslim children from being influenced by Swedish society in the development of personal character. Therefore, according to the SMC, is it of importance to construct Islamic schools or provide Muslim children with Islamic teaching within the national schools. In line with this, the SMC argues that “Muhammad expressively and with great force has forbidden Muslims to be inspired by non-Muslim culture and lifestyle” (Aldebe: n.d.a). Sander (1996) argues powerfully that Muslims need their own schools and institutions in order to avoid extinction. In other words, if Muslims participate in Swedish public institutions they risk losing their identities.

An act of separation/segregation – establishing independent Islamic private schools – is defined by pluralists as integration into Sweden. If language has any meaning, however, the construction of Islamic schools is a question of segregation, or separation. Johansson (1999) says vaguely that Islamic schools “segregate in a limited meaning of the word, since they minimize children’s possibilities for contacts with Swedish and other non-Muslim children during school hours” (ibid.: 189). The problem with the view that schools are segregating in a limited sense is that the author does not understand the social context in which Islamic schools are being established. Most Muslim children, if they go to Islamic schools, will find themselves in a situation of ethnic continuity with their local neighborhood. Some Muslim children are so profoundly segregated that even when they have one Swedish parent (a Swedish mother who is a convert, for example), they do not learn to speak Swedish. Hence, most Muslim children already live ethnically segregated private lives, and separate schools only reinforce this. The children operate within a public space which exists parallel to Swedish public institutions. This has nothing to do with integration in a generally accepted meaning of the term.

It is sometimes argued by pluralists that the “Swedishness” of Islamic private schools is insured by the fact that they have to follow the Swedish curriculum, and that the difference that makes a difference is that Islamic schools have a clearer focus on Islam and moral issues. This may be so. But it is also a problematic argument since, to the best of my knowledge, there exist no studies which can verify that this is, in fact, the case. It is also a problematic argument because it only touches the surface of the phenomenon. The same social logic operates here as in the case of other types of Islamic institutions. It is not ethnic Swedish children who attend Islamic private schools, but ethnically different children. By attending Islamic schools, the children may certainly incorporate an exemplary morality, but there is also a great danger that their language development will be poor because they socialize with children

who speak poor Swedish. To frame Islamic private schools in the Blue-and-Yellow Islamic paradigm also makes it difficult to see that it is often Islamists – and not Muslims – who desire to establish such schools. That is, actors who take advantage of the social context of segregation, rather than work for the dissolution of this social problem.

A relevant question to ask here: Are Islamic schools and Islamists in Sweden different in comparison to those found in other parts of Europe? Kepel (1997) has described Islamic education in Great Britain in fundamentally different terms from those used by many Swedish pluralist scholars when looking at this phenomenon. For Muslims in Britain the school issue appears not to have been part of making Islam more British. There the Islamists who are promoters of Islamic schools argue in a way that is more in line with how the Swedish Muslim Council perceives the problem for Muslim children: that Muslim children need to attend Islamic schools in order to be protected from a British society in moral decline (ibid.: 110). According to Kepel, already in the 1960s the Muslim Educational Trust was established by a Bengali “university lecturer in business studies” who was close to the Mawdudi Islamist movement. An important goal for the Trust was to “safeguard and defend the distinct Muslim identity of Muslim children exposed to Western ‘permissive society’ marked notably by the ‘flood of obscene publications’” (ibid.: 110). Hence, what seems to be the case is that Islamists in various European nation-states have a desire to protect children from the surrounding society, while pluralist scholars in Sweden suggest that it is Muslims (not Islamists) who desire to establish schools (and other institutions) in order to make Islam more Swedish. One could hardly find two more opposite intentions behind the same strategy.

Haideh Daraghahi (2003) has argued in a newspaper article that “violence against children is supported by the state” (*Dagens nyheter*, May 8, 2003). She claims that Islamic private schools in Sweden are a major problem for Muslim children because the schools “segregate, isolate, and in some cases, even allows physical abuse of children” (ibid.). Her arguments are similar to those of Islamists when she states that “the deepest ambition seems to be to prevent [Muslim] children from having any contact with the ‘sinful’ Swedish society” (ibid.). This is a problem Daraghahi points out, since “the Muslim minority have no well-established position in society” and therefore “the children become victims in more than one sense” (ibid.). My experiences from the Rosengård neighborhood confirm Daraghahi’s argument. Muslim children who attend Islamic private schools spend all of their time in separation from Sweden, a situation that will not make it easier for them to become part of Swedish society. Segregation or separation may be seen as a logical outcome of the construction of independent Islamic private schools. It is also, however, important to understand that the separation is an important issue for those Islamists who wish to establish the schools. It is not a coincidence that the Swedish Muslim Council has the separation of Muslim and Swedish children as one the most central aspects of their model of Muslim integration (*Att förstå islam*).

Thus far I have described certain activities and social consequences which are related to the institutionalization of Islam. This has been done in order to illustrate that



– in spite of the claims of the ideology of human rights and the right to be different stipulated by multiculturalism – independent institutions may hamper Muslim integration into Swedish society. Is this argument wrong? What might be argued against the perspective being offered here? Aside from arguments grounded in ideologies about religious rights, it is sometimes claimed that immigrants need to strengthen their cultural identities before they can begin to enhance their cultural competence. This is a general argument used in debates about culture, language, and religion. Before immigrants can learn Swedish, they must learn their mother tongues properly; before they can interact in the majority society, they need to feel secure in their own cultures and religions. This argument seems, at least on the surface, plausible: having a strong identity and speaking a language well may have a positive effect of the well being of any individual. The argument about a strong identity is used by, for example, Islamists in the Swedish Muslim Council who claim that Muslims need their own schools in order for children to incorporate Islamic norms and to learn Arabic in a proper manner.

From a Muslim parent point of view it is, of course, a problematic situation when one finds oneself in a social context which is difficult to comprehend. When the world that surrounds the family is perceived as complex and threatening. To establish a religious institution, or to put children in an Islamic school, is certainly a responsible act; no parent wants to lose their children to a world they do not understand. But taking diverse measures in order to strengthen the original cultural identity has as a consequence that children are restrained from strengthening the cultural competence necessary to succeed in the majority society. This cultural paradox is, to a greater or lesser extent, the reality for most children who grow up in segregated environments. It is not only Islamic private schools, or other religious institutions, that enforce this discrepancy. The whole social context which is the reality in an ethnically-segregated neighborhood isolates both adults and children from opportunities to strengthen the cultural competence they need to flourish in the new society. It may be understood as in accord with human rights to claim that independent institutions of various types are a self-evident right for people if they are to have an opportunity to maintain their identities over time, but it must also be understood that a consequence of this is that the construction of a good life as an adult citizen may therefore be more difficult.

## 6.4 Muslim men and Marginalization

### 6.4.1 The emotional state

The Islamist activities referred to above are performed by men. Needless to say, it is not because they are men *per se* that they have engaged in religious activities, but be-

cause they are men who live in a certain social context. In the following, I would like to point out some of the social issues I believe are important in understanding why certain Muslim men in the neighborhood have found their way to Islam. My argument here is that, upon reflection, it is possible to see that we are witnessing a social logic in this Swedish urban location which shows similarities to problems encountered by Muslim men in other parts of the world. During an interview with one of the leaders of a small mosque in Malmö, we came to discuss Muslim men and their need for social roots. The leader, or *imam*, described the Muslim group as religiously heterogeneous and pointed out that not all Muslims practiced Islam. But for some, he said, it was important to find a small group of believers where one could get his identity recognized and rebuilt. The *imam*, a well-educated man from the Middle East, noted the following about men in the organizations (my translation from Swedish):

He needs a small group in order to get help to obtain recognition for his identity. To build up his identity. It may be that the group he searches out understands religion in a different way. Instead of becoming a traditional Muslim he becomes a practicing [Muslim] who conducts religion as a living faith. This transition can happen here [in Sweden] instead of in the home country. In the home country he might have been a traditional Muslim but here he acts like a Free-church member [the stereotype of the Free-church in Sweden depicts its members as more "fanatic" than other Christians].

This *imam* argues that a small group is of importance for the feeling of community, and he points out that some men go through a process of Islamization in Sweden. It is here that certain men become born-again-Muslims and start practice Islam as a "living faith". This characterization is similar to how I would describe the social situation that confronted a group of Palestinian men I used to work with (Carlbom 1992). They had come to Sweden alone, as individuals, and struggled for months to become integrated into Swedish society, mainly via seeking work. As time went by, they became more and more confused and depressed; they felt a deep sense of isolation and meaninglessness. In order to cope with this unbearable emotional state of affairs, they gradually began to visit Islamic organizations in Rosengård because here they could learn more about Islam and also gain a feeling of community. These men certainly identified themselves as Muslims before they moved to the city of Malmö, but Islam had never been an everyday, full-time project for them. Back home in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon they had visited a mosque only occasionally. In the urban context of Malmö, however, they gradually, during the time I socialized with them, became more interested in Islamic solutions to various problems. They also took up prayer, and began to visit the big mosque regularly.

The social situation described above refers to how Muslim men have experienced the urban context in Malmö, but such experiences do not seem to be limited only to this particular location. The same type of experiences have been described by scholars speaking about Middle Eastern urban environments. Kepel (1985) argues, for example, that activists in the Islamist movement in Egypt during the 1970s were "marginal in every sense of the word" because the urban context (Cairo) did not provide them

with a means to participate in “modernity” (ibid.: 217). The same argument is formulated by Guilian Denoeux (1993):

Islamic groups became a source of comfort and reassurance for individuals who might otherwise have suffered from loneliness and disorientation and who, having been raised in traditional ways, were probably shocked by the consumerism and the perceived moral laxity prevailing in the megapolis [ibid.: 175].

These two examples discuss Egypt and even though they exhibit differences in details when compared to the social situation of Muslim men in Malmö, they also illustrate social issues that appear to ground a global experience for Muslim men, whether these men live in the East or in the West. Thus, the Islamist groups fulfill a social need for certain Muslim men in the sense that it is in such groups that they can construct community with other men who find themselves in the same social predicament.

The same kind of argument about social marginality is suggested by Mark Juergensmeyer (2001) in a discussion concerning how to understand why some individuals become Islamists. He takes the example of Muhammad Salameh, who was an adherent of the teachings of Sheik Omar Abdul Rahman, a sheik who is accused of having provoked the first attack on World Trade center in 1993. According to Juergensmeyer, Salameh occupied a marginal position both in the United States and in the Palestinian refugee camp in the West Bank where he was born and raised. In the U. S., Juergensmeyer argues, Salameh was:

situated in a busy working-class neighborhood that, like other industrial neighborhoods of Jersey City, teemed with new immigrants from Haiti and the Middle East. The setting was in some ways not unlike the social and economic conditions in the crowded Palestinian refugee camps on the West Bank and Jordan. [...] In the United States, where his limited English was a continuing social barrier, Salameh associated primarily with other Arabs. His life became focused around a local mosque located above a Chinese restaurant, led by the charismatic Egyptian cleric Sheik Omar Abdul Rahman. [...] Muhammad Salameh exemplified several aspects of marginality. He was a refugee first in the Middle East and then in America. He came from abject poverty and was a man with little skills and few hopes of developing a career (ibid.: 194).

The “profile” suggested by Juergensmeyer can also be used to help understand marginality for certain Muslim men in the city of Malmö. They are also refugees without opportunities for making a successful career, or a good life. I know of several Muslim men in the city who, just like Salameh described above, experience themselves as globally marginalized, and who spend most of their time together with co-ethnics. These men believe that they have no future back home in the Middle East because of economic and political problems; at the same time, their future in Sweden looks bleak because of discrimination and racism in the job market.

Juergensmeyer’s example concerns an uneducated category of Muslim men, but it appears that the problem of marginalization is also a problem relevant for Muslim intellectuals. Roy (1994), in his discussion about Islamism, claims that many educated men in the Middle East become marginalized after graduation since the larger institutional system can not provide a place (“integrate” them) where they can follow a career. For these men, Roy argues, “education bestows neither knowledge nor pow-

er nor status" (ibid.: 94). "Since neither the state nor the society furnishes institutional criteria for recognizing the category [of educated men]" (ibid.), Islam becomes a substitute, an alternative way to make a career and thereby become recognized as an important citizen. The same problem, that there is a lack of social structures which can absorb, or integrate, well-educated Muslim men, is the reality of these men also in Sweden. An Islamist informant explained his problem on arrival in Sweden:

The woman at the employment office in Malmö suggested that I should work as a cleaner. It was like being hit in the face. Sure, I can clean when that is needed – at home or in the mosque. But I was highly educated, I wanted to work as a city planner or teacher in Islamology. I could not accept that a prejudiced and ignorant person at the employment office tried to force me to work as a cleaner. No way.

This particular man has not yet found a place for himself in the Swedish social structure that corresponded to his education. In order to get recognition, he mostly works with Islamic issues. He has also been involved in some business activities, and local politics.

#### **6.4.2 Social continuity for women, but not for men**

The marginalized urban position for Muslim men in relation to modernity or, as in Sweden, the majority society, causes a great deal of frustration. Generally, the traditional role for Muslim men (which is also stated in the Koran) is to be economic providers for the family: a man has a religious duty to provide for his family's economic welfare. Women do not have this duty. Their prime duty is to take care of the household, with all of what that includes of ordinary homework and the socialization of children. The marginalization of Muslim men from the majority society [the labor market] makes this supportive task almost impossible to fulfill; something which in turn creates even more problems for the men and their families. The family councilor in the big mosque, Ayoub Chibli, has argued (during an interview) that the predicament for Muslim men is that they find themselves in a situation where they have lost all self-esteem.

The ideal man in the Middle East wakes up at six o'clock in the morning and with pride goes to work in order to support his family. When he comes home at night after a long day at work everyone is waiting for him. His children kiss him and give him hot water so he can clean his hands. His wife serves him food and shows him her respect. His life has value. He looks upon himself with pride. But those men who move to Sweden will, with great likelihood, become unemployed. And an unemployed Muslim feels like a nobody. He has lost his status as provider for the family, defender, and family head. He confronts his wife face-to-face every day and sees more of her defects. She has, in turn, started to despise him, and his children do not care any longer what he says. The risk of conflicts and violence that tears the family apart is great. A divorce is a total catastrophe for a Muslim man – if it is enough to call it catastrophe. When a divorce becomes a reality, the man goes into a difficult crisis. The family is the core of his life. Almost without exception the woman stays in the home, keeping the children and most of the welfare contributions. He moves out. She raises the children and works on with everyday tasks. He feels

expelled, devoid of any opportunity to, according to his religious duty, take responsibility for the children and guide them in moral issues [see Dagens nyheter, July 2001].

Even if this is an ideal-typical description of a Muslim male-female relationship, it is possible to argue that it tells us something about a traditional role pattern, and what the consequences are when this pattern can no longer be upheld. In this description, the man enjoys a certain status as breadwinner, while the rest of the family supports this in various ways by showing their gratitude. In Sweden, however, the man becomes marginalized from an opportunity to support the family economically (and thereby also from his religious duty), and this leads to a social crisis for the man and the whole family. My point here is that Muslim men and women do not face the same social situation when they migrate to Sweden. Men, who must be breadwinners in order to be regarded as real men, in accord with religious and cultural traditions, are placed in a kind of social nowhere-land, where each man spends his days without any everyday duties to perform. Muslim women, on the other hand, find themselves in a situation where they can maintain more social continuity between their homelands and Sweden. Roughly speaking, Muslim women had a prime duty to take care of the household back home, and they can continue to do so in Sweden. In terms of living up to religious rules, and in terms of living a meaningful everyday-life, Muslim women are better placed to cope with the problems produced by migration; at least those women who refuse the Swedish project of the independent working woman.

This has also been pointed out by Darvishpour (2002), who argues that Iranian “women’s experiences of immigration are different [compared to those of men]” (ibid.: 277). He likewise argues that Muslim men experience a lower status in the new society due to problems of finding work, etc. But also he adds that a woman finds herself in a situation in Sweden which is actually an improvement in comparison to the homeland. Darvishpour claims that women’s “power resources” are increased because of possibilities for employment and education, Swedish family legislation which protects the rights of women, and Swedish norms of gender equality (ibid.: 278-282). Thus, while the general social context in Sweden seems to improve the situation of Muslim women (including those women who accept traditional domestic roles), men have to cope with the reverse: a depreciation in status due to a marginalization in those contexts which can provide a meaningful life for men: work, public status, control over wives and children, etc.

During fieldwork Muslim men often complained about Swedish society in interviews. Sweden was described as a “woman society”, meaning a society that generally took the side of women and regarded Muslim men as violent abusers. Hence, many of my male Muslim informants had an experience of Swedish society which made them fear losing everything they considered important in life, such as their families, children, and social status. The general situation was experienced by the men as chaotic in cultural, economic, and social terms. Over and above the social conditions described here, Muslim men in Sweden also have to cope with a general negative anti-Muslim attitude directed at them from several sections of the majority population. This attitude, which the Muslim men feel is reflected in the media, concerns them

both as *men* and as *Muslims*. As men from the Middle East, they are regarded as patriarchal abusers of women and children, and as Muslims they are regarded as belonging to a religious faith which is inherently violent.

### 6.4.3 Back to Islam

Islamism should be regarded against the social backdrop described so far. Religion most certainly has a personal, spiritual dimension for each individual where “religious behavior is ultimately directed towards the existential problems of humanity and that religious beliefs represent attempts to make sense of the world by reference to a sacred reality” (Turner 1997 [1983]: 228). Here I would like to suggest, however, that – from a social point of view – Islam fulfills a multidimensional space of needs for marginalized Muslim men.

The most obvious of these needs is that Islam can provide meaning in life for the individual, since it offers, like all belief-systems, a cosmology which organizes the world and its objects into a meaningful totality. (Rainfall is not water falling from the sky, but tears from God, as one man formulated it.) However, as pointed out above, Islam may also provide men with a sense of social community in a situation where they experience feelings of isolation, chaos, and confusion. To be an Islamist in a neighborhood like Rosengård has certain everyday advantages when it comes to the relationship between private and public. Muslim men, who are marginalized from the Swedish labor market, can fulfill their needs for public activities by spending many hours a day in a religious association. Ayoub Chibli, quoted above, used this as a strategy to cope with marginalization.

I pretended as though I was not unemployed. I tried to become occupied with all sorts of things even if I was not paid for the job. I visited Muslims in prison every day, basically in order to do something good but also to avoid apathy. I worked for the *Islamic Cultural Association* in Malmö and for *the Islamic Association of Scania*. This way I could look myself in the eyes. My life did not become meaningless.<sup>74</sup>

This was also reflected upon by a modest Muslim man during an interview where he pointed out that if Islamists had ordinary jobs, “they would be too tired after a day’s work to engage themselves in full time religious activities”. From a social point of view, Islamism may also be understood as a strategy to improve the social status of the individual within the Muslim group. To become a pious Muslim may thus be seen as a method of receiving recognition from other Muslims (and from God). In this sense, it could be argued that Islamism is an alternative career choice for Muslim men who are marginalized from ordinary opportunities to pursue a career. Becoming

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<sup>74</sup> When I first met Ayoub Chibli in 1993, he was the leader of the *Islamic Cultural Association* (ICA). Because of an internal power struggle, this association was split in two in the middle of 1990s. The ICA was kept intact, but a new association called the *Islamic Association of Scania* was also established.

knowledgeable in Islamic issues transforms a man into an authority, and thereby also into someone to listen to, someone who counts.

By turning to Islam, it may also be possible for a marginalized Muslim man to construct some kind of ideological and social order in the chaos he experiences in life due to migration. As argued above, many men experience all sorts of personal anxieties and problems, and in this emotionally arduous situation, Islam becomes a means which can be used to “stop” the world from going astray. Islam offers a cultural model for answering questions such as how the family can be organized according to roles and tasks, how to raise children, what is a man (and a woman), etc. Islam also offers, especially for those individuals who believe that religion is a total way of life, a model for how society can be organized and the relationship between the individual and the larger societal order. For example, one Islamist, a sefalist in the Islamic Cultural Association, argued that the only solution to various problems in society was to create a “pure Islamic society”, and that the only way for this pure society to come about was if women were to “put on the *hijab*”. For this man, the *hijab* symbolized both an individual and a social order which would protect all the citizens in society from problems such as adultery, crime, drugs, rape, etc. A metaphor commonly used by men when discussing the organization of the family described the family as a business corporation. These men claimed that no corporation could function with several managers. In order to avoid chaos it was necessary to delegate responsibility for the well-being of the company – and the family – to one person: the man.

Thus, for marginalized Muslim men, Islamism is a social strategy used to cope with a complex position in society. It is important to point out, however, that the use of religion is *one* strategy among others: non-Islamists may use other strategies when trying to create meaningfulness in their confusing lives. Hosseini-Kaladjahi (1993) points out that many Iranian men start their own businesses in order to survive in a problematic Swedish context. It may be possible for a man to re-construct some of his lost self-esteem by opening a small business, (ibid.: 40). This strategy has been practiced by many Muslim males in Malmö during the last few decades, both inside and outside of Rosengård. Sometimes both religion and business are used in order to cope with marginalization. One of the Islamists I got to know during fieldwork, who belonged to a post-Muslim Brotherhood ideological trend (see Roald 2001), was a man highly regarded in dealing with matters Islamic. He were frequently engaged by Muslims in Malmö for consultations concerning marriage or other legal matters. But he was also a businessman who had been involved with bookstores, foodstuffs, and media productions for networks in Dubai, Saudi Arabia, and Italy. Another Islamist, a sefalist, had started his own small shop where he sold and repaired second-hand computers and television sets.

Starting a business is not, however, a strategy that can be used by all Muslim men. There also exist more passive strategies for coping with marginalization. Many men spend the majority of their days in coffee shops, together with other men, where they discuss politics and other problematic issues. Men like these could be observed in the café located in the middle of the neighborhood where fieldwork was conducted; several hours were spent here each day by men from Africa, the Middle East, and Eu-

rope. There are also men who become so depressed by their marginal positions that they react with passivity; an emotional state that is “cured” by watching satellite-TV all day long. Many times during my fieldwork in Malmö I have met Muslim men who use television as a means of distraction: they skip through the channels over and over again, displaying a lack of sufficient energy to try alternative social strategies. The reflections of an Iranian woman in Darvishpour’s (2002) study quoted above illustrates the passivity great many Muslim men experience in Sweden: “Here he was unemployed. He had no hope and no ambition [...] he did not help me take care of the children. He mostly watched TV”.

#### 6.4.4 A space for different interpretations

A popular notion is that Muslim women suffer from patriarchal tyranny. The stereotype to which I am referring here is one in which Muslim women are forced by men to wear the veil and take care of the household, while the men are free to do as they wish. As do all stereotypes, this one contains elements of truth. Some Muslim women are surely dominated by their husbands. Some Muslim women – or perhaps more correctly, girls – are forced by their fathers to cover themselves when they reach puberty. In interviews during fieldwork it also became apparent that many Muslim girls are forbidden to leave the private sphere after school. They have to work in the family, while the boys may spend their free time anyway it suits them. There are also, however, other aspects of the relationship between Muslim men and women which makes an understanding of Islam difficult. In this section I will describe some of the complex social situations which occurred during fieldwork which involved men and women, and their internal and external relationships. These situations involve Muslim individuals (Islamists and non-Islamists) who use culture and religion in different ways when they socialized with Sara Johnsdotter and myself.

*Scene 1:* During fieldwork we got to know an Arab family who had moved to the neighborhood from another part of Sweden. They had been married for several years, had four children, and were non-Islamists; they practiced Islam occasionally. Sara Johnsdotter (SJ) contacted them first for an interview. When she came to their apartment she was greeted by the Arab husband who invited her to sit down in the living room. The man’s wife was not at home when SJ arrived at their home, but she arrived later. During the time the man and SJ waited, they sat in the living room and discussed various subjects concerned with integration. When the woman came home, she joined her husband and SJ; all three sat together in the living room during the time while SJ conducted the interview. The interview took place in an intellectually open atmosphere where the Arab man and the woman laughed and interrupted each other. The man’s definition of the “world” was not hegemonic. The woman did not wear *hijab*, and did not practice anything which could be interpreted as an Islamic lifestyle. When SJ came home after the interview she said: “You must visit them. They were very nice. I thought they would be more Islamic but it was like socializing



with a Swedish couple.” Some days later I contacted them and was invited to do conduct an interview.

*Scene 2:* When I came to their apartment the husband greeted me and showed me the way to the living room. We sat down. The doors were closed, and I could barely tell that there were activities taking place in the rest of the home. After an hour or so, someone knocked at the door. In came the man’s wife carrying a plate of coffee and biscuits. She did not look at me while she placed the coffee on the table, and she then left the room. Her eyes were focused on the floor, and she was dressed in a *hijab*. She did not enter the room again. When the man and I had completed the interview, he showed me the door and said goodbye. When I came home I had a hard time understanding what SJ had experienced. Had we made visits to the home of the same family? My impression was that I had visited an extremely religious family where Islam was practiced in an almost “fundamentalist” way, while SJ had visited a couple who acted like we did.

*Scene 3:* A couple of days later we invited this same Arab couple to our own home. We sat down in our living room, where all four of us spent a couple of hours together. There was an open atmosphere in which the man and the woman laughed and interrupted each other as they told us about their experiences in Sweden. The woman was dressed in Islamic garb and she had put on a *hijab*, but she did not look down at the floor when she talked to me. All in all, this socialization reminded of typical contacts between adults in the Western world. Nothing culturally or religiously specific characterized the meeting.

*Scene 4:* In the neighborhood we also had regular contacts with an *Islamist* couple who had four children. This couple had transformed their life completely when they began to practice Islam. Before they moved to the neighborhood they lived ordinary everyday lives as most non-Islam-practicing citizens in society, with all that implies about acting in, from an Islamic point of view, an immoral manner. During the time of fieldwork they attempted to practice a relatively fundamentalist type of Islam. The first time we met this couple, the man refused to shake hands with SJ because of, as he expressed it, respect for his own wife. This particular man practiced a *salafist* type of Islam which, for him (and his wife), meant that they reflected upon almost every act they wished to perform. Was it in accordance with Islam for a woman to ride a bicycle? Could they walk outside a restaurant which served alcohol? Could they allow their children to be included in school photos? Before we entered their apartment, both SJ and I had preconceptions about how we would spend the evening in segregation, with the women socializing in the kitchen and men in the living room. The opposite happened. We spent the evening together with the couple and their children in a chaotic atmosphere in their living room talking about Islam, Sweden, and many other things.

*Scene 5:* One of my informants in the neighborhood was a Palestinian man from Lebanon. He was a non-Islamist: he often argued that he disliked the connection between politics and religion. He had visited the Islamist organizations in the neighborhood and said that this made him suspicious of what was going on. He practiced Islam only occasionally. During the time we associated he married a woman from

Lebanon who had been chosen by his family in the Middle East. This man, who had at first stood out in my eyes as a relatively modern man who practiced a western life-style, refused to let me meet his wife. Every time we met in his home, his wife was doing something in the kitchen behind a closed door. All of sudden she would appear in the living room with a plate of coffee and biscuits, but she never said "hello": she was dressed in *hijab* and her head was lowered. She disappeared as suddenly as she had entered.

*Scene 6:* Another family we got to know were also practicing Muslims. The man in the family, an Islamist from the Middle East, always shook hands with SJ and talked to her when we met. In this family, the social patterns looked different each time we met. Sometimes women (and children) socialized in the kitchen, and we men met in the living room. On other occasions, we all socialized together over a cup of coffee, or a meal. In this family the wife spent more time in public than in private, in comparison to the husband: he was the one who cooked the food. Each time I visited the family by myself, I always met the man in the living room; the rest of the family could be heard doing things elsewhere in the house, but I never saw them. On these occasions, the wife always remained in another room.

What type of inferences can be drawn from these scenes?

One conclusion can be drawn concerning observations made during fieldwork. If Sara Johnsdotter and I had conducted entirely independent fieldwork, we would most certainly have collected different types of data and, because of this, we would have represented Muslims and Islam in two different ways. The observations made by myself alone would have reinforced my pre-theoretical knowledge, stereotypical conceptions of Islam as a religion which inherently favors men over women. The behavior of the men and women described in the scenes above (when I alone visited the homes) all show how Muslim men and women live segregated from one another; and, if this were not enough, women act like "butlers" for the men, serving coffee in a submissive manner. The differences in the patterns of socialization in the scenes can be interpreted in terms of differences based in male/female: when I, a single man, visited the families, I was a male stranger with whom women are not allowed to speak, according religious norms. However, it is also possible to consider other interpretations for understanding different patterns. What can be seen is that Islam is not a rigid model, or scheme, for behavior, which forces itself upon men and women and turns them into religious slaves. Even though the Islamist men above could argue for relatively static interpretations of Islam, in everyday practice there exists a relatively wide latitude for using Islam in different ways. Gender may, of course, be important, but it is not certain that it was always religious ideas which made the women described above act in the ways which they did. A woman may have had a bad day, and taken the opportunity to avoid talking to a guest. Maybe she had better things to do than to talk to a stranger. Some women may dislike certain men, and try to avoid them for that reason. My point here is that one cannot be sure that everything observed on the surface, in everyday situations, is grounded in a pious, religious worldview: Islamic ideas may be used for strategic reasons in everyday life.

## 6.5 A local critique of Islamists

Thus far I have discussed certain aspects of Islamism as it makes its appearance in Rosengård. It is, however, important to understand that even if Islamists dominate the institutional structure in the neighborhood, they are a minority in relation to other Muslims. In the everyday activities of Muslims, the relationship between Islamists and modest believers is hardly noticeable. But, as will be argued in this section, modest Muslims outside the associations are generally critical toward Islamism, which they regard as a rather disturbing political activity. This has been suggested to me on a number of occasions. Some modest believers have explained that Islamists are not trustworthy, that they are hypocrites, or that they are fanatics with the wrong ideas about Islam. Below follows a discussion of how two critical Muslim men described the problem of Islamism in the neighborhood.

In the following, I discuss a representative incident which took place in the Rosengård neighborhood during the period of my fieldwork. The reason for taking up this is that it illustrates some of the problematic dimensions which are involved in the relationships between modest Muslims and Islamists, and among Islamists with varying ideologies. What follows describes a local situation that occurred in Sweden, with all of what that means of certain locally-specific details, but it could be argued that the general pattern is globally distributed in the relations between actors with a modest/secularized outlook on religion and Islamists with different religious ideologies. Needless to say, the incident illustrates a certain heterogeneity among those who use the category Muslim in their self-identification.

### 6.5.1 A case: 'Now it's Christmas again'

For several years the clothing retailer Hennes & Mauritz (H & M, in the following) have advertised women's underwear on posters regularly distributed throughout urban space. In the ads, the company uses internationally famous models who show more of their physical bodies than underwear. Many pious Muslims I have interviewed have felt disturbed by the huge photos of (nearly) naked women, especially when a young Muslim man took a photograph of a well-dressed Muslim woman passing under an ad where Claudia Schiffer smiled out at the viewer. This photo was published in a local paper called *Rosengårdstidningen*, where the Muslim man worked as a photographer. According to the local editor, Ann Gäre, the photo was published in order to illustrate the cultural conflict between Muslim and Western understandings of women. Most Muslims in the neighborhood reacted to the photo. One of my informants understood the publication as a typically "Western" act which underlined the "racist" attitude Westerners have towards Islam. Other Muslims took an opportunity to argue in public that Muslim women practice dignity to a higher degree than do Western women.

Islamists in the neighborhood also reacted to the public representation of the photo. Some men from the *Islamic Cultural Association* visited the local editorial office of the newspaper where they criticized the paper for having published the photo. These activists also attacked another Islamist when he, in an interview following the publication, argued that Sweden is a pluralist country where it is all right for women to show their naked bodies in public, further stating that he would not oppose the placing of his wife and daughter “in front of” an H & M advertisement for female underwear. The words “in front of” were, however, lifted out of the leaflet that was handed out to Arabic households in the neighborhood, where it was claimed that the Islamist thought it was all right for his wife and daughter to be used as nude models for female underwear. This conflict – which took place between a “euro-Islamist” and Islamists belonging to the seleftist Islamic Cultural Association – ended when the euro-Islamist invited the seleftists to a debate in the mosque. Since the seleftists were not interested in debating the issue openly, they turned down the invitation.

The photographer was also attacked by unknown (to him) Islamists in the neighborhood. For a long period of time after the publication of the photo he was called late at night by strangers who threatened to kill him. He was threatened while doing his weekly shopping at Möllevångstorget when a man came up behind him and whispered threats in his ear. He was also the target in a leaflet distributed in the neighborhood. The photographer was criticized for breaking up Muslim community by taking photos which were hostile to all Muslims. Other Muslims in the neighborhood were asked to “stab” all Muslims who acted like the photographer. In the leaflet it was stated that “the worse is that the one who has taken the photo comes from a Muslim family” and he has “helped the enemy of his own religion”. The leaflet concludes with the following request to Muslims in the neighborhood:

I beg all Muslims with an intact feeling for their religion to speak out about this humiliating job [to take and publish the photo] and urge that they come out and attack strongly and hard. Therefore, I would like to say to our brothers and sisters to protect our principles and Muslim feelings and stab those who try to humiliate our sacred religion.

The leaflet is signed by *The Committee for Defense of the Holy Places of Islam, Malmö, Sweden*. This committee is unknown to all the Muslims I have interviewed and, as can be seen in the quotation, the leaflet seems to have been written by a single individual (indicated by the word *I*) and not by an organization. The photographer suspected that the text was written by a Muslim man he knew with contacts among Islamists in the neighborhood. He did not, however, have any proof to back up his suspicions. When I asked what was meant by the word “stab”, he said that “in old Arabic it means kill, not only with a sword but also by stoning. When I filed a report with

the police about the incident, they did not, however, agree with this. They claimed that it could also be about chopping off a finger or so".<sup>75</sup>

The photographer was not surprised by the reactions of the Islamists. On the contrary, he had expected them. In an interview he claimed that the reactions were produced by an understanding of the photo which said that "the Muslim woman also was naked" and that the men feared that the Muslim woman would be infected by the nude model "and take off the *hijab*". "I was threatened, and so was the paper", the photographer explained, "but it is my parents who have suffered most because of the photo. They have been contacted by Muslims who have questioned their roles as parents, with a son who would do a thing like this. But my father always says that people should talk to me, not to him. 'He is my son, and he is a photographer doing his job', my father answers the critics".<sup>76</sup>

### 6.5.2 Critique of Muslim isolationism

The aim of the photo was, according to the photographer, to initiate a debate about Muslim attitudes vis-a-vis Swedish society. In interviews following the incident, the photographer kept returning to the problem of the isolationism he experienced many Muslims in the neighborhood practicing, but which was, according to him, most profoundly noticeable among the Islamists. He was annoyed by this attitude, and also worried. He claimed that many Muslims, both men and women, refuse to admit that they live in Sweden, and that this is reflected in a negative attitude towards Sweden, and also in passivity.

Many Muslims wants to work, but at the same time they sit at home and close the door. But no one looks you up and knocks on your door. People in this neighborhood want to participate in society, but they do not know how to do so.

The isolationist attitude was also, according to the Muslim photographer, reflected in how certain Muslims interpreted what was stipulated by Islam. He was clearly irritated by how certain Islamists in the neighborhood practiced Islam, since he believed that their wrongly-based understanding of religion obstructed their opportunities to be integrated. "Many Muslims", he stated, "do not know anything about their own religion. They have learned from their parents that we should pray five times a day, that our God is called Allah, and that our Prophet is called Muhammad,

<sup>75</sup> In the following edition of the newspaper, various well-known persons commented on the incident. The director of the large mosque, Bezat Becirov, said that there were more serious things to be upset over. "The only thing that hits me", he said, "is that these ads can be dangerous for car drivers, but not for pedestrians". Jan Hjärpe thought that it was only a "small group of extremist Muslims who reacted", and said that the word "stab" can also mean "prevent" (Gäre 1997: 5).

<sup>76</sup> The publication of the photograph also forced the editor of *Sydsvenska dagbladet*, Jan Wifstrand, to formulate a defense in which he claimed the paper did not go too far by publishing the photo. It was not, he argued, published in order "to humiliate" anyone. The paper acted, Wifstrand argued, "in order to contribute to a better public debate in society, and for an enhanced knowledge of what is going on in Rosengård", (*Rosengårdstidningen*, January 1997).

but when you discuss religion with them they do not understand the text, and they accuse you of being a racist". He also argued:

There are plenty of groups in this neighborhood, Shia, Sunni, etc. But they do not know anything about religion in the various associations. If you live in Sweden, you should keep your religion to yourself, and not do like many in the associations, announce your religion in public by growing a large beard. Islam does not demand that you grow a large beard. If I had lived in a Muslim society, it would be alright to dress in traditional clothes in everyday life. I could even go to work in traditional clothes. But in Sweden I cannot do that. This is a different kind of society.

Here the photographer challenges Islamists' understanding of Islam by criticizing how they interpret certain aspects of what their religion demands. It could be argued that the photographer challenges the general Islamist attitude, which he thinks is too narrow-minded to fit into Swedish society. He believes that Muslims in general, but specifically Islamists, would change their minds if they became part of the majority society.

The thing is that when they get into society and have contacts with Swedes, they forget about their traditional life-styles. They change. It is, of course, hard to "forget" your old life when you spend most of your time in front of Arabic TV.

The same kind of critique was also formulated by another of my informants during fieldwork, a man who left the Middle East in the 1970s. He was even stronger in his criticism, classifying Islamists in the various associations as "Hell's Angels types". He was, however, careful to make a distinction between Islam and Muslims when formulating his views, and he argued that although he did not have anything against Islam as a religion, he did think that it was appropriate to attack a certain kind of "religious" behavior.

I attack these strange people who act in a way that makes us all [Muslims] attain a bad reputation. I do not want to make a thing of Islam. Islam is Islam, Christendom is Christendom. I mean, you do not walk around in the street, saying "I am a Christian, I am a Christian, or "I am a Buddhist, I am a Buddhist [...] you do not write "Buddhist" on your balcony, or on your car. They hurt themselves, and me as well, because they belong to me in a way. You get pushed from two sides. Let me give an example. You go to the U.S. and try to live in a place in California where many Swedes live. There is a scarcity of jobs, but you want one, and the Swedes just drink all day long and fight with the Americans [...] Do you get my point? You are pushed from both sides.

This informant also challenges Islamists in the religious associations for behaving in a ways that do not fit into Swedish society. He is afraid that their Islamic practices will affect his own opportunities to become accepted and integrated. Another way to explain the problem is to say that Islamists practice precisely that stereotype of Muslim men that is prevalent in the Western world. That is a stereotype which describes Muslim men as growing large beards, dressing in traditional clothes, acting aggressively towards opponents, and rejecting the Western world *in toto* – and this is a problem for the man quoted. Just as drunken Swedes could affect the opportunities of all

Swedes, the bearded Islamists, this man fears, can limit the opportunities for integration for all Muslims.

In summary, it can be said that pluralist scholars perceive Islamic associations/organizations differently in comparison to those Muslims who are embedded in the social reality of Rosengård. Pluralists claim that religious institutions, mosques, and schools are examples of the construction of a so-called Blue-and Yellow Islam, while grassroots Muslims emphasize how the actors in these organizations try to isolate themselves from the majority society. Hence the multiculturalist goal of defining religious institutionalization as a means of becoming integrated into Sweden limits the possibility of gaining a more realistic understanding of processes of institutionalization. A multiculturalist ideology blurs the perception of reality.

## 6.6 Summary

In this chapter I have tried to point out some of the social consequences of assigning religious rights to Muslims. The pluralist argument that religious rights should also include the public sphere – in the sense that Muslims should have opportunities to construct various independent Islamic institutions – is built on a denial of its own empirical implications. This chapter has shown, however, that religious institutions are established in a social context which is characterized by the existence of a high concentration of Muslims. Thus, religious institutions seem to function both as a factors of attraction for Muslims outside this context *and* as an instrument which keeps Muslims within the confines of their own group. The community that is being constructed within these institutions is a community of individuals who are ethnically and religiously different in comparison to native Swedes. Hence, Islamic institutionalization seems to reinforce ethnic integration rather than supporting the integration into Swedish society which is claimed for it by several spokesmen for the pluralist view.

Two other pluralist claims have been challenged in this chapter: a) that it is self-evident that Islamic institutions are part of the construction of a Swedish Islam and are therefore a step toward Muslim integration into Sweden, and b) that the institutions are devoid of politics and established by a neutral group of Muslims. Rather, we should see Islamic institutions as part of an internal power struggle concerning which religious interpretations will assume ideological hegemony. Islamic institutions, in this sense, are therefore also instrumental in the fragmentation of the Muslim group, something shown by the local critique which was formulated by the secularized Muslim men quoted in the chapter. In fact, Islamic institutions are established by Islamists who are involved in trying to Islamize local urban space. Some of these actors are isolationists trying to avoid “Swedification”. Needless to say, the conclusions indicated thus far are in clear contradiction to multiculturalist ideology since the values of

that ideology dictate that it is morally wrong to focus on the social consequences of religious rights.

Another conclusion drawn in this chapter is that when Muslims are ideologically, rather than empirically, framed, this will obstruct the possibility of understanding Islamism in terms of a social strategy performed by marginalized Muslim men; that is, as a solution to certain existential problems. Islam fulfills a multitude of emotional and social needs for male Muslims deprived of an opportunity to pursue a career in established society. While participating in an Islamist group these men can build community (friendship, belonging), establish meaningfulness, take part in public activity, and enhance their respectability and status. In addition, Islam also offers an ideology which can be used to construct social order for an individual in his/her relationship to family, group, and society.



## CHAPTER 7

# The Muslim Enclave as a Social Shield

In the previous chapter, the discussion focused on the social function of Islamic institutions in a local context. It was suggested, in relation to multiculturalist statements about the “Swedification” of Islam, that religious institutions seem to be important in ethnic rather than native integration (into the majority society). In this chapter, my intention is to challenge two ideas prevalent in the Swedish discourse on multiculturalism. First, the hegemonic notion that the issue of ethnic segregation is a problem which can be reduced to racism in the native majority society. Muslims and other immigrants are, in this perspective, regarded as passive victims of a hostile, racist, majority population who force Muslims into their own community. Anyone trying to understand segregation from a Muslim point of view – as a way of protecting oneself from ideological and social threats from the majority society – is at risk of being criticized for blaming the victim for his/her predicament. The second idea in the Swedish discourse is a refusal to admit the existence of ethnic/religious enclaves; that is, local urban social structures which are not integrated into, but are inserted into society. In Sweden the division of urban space is understood as a problem with respect to residential segregation.

My argument here is that ethnic/religious separation occurs not simply as a result of society’s exclusion (“racism”), but also reflects strategies of the actors involved, themselves. This is not blaming the victim. On the contrary, it is of great interest to understand what kind of social logic actors themselves think they are involved with, how they themselves experience their situation in society. With reference to Rosengård: it is not simply a place where people are forced to live, it is also a place where people choose to live. I contend that even in Sweden it is possible to observe the growth of a Muslim enclave, even though the process of enclavization here is less elaborated than it is in, for instance, the U.S. or Great Britain. These two levels – the actors’ subjective understanding of why they live separate from native Swedes, and the process of enclavization – are related to each other because the process of enclavization is grounded in how individuals experience everyday social life. For many Muslims, one of the most crucial aspects of life in Swedish society is trying to find social

strategies which can be effective in the construction of a sense of security – understood as protection from various Swedish ideological and social threats – which allows them to socialize their children as good Muslims.

In this chapter, I make a distinction between *segregation* and *enclavization*. Segregation refers to a type of ethnic division of urban space where immigrants reside together in the same neighborhood. In Sweden, the term segregation is used with two general meanings: a) it describes a general situation where immigrants are segregated from Swedes in terms of housing, work, social contacts, and b) it is used in a more specific sense in discussions about residential segregation. Here the term is used mainly to describe residential segregation. The term enclavization, which is also a type of ethnic segregation, is used to illustrate a situation where segregation has been “developed” in terms of ethnic/religious institutions. Enclavization includes both residential segregation and separate institutions, while segregation only refers to separate housing. My goal is to make a distinction between two types of ethnic/religious divisions of urban space: one characterized by a situation where immigrants live segregated but participate in the established Swedish public sphere, the other where immigrants are active in ethnic contexts both in private and publicly.

If one looks at the history of Malmö and Rosengård, it becomes evident that relevant to an understanding of the ethnic division of urban space is residential segregation during the time of labor recruitment; a period which ended in the 1970s. During this period immigrants lived ethnic lives in private but participated in the Swedish public sphere through work – with all that entailed concerning the use of Swedish public institutions. However, in the last two decades there has been a transformation of living conditions for persons who have immigrated to Malmö and Rosengård. Political refugees, family members (in short, all those who have immigrated to Malmö) are no longer being integrated into the economic structures of the city; this means that they are not participating in the native society’s public sphere but are spending most of their time in ethnic contexts both in private and in public. This is possible, as I see it, because of a double institutional process. First, since the 1960s and 70s, the city of Malmö has gone through a process of de-industrialization (described in Chapter Two) which has weakened opportunities for immigrants to become integrated into society. This de-industrialization has, as I argue in Chapter Six, marginalized many men and making it necessary for them to fill their days with something in order to survive. Some have established their own businesses, while some have established Islamic institutions; others do both. Over and above this, since the 1980s, there has also been a rise in the number of immigrants (Muslims and others) who have moved to and settled in the city of Malmö. These processes have laid a foundation, it will be argued in this chapter, for a process of ethnic and religious enclavization in the city of Malmö.

## 7.1 Segregation from above

### 7.1.1 Swedish academic experts on segregation

Pluralist scholars involved in the discourse of Islam in Sweden do not, as I have tried to show above, consider Muslim segregation a problem worth taking seriously. The main contour in much of what is said in this discourse insists that Muslims need to segregate themselves from Swedish society in order to survive religiously (see page 72). There are, however, similarities in the general approach of pluralist scholars who describe Islam and those Swedish scholars who have discussed problems of ethnic segregation in Swedish society. The commonality in the perspective comes from a tendency to interpret and understand immigrant problems as resulting from evils in the majority society, and to avoid all factors that somehow relate conditions to choices made by immigrants themselves. The logic is, thus, that Muslims are victims of a hostile majority society. As for ethnic residential segregation, immigrants themselves have no responsibility for this because they are segregated by a hostile majority society which has denied them the same opportunities in the labor and housing markets as are available to the native population (Andersson & Molina 1996: 173).

This interpretation of segregation – as an act of discrimination by the majority population which forces immigrants into ethnic ghettos – is a common left-wing understanding of ethnic segregation which can be found among many of those in favor of multiculturalism. According to this understanding, the problem of ethnic segregation is an outcome of the structural position which immigrants hold in the wider society. As Irene Molina (1997) formulates it in her thesis (my translation from Swedish):

Ethnic residential segregation should not be problematized as a process caused and reproduced by the ethnic groups themselves. [...] Ethnic residential segregation is in my perspective first and foremost not about ethnicity, but about the individual positions of power in society, where the category ethnicity basically constitutes one of several structuring elements [ibid.].

Molina's statement is thus based on a critique of those scholars who claim that ethnic segregation is caused by the desires of members of minority groups to seek proximity to ethnic compatriots, friends, and relatives. She argues that there is not enough evidence to support claims that immigrants want to live close to one another. In her criticism she jumps from the category *ethnic* to the category *immigrant* in order to question the notion of ethnic proximity; she claims that if immigrants had a need to live close to one another that would mean that they had developed an identity *as immigrants*, and not as "men or women, not as Iranians or Somalis, not as ordinary Swedish citizens, but as immigrants" (ibid.). The categories Muslims and Islam are not part of her conceptual apparatus.

There is also another problem involved here, related to the word *choice*. Molina and others argue that it is wrong to interpret living in an ethnically segregated neigh-

borhood as a question of choice. "In order to speak of one's 'own choice' it is reasonable to consider what kind of possible choices a household has" (ibid.) (my translation from Swedish). If ethnic segregation is explained as a choice made by the immigrants themselves, this is "blaming the victim" for his/her own social conditions, something which it is wrong to do, in itself. Molina argues that immigrants are too poor and too powerless (hold a negative structural position) in order to be able to make choices concerning their residential status. This structural perspective on segregation is built on two assumptions: a) ethnicity (or culture) is not important in an explanation or understanding of ethnic segregation, and b) if immigrants had the means they would settle in non-segregated places. The main structural obstacle for immigrants, as defined by Molina – both in terms of residence and work, is racism. In order to understand the real problems in Swedish society, it is important to use the term race instead of euphemisms like ethnicity. Molina claims that "ethnicity may sound better than race", but that "concrete racial relations" where "racial minorities through various discriminating mechanisms are positioned in the lowest social levels does not change if we use a soft rhetoric" (ibid.).

This perspective is thus built on a model of understanding where immigrants are reduced to being the victims of a hostile and racist majority society. There is no place (or need) to understand immigrants as agents who try to take responsibility for their lives in a particular social context. To think so is to blame the victim, as stated above. One problem here, is how we are supposed to make a distinction between compulsory and voluntary ghettoization, if segregation in Sweden is understood as compulsory. If segregation in Sweden is compulsory, where does that put South Africa on the scale? How shall we understand the Jewish ghettos during the Second World War? Analyzing how free citizens are when it comes to various choices in society is a job for philosophers and not anthropologists. It is, however, possible to say that even if immigrants, or other citizens, belong to an underclass, this is not synonymous with people being unable to make choices; all persons makes choices – whether they belong to upper or lower social strata. It gives us a false understanding of any human to think of him/her as either a victim or as an actor. Of course, lower classes have certain choices that are circumscribed. Poor families cannot buy a villa. The unemployed will have a hard time getting credit at a bank and therefore will have to reside in neighborhoods where there are cheaper apartments. This is not, however, self-evidently synonymous with people choosing to move, in this case, to Rosengård. In fact, most of the Muslims I have interviewed lived in ethnically non-segregated neighborhoods before they decided to move to Rosengård. They could have chosen to remain in these neighborhoods instead of moving. This contention is not being put forward in order to dismiss racism in the majority society as a factor in ethnic segregation. It is pointed out in order to highlight that there are ongoing social processes which need to be understood from the actors' points of view.

Although it may feel morally good to take a stand for victimized immigrants, such a stance will not provide us with a realistic understanding of contemporary ethnic/religious segregation. The ideas referred to here are recognized as the "official" perspective on how to explain and understand ethnic segregation. The Swedish state's

antiracist homepage, *Sweden against racism*, also argues against ethnic/cultural explanations of segregation. Immigrants, the state argues, do not choose where to live, but are mainly objects for discriminatory tendencies in the Swedish majority society.<sup>77</sup> That ethnicity, culture, or religion are unimportant to consider when it comes to segregation is also shown in the government report *Three Cities, a big city policy for the whole country* (SOU 1998: 25). Herein the authors almost never use the word ethnicity (or religion), saying instead that economically exposed neighborhoods are “immigrant rich” (ibid.: 17). The problem of segregation (ethnic or other), as it is understood by the state, is basically due to economic conditions (ibid.).

In the following I will contrast this structural perspective to how certain Muslim actors living in the ethnically/religiously segregated Rosengård explain how they ended up in the neighborhood. This is not being done in order to argue against the structural perspective in its totality, but to emphasize that ethnic and/or religious identification is a part of ethnic/religious segregation, and that this is important if the phenomenon is to be understood. Some people (in this case, certain Muslims) actually wish to remain in a neighborhood where there reside other Muslims because this makes it possible to confirm ones “normality”. The examples below should not be read as accounts which are representative of all Muslims living in the neighborhood. The intention with giving voice to the descriptions is mainly to use them as characteristic of a social process which seems to take place among certain Muslims. What my informants say illustrates, I believe, a certain social logic which it is important to be aware of if a particular kind of religious segregation is to be understood.

## 7.2 Segregation from below

### 7.2.1 Muslim voices

There is, as we have seen, a tendency to emphasize the structural aspects in the majority society when certain scholars explain social segregation. Muslims or other immigrants are construed as victims for a hostile society that pushes migrants into ethnic ghettos. This hypothesis, which is hegemonic in Sweden, was also part of my own thinking before we moved into Rosengård. Gradually, though, as I got to know Muslims and started to interview people, the question of segregation naturally became more complicated. When dealing with this phenomena from an actor’s point of view it became evident that many Muslims had lived outside the neighborhood, often for many years, before they moved to the place. Some had lived in other urban neighborhoods in the city of Malmö (in ethnically non-segregated areas); others had lived in other parts of Sweden before their move to this particular area. Below, I

<sup>77</sup> This page can be downloaded from <http://www.sverigemotrasism.nu/kunskaper/segregation.html>

present a few examples of how the social logic behind ethnic segregation can look like – in this case, how certain Muslims ended up in Rosengård.

In the 1992-93 I conducted a small field study in the city of Malmö where I spent several weeks together with a group of Palestinian men. During this particular period these men had just left refugee camps in northern Sweden and moved to Malmö. Here they rented run-down apartments in the city center. All of them were socially marginalized: they were out of work, had only sparse contacts with other Arabs, and had no informal contacts whatsoever with native Swedes. Generally, their lives were characterized by cultural and social *chaos*; they were confused by what they had experienced in Swedish society, and they needed a context which could provide them with some kind of meaningfulness. During the days they spent a few hours trying to learn Swedish together with other immigrants; at night they socialized together over a cup of tea in front of old television sets. The general chaotic situation – which was based in being uprooted from their home country and thrown among strangers in an alien urban space – resulted in a severe cognitive breakdowns, in personal crises, which all of the men spent a lot of time trying to alleviate. A general strategy was to try and find a place to live; a new apartment in a new community. After some time, two of the men left the city of Malmö and moved elsewhere in Sweden; one man moved to another (smaller) city in the south of Sweden; another man decided to stay in Malmö.

The man who moved to the smaller community did so because he thought that a smaller town would enhance his opportunities for becoming integrated into society. He thought that a small town, with only a few immigrants, would put an end to the social isolation and anonymous life he had in Malmö. He managed to obtain a quite nice apartment in the center of town, but he ended up in a situation where he experienced even greater isolation and depression, compared to his life in Malmö. The man who stayed in Malmö moved around among different apartments during the months that we interacted. He was never really satisfied in any of the three different places (all ethnically non-segregated) in which he resided; there was always something which troubled him. After two years, both of the men discussed here – the man who had moved to a small town and the man still moving around in Malmö – finally ended up as neighbors in Rosengård. Parallel to the process of moving around among various apartments, both of these men had gone through processes of Islamization. Our conversations over the months made it clear that both men had identified themselves as Muslims at the time of their arrival in Sweden, but gradually they had also become more conscious of their religious identification and had started to search for religious solutions to various problems. Put simply, it can be said that when I first got to know the men their identification as Palestinians, Arabs, men, and Muslims were equal – in the sense that none of these layers of “identity” dominated their selves. However, as time passed, Islam became the most important cosmology, the ideology that organized their everyday practices and outlooks on the world. In my fieldnotes from this period of time (notes written down during and after I met these men), there is nothing about racism as a reason for their moving to and from different urban locations. Considerations of how to make contact with Swedes outside various public

institutions are common, but neither of the men felt as though he was the target of a racism that forced him to find a new place to live.

Another Muslim family we got to know had, before residing in Rosengård, lived in a community in another part of south Sweden. In the beginning of their relationship neither the man nor the woman had been practicing Muslims; after a couple of years together they began to practice Islam. The man, who came to Sweden from the Middle East in the 1980s, had met the woman in Sweden and gradually, during the course of their relationship, they had entered the “Islamic road”. This couple had six children; even though all the children were born and raised in Sweden, none of them spoke Swedish. It was difficult for them to understand the meaning of even very basic, everyday Swedish; this was primarily due to the fact that the family spoke only Arabic at home, and that the children lacked Swedish friends. As a consequence of the gradual process of Islamization that the couple had gone through, they experienced greater isolation in the small community where they had formerly lived. In order to come to terms with this isolation, they decided to move to Rosengård. The man explained the family’s change of neighborhood in the following terms (my translation from Swedish):

[We settled in Rosengård] because my children had to learn some Arabic. They had to meet humans. In the other community there were no humans. I was the only foreigner there. It was a nice place, we had a nice apartment, cheap too, but I did not trust it [the village]. I wanted to have contact with humans. I cannot speak to forests, trees, and a nice apartment. I want to talk to humans. They understand me, but not the apartment or the village. [Carl bom 1998].

He uses the word “humans” when he describes a feeling of isolation in the neighborhood outside Rosengård. I do not think that it is correct to understand this choice from an ethnocentric point of view; that is, that *we* are the humans and everyone living outside our cultural world is classified as non-human. My informant uses the word because of language problems, and because he did not have any friends when he and his family lived outside Rosengård, neither among native Swedes or among Arabs. This interpretation is also confirmed by the man’s wife, who elaborates what her husband says about their change of residence (my translation from Swedish):

We had this idea that we should live more in accordance with religion. In the other community there were only Swedes, so my husband did not have any friends there. I was totally against coming here [to Rosengård] at first, because of all the negative things that have been said about this neighborhood. But, after a while, I discovered that it was [more] difficult to live as a Muslim in a place like the one where we used to live. That is, if I want to live as a Muslim and practice religion as a Muslim. We came to Rosengård because there are many Muslims here, many friends. And I began to meet women also. Now I would never move away from here. Never. I would not do that. [Carl bom 1998].

The woman focuses on religious aspects of the movement from the non-segregated neighborhood, while her husband emphasize a more cultural explanation. But both point out that they experienced a feeling of not-belonging, of existing in a world that, to a great degree, was meaningless (no friends, isolation, etc.). At first she felt repelled by moving to the neighborhood because of the negative reputation of the area, but,

as time passed, she became assimilated into the religious and social structures of the place. This couple is interesting because the woman was originally born and raised as a native Swede, and therefore started to feel alienated within her own cultural milieu when she began to identify herself as a Muslim. Thus, as a convert she went through an opposite process of cultural assimilation: from Sweden to Islam. Neither did this couple explain their move to Rosengård in terms of majority racism.

The same kind of focus on community was also expressed by two religious leaders I interviewed during fieldwork. One of the sheiks, a man who explained his activity in Rosengård in terms of being on a religious mission from a country in the Middle East, gave an immediate response to the question of why Muslims have become concentrated in the area by saying that they needed this concentration in order to find some kind of community. In Rosengård it was possible, he claimed, for Muslims to establish themselves in social networks, and it thereby became easier to cope with everyday problems. The other sheik, a former chairman of a religious organization located in the neighborhood, was asked to comment on the concentration of Muslims in Rosengård (my translation from Swedish). He said:

Because they need to have their identity recognized. It is because here they can find a group where one can feel safe. You experience a loss of roots. You want to find new roots. It is a way to find people of the same background to identify with people who have something in common, in a way.<sup>78</sup>

This religious leader was, as are many other Islamic leaders and interpreters, a well-educated man who professionally had to reflect upon human experiences and societal problems. He was well aware of the individual variants of integration which can be found among Muslim immigrants. He knew that diverse persons, depending on their former life-history, seek different solutions to their social predicaments. Some, he felt, may go through a process of religious rebirth, while others try to become assimilated into the new society.

A middle-aged Muslim woman, who during fieldwork was involved in *dawa* activities in the neighborhood (from a female point of view), also pointed out the problem of living as a religious believer in non-Muslim places. If it is to be possible to practice a religious identification without too much friction, she said, it is better to live among co-believers than to be isolated somewhere “out there”. It is of particular importance to be integrated with other Muslims, she believed, when it comes to the socialization of children (my translation from Swedish).

I believe that it is easier here [in Rosengård] where many Muslims live and where something is done for Muslims. If you live isolated somewhere “out there” or in a neighborhood where there are no Muslim children, I think it is a lot harder. They [Muslim children] feel more unusual and it is very difficult to make your identity functional. Outside [Rosengård] you will feel more marginalized, I believe.

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<sup>78</sup> Interviewed by Aje Carlbom.



Here the reflections concerns children, but this woman also points to a general feeling of isolation and not-belonging when Muslims try to cope with life outside Rosengård. This same experience was also discussed by another of my Arab informants. This man, a well-educated Palestinian, had also lived together with his family in another non-segregated neighborhood in Malmö for eight years before moving to Rosengård. During the interview he also underlined the importance of having found a place in the city where life was easier for him and his family than it had been outside the neighborhood. This man's project was living a relatively "pure" Islamic life such as he found stipulated in the Koran and Sunna; in order to be able to live in this manner he found it necessary to separate himself from non-Islamic contexts.

So far I have talked about Muslims with a religious orientation of some kind. That is, Muslims who regard Islam as an important individual life-project. It is, however, also possible to find the same experiential pattern among Muslims with a more secularized orientation. The same experience, for example, was described in an interview with a Somali man. The earliest period of time in Sweden he and his family spent in a non-segregated neighborhood outside the city of Gothenburg. After some months there, they felt alienated and different in relation to the surrounding Swedish environment; they chose to solve this dilemma by moving to Rosengård. In Rosengård they feel more safe and secure, basically because they can socialize with other Muslims and Somalis, live closer to friends and family, and can establish relationships with members of their own Somali *clan*. They have now lived in Rosengård for several years and feel no desire to leave.

An Arab family who had lived in a small village in the north of Sweden also found themselves in the same kind of situation as the Somali family. The Arab family had been, according to their own description, relatively well-integrated into the northern village. The native Swedes had treated them well. They had been invited into Swedish homes, and had been quite active participants in the everyday life of the village. This family moved to the Rosengård because – even though they had been part of village life in northern Sweden – they experienced an isolation which they wanted to do something about. They also disliked the climate of northern Sweden; the husband in the family, who had had a heart attack, wanted to live in a milder climate. The members of this family were aware of, and complained about, the fact that, even though they felt less isolated in their everyday life in the Rosengård neighborhood, they were isolated in relation to Swedish contexts; a situation which they feared would mostly affect their children. This was not, however, a powerful enough reason to leave the neighborhood for a non-segregated urban location.

In sum, most of the informants quoted above have lived in other (non-segregated) neighborhoods before they moved to Rosengård. It would be absurd to argue that they have been forced by a hostile native majority population to settle in Rosengård. The informants have most certainly made individual choices to settle in a segregated area (they could have chosen to remain in the non-segregated areas). In their own understanding of why they moved to Malmö/Rosengård, they emphasize factors other than racism, such as Islam, culture (ethnicity and language), community, trust, friends, roots, isolation, and socialization of children. In the Swedish multiculturalist

discourse there exist two ideas of segregation which are touched upon by what the informants quoted above say. One of these is that many Swedes seem to think that immigrants experience social isolation when they live ethnically separated in specific neighborhoods. It is possible to argue that living in an enclave means isolation from the wider native community. But this is not necessarily greater isolation *for the individual immigrant*. As we can see from the quotations above, Muslims have experienced isolation when they lived in non-segregated neighborhoods. They reacted to this isolation by moving to Rosengård. Many pluralists therefore seem to commit two errors. First, they assume that living ethnically/religiously separately from Swedes is reducible to native racism. Second, they assume that living separately somehow facilitates integration because it provides residents with a local foundation from which to confront the world outside (the Swedish society). However, the problem is that as an enclave develops one no longer needs the outside world, as will be discussed in the following.

## 7.3 Social protection of experiences

### 7.3.1 Private and public in the local context

From the descriptions above, it is possible to interpret actors' self-separation as a social strategy used to construct a certain "plausibility structure" (Berger and Luckman 1966: 157, BL in the following). If an individual has a project of practicing a certain type of identification which is embedded in a particular kind of symbolic system, then this practice needs to be anchored in a social context with other actors of the same kind. BL illustrate their argument (see page 157-159) (as does, for example, the SMC) with the religious convert. For a convert it is necessary to make a break with the old social life in order to make it possible to become assimilated into the new way of life. According to BL, the ideal way to construct a plausibility structure is by "physical segregation"; to remove oneself from what is experienced as the wrong world (ibid.: 158). BL illustrate their argument with the religious convert, but it is important to understand their perspective as more general. Hence, if someone wishes to practice a religious identity, it appears to be socially necessary to be a member of some sort of viable religious community (ibid.: 158).

This is also what the Muslims quoted above point out: that they have moved to the Rosengård neighborhood in order to be closer to other Muslim believers. It would be quite difficult, in fact, for a Muslim individual to be a practicing believer in a totally secularized, or non-Muslim, social context. To be alone in a such a context and attempt to practice faith in a "pure" manner would be almost impossible. Practicing one's religion is, as are all practices of identity, also a social activity. BL point to an important aspect of religion, regarded as a social phenomenon, but it is also

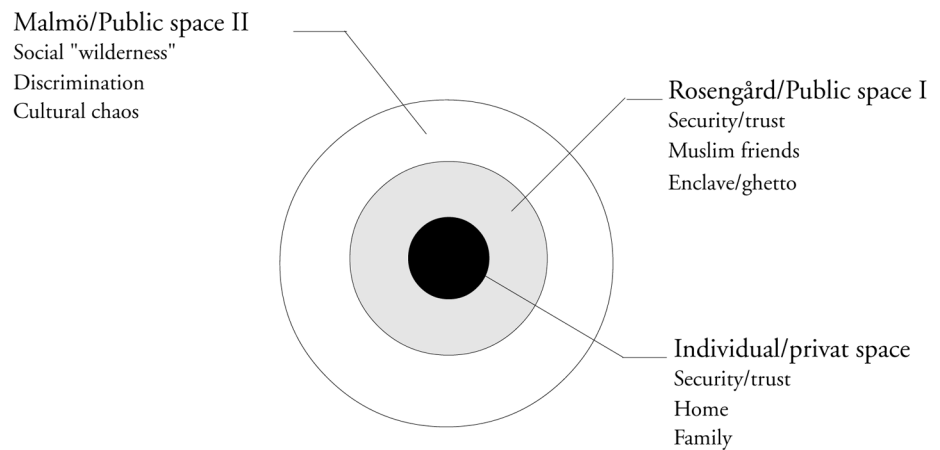
possible to argue that they are quite “mechanical” in their statements. If we look at the interviews cited above, the informants also refer to other aspects of living together with co-religionists which indicate a more total experience. In addition to religion *per se*, informants mention factors such as language, culture, social security (trust), socialization of children, isolation, etc. Religion (here, Islam) may be regarded as one of the more important issues, but there also seem to be other factors involved. Another way to look at Muslims in Rosengård, and at their relationship to the rest of urban space in Malmö, is to think in terms of private and public space.

From an individual point of view, it is quite clear that many residents in the neighborhood experience Rosengård and the city of Malmö as two relatively distinct public spaces. When visiting people in their homes, one always encounters an ethnically and religiously distinct environment, both materially and socially; each home is a culturally different island, where people live according to their own rules. Every home, Swedish or Muslim, is a small “homeland” where people feel comfortable and safe; inside the private sphere it is possible for people to identify with various material and symbolic manifestations. When moving out from the private sphere into the public sphere within Rosengård, people experience a higher degree of cultural agreement than when they move to the urban public sphere outside Rosengård. Inside the neighborhood residents can move around in a social environment with which it is easier for them identify and cope than they can outside. For Muslims, for example, it is possible to find other Muslims with which to interact, both when it comes to friendship, and in the more formal practice of religion. Muslim women can do their everyday business while dressed traditionally, and inside the neighborhood they can do this without having to feel different in comparison to the surrounding social environment. From an individual point of view, it is normal for a Muslim woman to meet other Muslim women doing their everyday shopping, etc.; this produces a higher degree of social trust in comparison to how Muslims experience public space outside the neighborhood.

Urban public space located outside the neighborhood is generally experienced as problematic. This is not only because Muslims feel different, but also because they experience that their difference is valued negatively, and that native Swedes (or other non-Muslims) dislike Muslims and treat them with hostility. The symbolic violence which Muslims experience in public space outside Rosengård is not located in a specific arena, but is a general feeling that is felt in various contexts. One of my Arab informants described, for example, how he and his wife had been confronted in the street by a native Swede who said: “Go home, we don't want you here”. My informant also described how he and his wife had to wait many hours longer than native Swedes in the hospital during his wife's pregnancy; this he interpreted as discrimination because of their being Muslims (she was wearing the *hijab*). Other descriptions mention the ambivalence in the gaze of the other (from native Swedes) and note how this produces an emotional uncertainty among Muslims which is complicated to deal with in everyday life. Hence, discrimination and racism *are* aspects of the Muslim experience of life in Sweden, but an understanding of ethnic/religious separation cannot be, as Molina and other leftist pluralists argue, reduced to this particular factor

alone. It is possible to illustrate the relationship between private and public, as it is understood here, with a schematic model:

## The Urban Position of the Individual



In the 1920s, the sociologist Louis Wirth described the history of the Jewish ghetto, and his description of the basic experience underlying the social need to live together with other Jews is plausible as a description of certain aspects of the Muslim enclavization in Malmö:

From this little world of kinsmen they gained courage to live and venture into the larger cosmos that loomed enticingly beyond the high walls. The ghetto offered security and status in a narrow but intimate community, sheltered from the storms that raged without [Wirth 1920: 39].

In the Swedish discussions about ethnic segregation, this kind of description would not be valid because it blames the victim for being in a segregated position. The ghetto is, from the residents' point of view, experienced as a social shield which can be used to protect them from various threats out there in Swedish society. This contrasts with the researchers' point of view, which sees enclaves such as Rosengård as prisons into which people are forced, which they would leave if they were able to do so. It is not, however, self-evident that all immigrants, Muslims and others, wish to become part of the political community in Sweden.

This experience can also be found in Muslim contexts outside of Sweden. McGown (1999) has described the function of the Somali enclave in Toronto (and London) as a means of protection from the outside world. Two of her informants, interviewed about Islamic practice, claimed that:

There is a large Muslim community here, so you can stick with them. [...]. The companionship and strength make you stronger. You can't crack this society's way of practice. If you make yourself isolated, it can be good if you are a group and good if you have children. If you try to assimilate your kids will pick up bad things [ibid.: 73].

### 7.3.2 Protection of children

In order to understand Muslim residential segregation as a choice, it is important to emphasize that it is central to the actors themselves to live in an urban space where it is possible to arrange for the protection of experiences. Basically, it could therefore be argued that the protection of social experiences is a theme with variations. On one hand, adult Muslims feel a need to protect themselves from discrimination (or what is experienced as discrimination) by the majority society, making it possible to establish an Islamically-based social structure. On the other hand is the issue of protecting children's experiences and thereby gaining control of their processes of socialization as Muslims. During fieldwork, Muslim children were a constant theme in both interviews and everyday conversations. The protection of the experiences of children can take various forms, depending on the social context. For example, during a P.T.A. meeting at our son's school, a Muslim father refused to let his daughter accompany her class to watch an opera for children with the argument that "in the opera they wear tight clothes and short skirts" (my translation from Swedish). His daughter was also forbidden to participate in a visit to a church because her father did not wish her to receive any Christian impressions. Several Muslim men took part in this meeting and they all agreed that their children should be stopped from swimming together with their classmates in a public bath. The fathers argued that their children should not have to confront other naked bodies.

It would be incorrect to claim that all Muslim parents have the same notion of how to best protect their children from non-Islamic experiences. This is an important topic for negotiations and reflection among Muslim adults; it can be difficult for parents to decide where to set boundaries. A Muslim mother in the neighborhood argued that an important distinction should be made between seeing an activity and being a participant in it. She said that her daughter could watch a traditional Christian event such as the Lucia day celebrations because it is important for her to know what is happening in Sweden, but that participating in it was out of the question. "Islam stipulates," she said, "that others have their traditions and we have our own traditions; you should practice your own and not those of others". She claimed that it was not good to mix traditions because then religions becomes so blurred "that no one really knows where they come from or what they stand for". During fieldwork this mother was involved in a conflict with the teachers about how to deal with "cultural training" before Christmas. The two female teachers claimed that it was necessary to start practicing Christmas songs in the middle of November because of the multicultural composition of the class, while the Muslim mother questioned this idea. "I was unhappy about the Christmas celebrations; they felt like a necessary evil, but some things she [the daughter] could participate in as long as not too much stress was placed on the activities". After a time, the mother realized that her daughter was caught in a conflict between their Islamic life and the Swedish/Christian traditions she met at school. "She [the daughter] felt uncomfortable in singing the Christmas songs because we didn't like it at home". The mother hoped that Christmas would end without any problems, but a conflict developed when the teachers told her

daughter that if she was unhappy with singing Christmas songs, “she could go to a Muslim school instead” (all translations from Swedish mine).

Another practice that annoyed Muslim parents in the class concerned the teachers’ practice of alternating boys and girls in their seating arrangements. According to the teachers, this was used as a method to keep down the level of conflict in the class. Some Muslim parents in the group argued that they did not want their daughters to have the experience of sitting beside boys, and thereby be exposed to the danger, in the parents’ eyes, of experiencing positive feelings toward boys. A father claimed that he was afraid that his daughter would store positive feelings of boys in her memory if she sat too close to them. “This memory will never disappear”, he said, “and when she grows up it can come back and nourish an idea that they should meet [because it was such a nice experience – my comment]. Another Muslim mother also interpreted the placing of boys beside girls as “very provocative”. “It is unnatural; they ought to have an opportunity to sit beside whomever they wish”, she commented. She was not as committed as other parents to this cause, but her opinion was that Muslim parents should have the power to decide this question because it could be problematic for parents to separate boys and girls in the long run. “One day they will no longer be allowed to socialize freely, and it can be difficult for parents to make the children understand this all of a sudden”, she argued. (all translations from Swedish mine)

One variety of protecting children is attempting to construct a Muslim identity through Koran schools. During fieldwork I had an opportunity to visit a Koran school organized by the Islamic Center/the Great mosque, which is located in the south part of the neighborhood. This particular Koran school, as far as I can tell, differed from other schools in the neighborhood in the sense that the teacher, *imam* Adly Abuhajjar, tried to socialize the children by using a “positive” teaching method. The general picture in the West of Koran schools seems to be exemplified by showing a line of boys sitting bent over a Koran, reading and reciting the word of God, hour after hour. In the course I participated in, religious knowledge was transmitted with the aid of games and quizzes, in a friendly and positive atmosphere. All the children laughed and had a good time, both during the teaching sessions and afterwards, when we made our beds in the mosque.<sup>79</sup> The *imam*, who also has training as a teacher, invented this method of teaching Islam in order to make the transfer of religion better able to compete with what the commercial world outside the mosque could offer young people. A great fear among Muslim parents is that their children will become victims of drugs or sexual promiscuity, and that they will internalize negative moral values; the only way to fight this, according to the *imam*, is to make Islam a more attractive alternative.

Above, I have referred some of the Muslim parents I interviewed during fieldwork. The need to protect children from an immoral and dangerous society is, however, something that should be understood as a general issue which concerns Muslim families. The same problems are, for example, discussed by Otterbeck (2000) in a book

79 The word “bed” indicates that we spent the night in the mosque. The course took place every Friday to Saturday during the winter season.

about Muslim parents and the problems related to Swedish public schools. “All” of his Muslim informants “talked about how they perform a daily struggle for their daughters’ and sons’ morality” (ibid.: 127). The parents were mainly concerned with sexual issues, the exposure of naked bodies and sexual relationships in the media (ibid.). Questions such as these belong to the most important aspects of the SMC-model of integration. The organization presents a long list of ways to protect Muslim children from the dangers found in Swedish society. Muslim children should be protected by Islam “from being victims of sexual promiscuity or sexual violence in Swedish society”, they should be kept apart from Christendom (celebration of Easter, Christmas, and Lucia). Most activities for children should, according to the organization, be organized in a way that protects the children from the majority society and strengthens their Muslim identities (*Att förstå Islam*, pp. 69). It is understandable that Muslim parents feel that they are taking responsibility as parents when they protect children from the majority society. However, this protection also has as a consequence that the Muslim children are deprived of the opportunity of learning the cultural skills necessary to succeed in Swedish society and kept from learning of how to cope with the dangers present in that society.

## 7.4 The neighborhood in a wider context

From a Muslim point of view, it is often said that one reason for moving to, and living in, the Rosengård neighborhood is the possibility of achieving an enhanced feeling of social safety. People feel safe in the neighborhood. This is safety, as discussed above, with several dimensions. Spontaneously, it is easy to accept that it is a good thing that people feel safe and secure; especially immigrants who have just arrived in a new society. However, from a multiculturalist point of view, it is also possible to see this aspect of ghettoization as problematic. An important value of multiculturalist ideology demands that immigrants be integrated into the established Swedish public sphere. This idea should be seen in relation to ethnic segregation, which is regarded as the opposite of integration. If the neighborhood is placed in a wider political and social context, it becomes more difficult to understand safety and security as unambiguous aspects of neighborhoods like Rosengård, since the experience of security may hinder initiatives to break out of a segregated place. Thus, the experience of safety which is pointed out by the Muslim actors above, is in accord with the ideology of security which has been developed by Swedish public actors involved in managing the neighborhood in recent decades. In the following, after a description of the neighborhood, I will relate this to my general argument about the problem of safety and security.

### 7.4.1 A high degree of social order

Many who visit the neighborhood are surprised by the high degree of material and social order that meets the eye.<sup>80</sup> Rosengård may be described by many different words, but the word *slum* is not one of these. The place may be best described as a Swedish welfare ghetto with a comparatively high standard of housing and in the local environment. Nowhere is it possible to find signs which might suggest that one is situated in a poor, underclass area. Streets are clean, and flowers and bushes grow everywhere. The housing, a few multistory buildings, is made from prefabricated concrete, but residents can go for a walk nearby in a well-kept park with playgrounds and benches. The public schools are situated in the middle of the neighborhood within walking distance from home. It is also possible to play tennis, soccer, basketball, or handball in one of the playing fields or indoor courts available for residents. In the summertime, it is possible to use a public swimming pool which all of the residents can easily reach on foot.<sup>81</sup>

The reasons why Rosengård is such an orderly place can be found in the social engineering work undertaken by the neighborhood's largest real estate owner, *Malmö kommunala bostadsaktiebolag* (MKB). This company, owned by the municipality, implemented a few years ago a new housing policy aimed at deconstructing the negative material and symbolic status which had characterized the neighborhood. As the company itself puts it: "In the early 1990s, the situation in Rosengård was chaotic. If the area was to avoid being gradually turned into a slum, immediate measures had to be taken. The problems in the area had to be solved through other actions than those which had been used previously, which were basically: physical improvements, intensified housing stock administration, improved service and a spectrum of various cultural projects" (Andersson, Alfredsson and Cars 1998: 27). The new goals set up by the company for improving living conditions in the neighborhood were intended to insure that their tenants would "enjoy" living here, that they would feel "secure" in the neighborhood, and the area would be "clean" (ibid.: 23).

It can be argued that the company – at least in Rosengård – modified its role from that of a centralized actor without social ambitions into that of an actor who expanded the scope of its activities to also include cultural and ideological factors. It is quite difficult to describe the company in unambiguous terms, since it orchestrates a wide range of material and social activities. In one sense, the company can be seen as a kind of local "panopticon" because it has developed a network of informants who have first-hand knowledge of thousands of residents. All new residents are visited by a "housing informant" who explains what is allowed and not allowed in the area. We were, for example, informed about how to use the facilities in the apartment, where

80 During the time of fieldwork, Jack Katz from UCLA and Donald Horowitz from Duke University made a visit to the neighborhood. They were very surprised by how this neighborhood could be regarded as a social problem.

81 During fieldwork Islamists in the neighborhood rented the swimming pool and opened it for "Islamic swimming". That meant that they segregated men and women and demanded religiously correct swimming suits.



to put bicycles, how to contact people, etc. The company could also be described as a type of local police. Every day various employees from the company work with enforcing different kinds of social boundaries in the neighborhood. This is work which concerns all kinds of boundary trespassing. Flowerbeds are watched, as are laundries. Relationships between residents (for example, different types of complaints) are observed, as is whether residents throw away garbage in a correct manner. The company has also organized the establishment of various groups of residents who patrol the neighborhood at night in order to discipline troublesome residents or others.

The company can also be described as a social organizer of neighborhood space. When we lived there, the company distributed social space among various ethnic/religious groups in the sense that it hand-picked residents for various houses. This activity was based on previous experience of conflict and chaos, when buildings and yards were characterized by too many different “cultures”. The company has also helped certain groups of residents with locales and rooms for cultural, ethnic, and religious activities. For example, it is MKB who rent so-called basement prayer halls to various Islamist groups; the company also helped one of the first Islamic private schools obtain buildings for its school. The company also assists other types of associations with places for their activities, however. It is important to keep in mind that the activities of MKB being described are not only a matter of “discourse” or an ideology written on paper. As a former resident in the neighborhood, I can affirm that the actions performed by the company really worked in a physical, concrete meaning of the word. One interesting aspect of the work done by MKB is that the company has moved in on a social space which is traditionally supposed to be “controlled” by the social welfare department and the police. These two institutions, which cooperate with the housing company, do not reach as deeply into the social world of residents as MKB does.

The company has accepted that Rosengård is an immigrant area, and it tries to design its work from the reality it believes exists in the neighborhood; important in this regard is its willingness to listen to the voices of the residents. A problem many residents have experienced is the high degree of unemployment. Thus, in order to achieve the goals in the company model of how the neighborhood should function, it has started activities similar to those of the employment office. In locales offered by the housing company an organization for small-scale service businesses has been established.

In the middle of the neighborhood the (newly renovated) commercial center, *RoCent*, is located. Here it is possible to buy whatever everyday items might be needed: clothes, gifts, flowers, food (*halal*-meat), candy, electronic products (microwave ovens, cameras, etc.), medicine (in a Swedish drugstore, *Apoteket*), beds (and bed-clothes), airline tickets (Middle East specialists), toys, pizzas, kebab, hot-dogs (*halal* and others), newspapers, biscuits, bread, etc. All in all, the neighborhood is a small society within society where it is possible to satisfy almost all one's everyday needs, except for advanced medical care. When one lives in the neighborhood it is not necessary to use the rest of the city; in fact, it is more complicated than rewarding to do errands in downtown Malmö. *RoCent* center can be used to symbolize the social

transformations which have effected Sweden in recent decades. In the beginning of the 1970s, most shops were typically Swedish, but today most of the stores are owned by immigrants from the Middle East who have established their businesses in the middle of their market.<sup>82</sup> Several shops are, for example, owned by Arab-speaking persons of various origins. A small bazaar has been opened where it is possible to find items directly targeted at Arabs: shoes, wedding dresses, clothes in general, Arabic books and magazines. It is, in fact, easier to obtain the largest Arab newspapers in the neighborhood than it is to buy the largest Swedish morning paper, *Dagens nyheter*. Other services are also available in the neighborhood, such as haircuts for women practicing Islam (they can get their hair done behind a veil) and lawyers; there is also a Swedish library in the center which contains books and newspapers in most languages. Anyone who desires a cup of coffee or a meal may use the restaurants located in the commercial center. One of few Swedish institutions still in the center is the state-administered liquor shop, *Systembolaget*.<sup>83</sup> The institutions described here are situated within walking distance from home: any of the residents in the neighborhood can reach the stores and other facilities in a few minutes. As stated above, it is also possible to find cultural and religious institutions, such as associations and mosques, in the neighborhood. These function as extensions of the private sphere: here people, mainly men, meet during the days and nights in order to spend a few hours together over a cup of coffee or a game. The associations and mosques are ethnically and religiously distinct, and are organized by local entrepreneurs whose ambition is to become politically influential among their co-ethnics.

#### 7.4.2 The construction of social safety as a problem

My goal in this section is to highlight a general problem of integration and segregation in contemporary Sweden. On one hand, multiculturalist ideology stipulates that immigrants – Muslims and others – should become integrated, and an obstacle to this integration is segregation (whatever form the segregation may take). This is the political goal, as formulated by the state. On the other hand, several local actors in the Rosengård neighborhood work toward making the neighborhood a nice, clean, safe place to live. These measures resonate with how many Muslims experience urban space in Malmö: they want to live in a safe neighborhood; and this is a safety linked to the desire to separate Muslims from other citizens. My point here is simple: if resources are used to make the neighborhood a safer place, where residents can practice their cultural identity in separation from a Swedish context, society (the state, and

82 When we made a visit to the neighborhood with one of our daughters, we had a kebab in a small restaurant. The place was full of Arabs. Our daughter was quiet to begin with, but after a while she asked: "Mum, are we in Sweden now?" The other guests looked at her and laughed.

83 This is, compared to other *Systembolag* in Sweden, advantageous to use before holidays. Normally *Systembolaget* is crowded with people on holidays, but since Rosengård is populated by so many Muslims, the store here is empty. Only a few alcoholics use it regularly.

the housing company, MKB, for example) are making it more difficult for immigrants to be integrated into Sweden.

The intention underlying these measures may be understood as desirable from a multiculturalist position since the activity is aimed at avoiding a slummification of the neighborhood. Why should immigrants live in a slum? However, the social consequences of making the neighborhood a nice place to live – in combination with the relatively well-developed institutional structure – is that several Swedes and immigrants (Islamists belong to this category) are involved in the construction of a society within society: a permanent enclave characterized by cultural/religious diversity. Thus, what is constructed is, for Sweden, a historically-new social structure which, in transnational perspective, may expand over time with arrival of new immigrants who seek out the enclave upon their arrival in Sweden in order to find security and safety. One argument against what is claimed here is that the immigrants (Muslims and others) will become more integrated as time passes: spending time with co-ethnics is something that an individual needs in the initial stages of his/her exile. The enclave is needed at an early stage in migration; later on, when people feel sufficiently secure, they will move out of the enclave and into the majority society. This argument is based on an assumption which says that immigrants, as Suárez-Orozco (2002) phrases it, make a “clean break” with their home countries. But, as he and others have demonstrated (Basch, Schiller and Blanc 1995), migrants are involved in different type of global economic and social context than was the case a few decades ago. Transnational links are not the focus of this thesis, but there is no reason to believe that Sweden should be any different in this respect, in comparison to other places in the world. The relationship between the Rosengård neighborhood and the city of Malmö is a case in point when it comes to the problem of integration. As has been argued elsewhere in this thesis, contemporary Malmö lacks the economic resources needed to absorb a large number of workers (immigrants and natives).

## 7.5 A process of Muslim enclavization

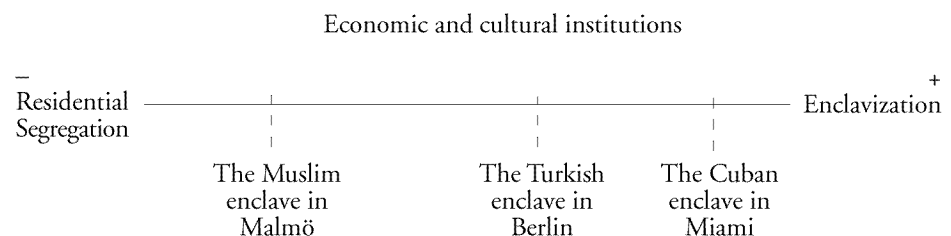
### 7.5.1 Enclavization as a process

What is an ethnic enclave? Is it qualitatively different from ethnic segregation, another concept used to describe ethnic divisions of urban space? In the Swedish context, there exists a relatively long tradition of defining urban spatial divisions in terms of ethnic residential segregation. The official political definition of an urban area such as, for example, Rosengård, states that some immigrants only live or reside in this particular neighborhood. Official experts deny that there exist any ethnic or other enclaves in Swedish society. For them, the division of urban space between Swedes and immigrants is basically understood in terms of residential segregation. In other

words, people from other parts of the world than Sweden reside together in the same urban neighborhood, but they do not cooperate with one another in a separate economy “where recruitment of labor and entrepreneurs follow ethnic lines” (Andersson and Molina 1996: 169). Andersson and Molina (*ibid.*) reduce the meaning of the term enclave to aspects of an economic structure, i.e., there is no place for culture, ethnicity, or religion in their definition of an enclave. Molina (1997) has argued that ethnic networking is not part of contemporary Sweden because people who have come here are too multiethnic. In order for an enclave of the American type to come into existence, it would be necessary to have “a much larger number of immigrants than what the Swedish groups constitute” (*ibid.*).

It is true that, if the Swedish situation is compared to that of the United States, there do not seem to exist any well-elaborated ethnic enclaves with high degrees of institutional completeness. A problem here, however, is that Swedish scholars seem to think of ethnic enclavization as an all-or-nothing phenomenon: either there is an enclave or there is not. It is more accurate to understand the establishment of an enclave in terms of a social process, where immigrants live in a more or less enclavized social structure. Enclavization may entail cultural, religious, social, and/or economic networks. Using the more all-inclusive American-type of enclave as a prototype would mean that an enclave could never exist in Sweden. The problem with using such a model is that it does not allow us to see the changes that have taken place in Swedish society during the last few decades. Rosengård is neither a ghettoized Harlem, Little Havana, nor Chinatown. It does share elements with all three, however; it is a place for socially vulnerable families and a “home away from home” for Muslim and other immigrants.

### Enclavization as a process



My intention with the above diagram is to illustrate that ethnic/religious enclaves may be more or less institutionalized. The left part of the continuum is intended to show that immigrants can live residentially segregated from majority populations without any ethnic cultural or commercial institutions. According to this model, when ethnic groups live residentially segregated, they use the institutions of the majority society on an everyday basis to satisfy various needs. As soon as cultural and commercial institutions which are ethnically different (compared to native institutions) are established, a process of enclavization has begun. The more institutions that are established, the larger the enclave becomes. The expansion, both in terms of

people and institutions, makes it possible for actors to satisfy cultural, economic, and social needs. The social logic of the continuum is that, if no ethnic institutions are established, people will live residentially segregated but participate in the native majority society's institutions: a situation that, in the long run, will lead to cultural assimilation. If the development leads to a large percentage of ethnic institutions and a high degree of enclavization, this may entail, in the long run, a process of urban colonization where immigrants live in a relatively well-developed society within society. Which of the logics becomes dominant depends, as I see it, on the number of immigrants and the opportunities for newcomers to become integrated into native institutions.

Looking at the history of the Rosengård neighborhood, it is possible to argue that today immigrants in the neighborhood do more than simply live together as neighbors, as a residentially segregated group. In the contemporary neighborhood, immigrants – especially Muslims – have many other opportunities for practicing ethnicity and religion than did labor migrants up until the 1970s. There has been an expansion and growth in the number of Islamically-based institutions in the last ten to twenty years. When the neighborhood was originally built (1960s-70s), and during the first years of its existence, no Muslims lived here. In the 1970s, the dominant group was made up of Swedes from the countryside (Flemström & Ronnby 1972: 93). Since the 1980s, more and more Muslims have settled in the neighborhood. These Muslims are virtually all socially and economically marginalized. Most of them have poor or no education, speak poor or no Swedish, and do not have the skills needed to acquire jobs in an information/service society such as Sweden. The existential problems generated by the social situation has led to the development of religious and other, commercially-based solutions to these problems.

Gradually, as more Muslims have settled in the area, there has also been a growth of those institutions needed to practice a culturally and religiously different way of life (Islamic associations, grocery shops, Islamic private schools, hairdressers, etc.). In the contemporary neighborhood, it is therefore possible to satisfy basic everyday needs – buy *halal* food, socialize with friends, etc. – without having to leave the area. The experience of living as a Muslim in the contemporary neighborhood is expressed well by one of Ristilammi's (1994) informants. This informant, Hassan, had negative feelings toward the area to begin with, but changed his mind after he and his family settled there. During an interview with Ristilammi, he stated that he really liked living in the neighborhood

not only because of the mosque, but also because of the Islamic school for my children. .... The children go to the Muslim school, on Fridays we go to the mosque, when we do our shopping in the stores we meet Muslims. .... After what have happened in Malmö with the mosque, the Islamic school and all Muslims that have concentrated here in Malmö, I do not want to move again, but instead to stay here. The children learn Arabic and know a lot about Islam. When I was in Lebanon I did not know as much about Islam as they do now [ibid.: 116].

Residents in the contemporary neighborhood confront a social context different from the situation that labor immigrants had to cope with. The change in social con-

text for today's and yesterday's Muslim migrants is, of course, not only due to a rise in the number of Muslims who have come to Malmö and settled in Rosengård, or to the growth of ethnic/religious institutions. The process of enclavization is also related to the economic transformations that have taken place in the larger, surrounding, urban context. Since the 1970s, Malmö has – as have several other cities with their economic bases in highly developed industries in need of a large number of workers – gone through extensive de-industrialization, with effects for all the residents in the city. The consequence of this for Muslims and other immigrants is that they have a hard time finding work; something reflected in the statistics for Rosengård and Malmö and also in the many projects which have been created in order to deal with the situation. From a social point of view, it also means that a great many Muslims and others very seldom have any reasons for leaving Rosengård, and therefore remain within the public confines of the neighborhood. An important difference between the early labor immigrants and the more recent wave of refugee/family-reunification immigrants, is that the early labor migrants spent at least eight hours a day in the industrial jobs which were available to them at the time, while the refugees spend almost twenty-four hours in an ethnic/religious area where even their jobs (cleaning, taxi driving, etc.) are now ethnically distinct.

This certainly has consequences for individual Muslims learning the Swedish language or other culturally specific skills needed in order to become integrated in Swedish society. The difference is that not only is it more difficult to learn Swedish, it is also less necessary. When Muslims do leave the neighborhood in order to buy food or other everyday items, a great many visit a square called *Möllevångstorget*, which can be described as an extension of the Muslim enclave in Rosengård. It is located downtown, about a fifteen minute walk from the neighborhood. This square can be used as an illustrative example for the last fifteen years of urban change in Malmö. When I settled in Malmö in 1986-87, this square was dominated by immigrants from the Eastern Europe and native Swedes, but since then the square has gradually undergone a process of orientalization. Several of the former Swedish shops have been taken over by Arabs of various nationalities, and many of those selling fruit and vegetables at the square also come from the Middle East. In the contemporary urban space, which is generally characterized by a relatively great influx of Muslims during recent decades, there is an extended market for various ethnic/religious entrepreneurs. The greater number of Muslims has therefore also made it possible for various individuals to open up shops, restaurants, and religious facilities. In the city there also exists a combination of religious and commercial entrepreneurs. Each month each member of a group of Muslim men deposits a couple of thousand Swedish crowns into a common economic pool, and they then meet regularly in order to decide whom they will assist in financing new business. One of the men participating in this economic-religious network explains:

I have fifteen friends here in Rosengård. Every month we pay a certain amount of money to a common pool. The ones with most money also give more than the others. Regularly everyone can pick up capital from the pool in order to start a company. Every month someone of us can,

for example, buy a falafel stand or open up a store for vegetables. We help each other. Islam is a system for solidarity between people. We are all brothers.

Muslim enclavization is certainly problematic in various ways. The separation of native Swedes reinforces negative stereotypes. It also reinforces problems of unemployment for Muslims, since the enclave puts social obstacles in the paths of individuals establishing necessary networks in Swedish society. Muslims are strengthening their ethnic-religious contacts and networks rather than constructing/strengthening Swedish ones. Another consequence of enclavization is that it offers various groups of Islamists a fertile soil for *dawa*, thereby also strengthening the attitudes of certain fundamentalist political groups.

The multiculturalist ideology underlying the Swedish official discourse about enclavization/segregation makes it difficult to understand the social problems and solutions which this type of structure generates in society. Integration into Sweden has been a goal for the Swedish state for thirty years, and ethnic segregation has been seen as an obstacle to this integration. This idea – in parallel with the refusal to recognize the existence of enclaves, and combined with a policy that is aimed at improving the material, social, and symbolic status of the neighborhoods – makes it difficult to understand how integration, as defined by the state, can ever become a reality for Muslims generally. On a moral, ideological level, the state is for integration and against segregation, but on a practical level, it is involved in strengthening ethnic and religious enclavization through the investment of money in various ethnic activities (see for example SOU 1998: 25). How a moral model based in multiculturalism is an obstacle to an understanding of enclavization can be illustrated by the following official quotation about commercial institutionalization (my translation from Swedish):

Our studies show that the level of public and commercial service in negatively exposed neighborhoods has declined during the 1990s. Curtailment in the public sector and a reduced purchasing power in the population is the most important explanation for this. The large department stores have faced difficulties in keeping their businesses going, and their capacity to adapt to the needs of the population has been imperfect. When these shops have closed, another kind of new and exciting alternative business for foodstuffs has emerged which offers a product-mix better suited for various ethnic groups in the neighborhoods. The shops also have a function when it comes to jobs. This is an activity which ought to have a great potential for development. Many things indicate that there exists a large un-exploited market for a number of products and services in these neighborhoods [SOU 1998: 25, pp. 83].

This quotation shows the problem of understanding the world with an approach taken from a multiculturalist ideological model. Instead of analyzing the social effects of the construction of ethnic shops, the state values them as “exciting alternatives” which can provide the ethnic neighborhoods with various foodstuffs. It is more important for the state to show a morally correct attitude towards ethnic institutions than to understand them as social instruments in the process of ethnic enclavization.

It is, of course, not possible to deny immigrants the right to start their own businesses. Surely it is also the case that, for example, shops and restaurants may enrich both Swedes and immigrants in various ways. Swedes can buy exotic food here, and

enhance their experiences of difference. Immigrants can, as claimed in the quotation above, gain access to items which may make them feel “at home”, and therefore more secure. The shop owners can make money and establish a career. However, my intention here is to highlight that, in addition to all of these enriching aspects, commercial institutions may *also have as a consequence* that segregation becomes permanent – in the sense that it becomes enclavized. The combination of having commercial and cultural institutions within a limited geographical area means that immigrants do not need Swedish public society for anything other than advanced medical care and the payment of social welfare. This process is taking place in Malmö but it is not understood because the moral dictates in multiculturalism put obstacles in the way of perceiving it.

### 7.5.2 A multiethnic space

Muslim enclavization is certainly not unique for Malmö, or Sweden. The Muslim enclave in Malmö, however, seems to differ from similar Muslim enclaves elsewhere in Europe. One of the most obvious differences is that the Muslim enclave in Malmö is more multiethnic than are other, more monoethnic enclaves in other European cities. An example of a monoethnic enclave is the Turkish enclave in Kreuzberg, Berlin. Mandel (1996) has characterized life in general there as somewhere Turks can survive in everyday life in isolation from the wider German context.

The extensive degree of commercial self-sufficiency is another way the migrants have recreated the place for themselves, and in their own terms. Thus, one need not know a word of German to buy insurance; rent a video; buy pide bread, olives or *helal* meat; talk to a child minder at a day-care center; deal with a travel agent; and so on. Thus the motivation for many of the migrants to learn German remains minimal [ibid.: 163].

The Muslim enclave in Malmö, if looked at in its totality, shows a higher degree of ethnic complexity than the German one. Besides the fact that Muslims in Rosengård use Islam as a common factor in identification, the enclave is also ethnically divided. For example, the great mosque serves a common function for all Muslims in the enclave, whether they come from Bosnia, the Middle East, or Africa, but various ethnic groups also have their own Islamic associations. For example, Arab-speaking Muslims socialize mostly with various Arab nationalities, Somalis prefer to spend time with other Somalis, etc. This also goes for how various groups are geographically situated; various groups are more-or-less clustered in different parts of the neighborhood.

Swedish scholars quoted above (Andersson & Molina 1996) argue that the multiethnic situation in Sweden makes it difficult to talk about enclavization in this country. Multiethnicity would seem to be an argument against the idea of Muslim enclavization. It is certainly possible to argue that there are differences of degree in how “enclavized” various groups are when it comes to ethnicity and religion. It is also possible to argue that the most clearly enclavized group in Malmö is the Arab-speaking pop-



ulation: this is the group which demonstrates the highest degree of institutional completeness. Most Arabs can satisfy their everyday needs without having to use a single word of Swedish, since several of the commercial and religious institutions in the enclave are run by Arabs. Other Muslim groups, such as the Somalis, do not have the same opportunities as Arabs to live a Somali everyday life, inside a well-developed institutionalized structure. Somalis socialize mainly with other Somalis, they have their own mosques and associations, but – compared to Arabs – they lack commercial institutions which make it possible to satisfy all their everyday needs speaking only Somali, etc. The situation of the Somalis resembles that of other Muslim groups.

Even though it is an ethnically divided enclave to a certain extent, there are also transethnic aspects of the neighborhood which need to be considered if the phenomenon of Muslim enclavization is to be understood. If the value for individual Muslims of participating in an enclave is going to be understood, it is necessary to talk about *identification* rather than *identity*. The point I wish to make here is that it is import to understand that what is involved for Muslims themselves is a situational identification where different dimensions of identification are activated in different contexts (see also Otterbeck 2000: 126). A general value for people in the enclave is that most persons identify themselves as Muslims. This has two aspects: a) a cosmological (cultural) value and b) a social value. Muslims in the neighborhood thus think of themselves and others with the help of categories and symbols understood by all Muslims. Even when individual Muslims make their own interpretations of Islam, there is a communal identification via the fact that people from Muslim countries understand a common Islamic cosmology. The social value, I would like to argue, is that when one moves around physically in an environment where everyone else is a Muslim, this creates a higher degree of security than when one lives in a non-Muslim environment. These two aspects – cosmological and social – are the general identificational dimensions which are important for all Muslims when it comes to the value of living inside the boundary of a Muslim enclave.

However, as indicated above, no Muslim or any other individual is one-dimensional in his/her identification. When Muslims socialize with other Muslims in everyday public life, Islam is an important aspect in the construction of security, but ethnic factors are also important in this regard. Language, a common history, a common political outlook on the world, etc., are all factors which are involved when Muslims try to cope with problems in everyday life. This is one reason why Muslim associations are ethnically divided. For instance, during my time together with Arab men in Malmö, they identified themselves with the help of four categories: They understood themselves as *men*, with all of what that meant of masculinity. They were *Palestinians*, an identification with certain political consequences. They were *Arabs*, meaning that they belonged to a large group of people who spoke the same language. They were also *Muslims*, meaning that they belonged to one of the monotheistic religions in the world. However, depending on the kind of social situation they found themselves in, only one of these identificational “potentialities” came to the fore. When meeting Muslims with other ethnic identifications, the Muslim dimension became impor-

tant; when thinking of themselves in relation to women, the male dimension became most important. Etc.

It is possible to argue, however, that the identification which grounds the need for Muslims to live in an enclave also has other dimensions. One such dimension is related to the experience of being different in general, in relation to the Swedish majority society. Every resident in Rosengård confronts *difference* to such an extent that, in relation to the Swedish majority society, difference itself becomes the norm. To be a native Swede in the neighborhood is unnatural; it is a difference which is located outside the neighborhood. The type of difference I am talking about here should not be understood as the development of an identity as an “immigrant”. It is more a question of persons who are different (in relation to the Swedish majority society) having a common experience of “sitting in the same boat”. This has also been pointed out by Ristilampi (1994). He has claimed that in the neighborhood it is possible “to be different” and “maintain lifestyles that are experienced as strange in contemporary Swedish society” (ibid.: 117).

### 7.5.3 Satellite dishes

If immigrant ghettos outside of Sweden show a certain degree of material and social despair, the contemporary Swedish ghetto is characterized by its large number of satellite dishes. Buildings which house a majority of immigrants have these dishes on every balcony. People who visited us during fieldwork in Rosengård were always fascinated by the number of dishes that met their eyes. In Sweden there has been a debate about how to understand the functions and roles of satellite dishes. Some have argued that they constitute a problem since immigrants may be influenced by undemocratic, authoritarian ideas, transmitted by media sources in their former homelands. Satellite dishes – or, more exactly, transnational television – has also been discussed as instrumental in the construction of diasporic hybrid identity (see, for example, Naficy 1993).

Roald (2001) has conducted a survey among Arab-speaking immigrants in Malmö and Copenhagen. Her theoretical approach was to investigate whether these dishes should be understood as part of processes of integration or segregation. Most of her respondents did watch, in this case, Arab TV channels more frequently than they viewed Swedish programs. Roald did not, however, interpret this as an act of segregation; on the contrary, she argued that it is possible to understand the attention given to the Arabic media as in line with a multiculturalist ideology where immigrants should have a right to preserve their cultural identities. According to Roald, her respondents also saw satellite television “as essential for their feeling at home in Scandinavia on the one hand, and balanced mental health on the other”; and this, Roald argues, “points to the importance for immigrants of having a structure of plausibility that confirms their religious faith” (ibid.). Moreover, Roald says:

As even in the western world, television has a similar role of maintaining a certain worldview, one can conclude that the Arabic-media satellite channels play a role in Muslim immigrants' maintenance of the Islamic worldview. In the segregated Scandinavia this bond with their countries or region of origin creates a feeling of security in the immigrant situation which might influence immigrants' psychological states (ibid.).

All Roald says is probably true. It is certainly problematic, and boring, to watch programs on television which you cannot follow because of language difficulties, or have a cultural content with which is hard to identify. On the other hand, it could be argued that satellite dishes do not *per se* pose problems of integration or segregation. The real problem, if we are talking about integration into Sweden, is that the Muslims already live segregated in an enclavized social structure; the satellite dishes are among the most evident symptoms of this enclavization. They are one instrument among others which function to keep Muslims inside their social and symbolic framework. Muslims socialize with other Muslims, they live within a walking distance of Islamic institutions; in short, Muslims spend most of their time in a social environment which exists in parallel to Swedish society. Satellite dishes are only one aspect of this larger space of a cultural and religious lifeworld in which Muslims participate. Muslims live alongside of Swedish society rather than being part of it. There is nothing multicultural about this.

## 7.6 Summary

In this chapter it has been shown that the Muslim enclave can be understood as a social shield which offers protection for individuals who experience Swedish public space as a threat to their own opportunities to live according to Islam. The threat consists of various factors. Some emphasize racism/xenophobia as the most important, while others argue that Sweden is a morally degenerate society when it comes to the relationship between men and women. Criminality and drugs are also seen as threatening to Islamically-based ideas of how to be good person. Many adult Muslims are also afraid that they will lose their children to the world outside Islam if they do not keep them inside the boundaries of both their religion and their own ethnic/religious group. Another factor which makes the Muslim ghetto a valuable social asset for diverse individuals, is that it offers a remedy for the social isolation which is felt by Muslims who live outside the neighborhood. A multiculturalist idea is that Muslims are isolated in Swedish society due to their segregated living. This chapter has, however, tried to show that it is the opposite logic which is true: Muslims feel isolated when they try to live outside the enclave.

Another conclusion drawn in the chapter is that the "old" understanding of the ethnic division of space in terms of residential segregation needs rethinking. The contemporary situation indicates that there is more to the division of space than a ques-

tion of immigrants living together in the same neighborhood. During the last thirty years, the overall situation for immigrants has undergone a thorough transformation, both economically and socially. Here two parallel processes are important. Contemporary Muslims in Malmö reside in a city which have been severely affected by the globalization of the economy. They have, due to a process of de-industrialization, problems in finding work. They also find themselves in a different social situation, in comparison to yesterday's Muslims, in the sense that they have greater, more elaborated possibilities for establishing networks within their own group. These two processes form the basis for the Muslim enclavization in the city of Malmö. That is a process where the ethnic division of space is becoming institutionalized, and thereby also a permanent feature of urban structure. Denying the existence of enclaves from the multiculturalist ideological position, because it is a phenomenon that may be used by nationalists as an argument against immigration and cultural diversity, is dangerous because it shrouds in silence a social process which can have profound consequences for society.

## CHAPTER 8

# A Native Minority Inside a Muslim Enclave

In Swedish multicultural discourse we find a statement which says that one of the greatest problems in the relationship between immigrants and Swedes is the profound social distance that exists between these groups. People live segregated from one another; there are too few opportunities for various individuals and groups to meet. In order to cope with this situation, it is sometimes argued that more resources must be allocated for the establishment of social arenas where immigrants and Swedes can meet in dialogue and talk about their differences. The notion of distance is also part of the discourse about Islam/Muslims in Sweden. For example, Samuelsson (2000) argues that the “greatest obstacle” to Muslim integration is the negative attitudes towards Islam held by non-Muslim Swedes. An important factor in the production of these negative attitudes (often referred to as *Islamophobia*) is, according to Samuelsson, that Swedes have limited “experiences” of Muslims (and, immigrants in general). He argues that “the most negative and the most positive conceptions of immigrants may have a background factor in common – both are built on limited experiences with immigrants” and that means, he continues, “that we are talking about standpoints with no attachment to reality” (ibid.: 56-57).

The argument presented by Samuelsson is quite common in the discourse about multiculturalism in Sweden: a) that the greatest obstacle to Muslim integration is to be found in the anti-Muslim attitudes among the native majority of the population, and b) that in order for these attitudes to change, it is necessary that natives meet, or come closer to, Muslims. His argument also reveals another aspect of the contemporary multiculturalist comprehension of Swedish natives: natives are seldom or never understood as having a life-world in their own right. Native citizens, especially those who can be referred to as the working class, are forgotten as a category of citizens by the intellectual multiculturalist elite. Natives do have a part in the general multicultural perspective (as in Samuelsson’s discussion above), but most often it is as those carrying the sickness of cultural racism or Islamophobia. In the multicultural project, natives are thus viewed as targets of information campaigns which aim to correct their ways of thinking about the world, since they have wrong ideas about multicult-

turalism. The homepage, *Sweden against racism*, to which I referred above, is an example of this: the native population is there targeted as an object of anti-racist campaigns. The native underclass is thus a silent category in the opinion-making elites of contemporary societies. No one argues for the welfare of the native working class. The intellectual elite has been occupied with the discussion of cultural difference for some years now, and they have forgotten issues of class. The native working class belongs to one of the groups most severely affected by economic globalization but, in the minds of intellectuals, members of the working class are mostly defined as xenophobic or racist (see, for example, Wigerfelt 2000). The reason for discussing native working class representations in this thesis is the fact that this category of citizens does not have a place in the discourse of multiculturalism, or in the discourse about Islam in Sweden. The multiculturalist ideology that organizes the discourse of difference has constructed natives as the enemy of multiculturalism, and it has thereby also excluded the possibility of understanding the problems of contemporary society from a more realistic point of view. My point here is that if Muslims (or other immigrants) and Swedes are supposed to live in the same society, it is important to gain an empirically-grounded understanding of what kind of problems natives confront, rather than using categories based on prejudices.

In the following, we will meet some Swedish natives as they represent themselves, their lifeworlds, and immigrants as these factors were described during fieldwork. The representations of the natives are methodologically different in comparison to the approach used with other actors in the thesis; especially in the sense that the descriptions here may stand out as more ethnographic and detailed in nature. This is due to two reasons. First, since multiculturalists (or pluralists) mainly see natives as representatives of an Islamophobic or racist problem to somehow correct, it is important to try and understand this category of people in a more nuanced way. Are Swedes really racists *per se*, or can we define their attitudes in another way? Secondly, the Swedes were approached differently, because we lived in the same block as did the Swedes during the time of the fieldwork. Thus, it was quite easy to make contacts and observations of this group. Since we also had children in the same age range, it was easy to establish everyday relations with some of the Swedish parents.

## 8.1 Globalization from a native point of view

This chapter is about how native Swedes represent immigrants/Muslims. During fieldwork in Rosengård, we lived in a block where there also resided a group of native Swedes; a group which, in the local context, stood out as an ethnic minority in relation to other ethnic groups present. Even though this group of Swedes were a minority in quantitative terms, they dominated the social life of the block. They regarded the small yard with benches, tables, and a playground as an extension of their private spheres. They spent a great deal of time in this yard, where they socialized and con-

trolled both their own children and other persons moving in and out of the yard and the houses. They always kept a watchful eye on whatever happened in the yard.

Most of these Swedes were born and raised in the neighborhood. They had attended schools in the area, and most had known one another since childhood; most of them had resided in other neighborhood blocks, but when we were conducting fieldwork they had all ended up in the same place. Therefore, this group of Swedes could be characterized as a part of the population that had lived in and watched “the globalization of culture” from a local point of view for the last 25-30 years. For them, immigrants were a kind of “natural” feature in their everyday lives: they had always, since they were children, lived close to various groups of foreign strangers. “There have always been a lot of immigrants here, it is nothing new”, is how one of the Swedes expressed himself. This social proximity to the Other did not mean, however, that the Swedes had intimate relations with Muslims or any other category of immigrants. Living side-by-side did not mean living together. The natives often complained about the lack of contacts between themselves and their neighbors in the block. One of the women, Lola, regarded the social gap between themselves and the immigrants as a problem. “I don’t even know where they come from”, she stated during an interview. She concluded that most often none of the “foreigners sit with us”, but always “they sit by themselves” [in the yard]. One of the Swedish men, Peter, thought that there existed “invisible walls” between the Swedes and their neighbors: “We have two camps in this yard. The Swedes are by themselves and they [the foreigners] are by themselves”. The Swedes had no friends who were immigrants: their friendships were with other Swedes. Nor did the Swedes know much about what was going on among the various ethnic groups in the neighborhood.

The Swedes made up a rather closed group in the block. It was difficult, even for we who were Swedes, to make contact with these people. It could be argued that the Swedes practiced a kind of “banal nationalism” (Billig 1997) in their everyday lives, in the sense that they lived a Swedish “form of life” (ibid.: 69). Thus, they celebrated all the traditional Swedish events which occurred during a year: Christmas, Easter, Midsummer, and the annual crayfish party were all part of their lives. Most of them had a Swedish and/or a Scanian flag on their balconies/terraces; these were always hanging there (something which annoyed multicultural friends who came to visit us). Several of the Swedes also dressed in various kinds of sports attire while at home; clothing which has become a kind of “social democratic” uniform in Sweden. All in all, these Swedes stood out as a rather uniform group when contrasted to the surrounding, culturally-foreign context.

This Swedish enclave could be defined as an extremely rooted category of humans, in both an *historical* and a *contemporary* sense. Historically, the members of the group have lived their whole lives in the neighborhood and have known each other since they were children. They share “experiential space” (Bohnsack 1995) in an almost literal sense of the word; they have gone to the same schools, and have spent a great deal of time together engaged in various kinds of activities. In a contemporary sense, they are rooted in the neighborhood primarily because of poverty. The lack of money and other material resources (cars, for example) means that they are stuck in the

neighborhood. They cannot afford to travel, either domestically or internationally. Their poverty is, of course, a kind of Swedish welfare poverty, which is hardly visible. They have all that is needed in order to subsist from day to day, but they must always keep an eye out for the cheapest possible options when buying clothing or food. Saving money is out of the question, since they have only enough money to account for monthly survival. This group of Swedes is therefore, as the description indicates, part of the national category that is most severely affected by the restructuring of the global economy. Ten to fifteen years ago, this category of Swedes could easily be placed within the working class, but in light of global economic changes they are now moving toward an underclass position; a position which seems to include a growing number of citizens in the Western World. Most of the native Swedes are out of work and have been so for a couple of years; since they often lack education, their chances of getting jobs in the future appear to be quite small.

Generally, these locals spend their everyday lives in a small yard with some benches and a playground. Here they socialize and play with their children. I observed this space for almost three years, and very few things happened which could break the everyday monotony. There were, however, differences between men and women. Most of the women are occupied with the daily task of raising children, cooking, and shopping. The men, even though they spend most of their time at home, do little to help their wives take care of daily business. The men spend almost all their time in front of television screens, watching *Eurosport*; or on someone's balcony, discussing sports over a bottle of beer or a cup of coffee; or, in the back sleeping away the time.

## 8.2 The category immigrant

The category of *immigrant* is often problematized by various intellectuals. Molina, the cultural geographer quoted above, argues that it is completely wrong to think with the help of this word – in her perception of Swedish space, there exist no immigrants. Theoretically, it is probably possible to deconstruct this concept in a way that makes it un-usable, but this would be pointless, since the official category of immigrant is also used by almost all the social actors in today's multiethnic society. Scientifically, our interest must be in understanding how the category is actually used, rather than in, as Molina does, denying the existence of immigrants. Theoretically, it is also possible to argue that migration has created a situation where pure nationals no longer exist: that the former national categories of “Norwegian”, “Swede”, or whatever have undergone a change in content because of immigration. If these categories were once used to define relatively homogeneous types of identities, they now have a broader content, including the kinds of differences that the strangers who have moved from the European periphery have brought with them.

Ethnically, the category of immigrant is used as the most general intellectual instrument when actors try define social space. From a native Swedish point of view an



immigrant is the most general and different stranger in a dichotomization between *us* and *them*. The category is thus used methodologically to organize experiences of cultural difference between native Swedes and the rest of the population. In other words, the category is used in a way that creates, “economy” in the perception of difference (see Lakoff 1987). And as such it is rather useful, since thinking would break down if the mind had to cope with every cultural specificity that could be found in the nation-state each time immigration was an object of discourse. One of the native Swedes in Rosengård explains how he identifies various ethnic differences with the aid of this category (my translation from Swedish).

In the eyes of Swedes, immigrants are immigrants; it is all the same even when they come from different countries. We look at Turks, Greeks, and Yugoslavs as one single group that comes from somewhere down in the south of Europe. I see them as a group.<sup>84</sup>

In this quotation Turks, Greeks, and Yugoslavs are used as examples of immigrants, but it should be kept in mind that the immigrant category is used as an indicator of all kinds of cultural and physical differences that the Swedes identify. They do not make distinctions between different ethnic markers, such as a Muslim woman wearing *hijab* or the color of skin of a Somali man; all the differences float together and are lumped together in the cognitive construction of a general type of immigrant (see Schutz 1970: 111-122). This general immigrant is then used in a process of identification concerning us and them. Another term used by the natives to make a distinction between us and them, is the word *them*. This term is also used in order to cope mentally with the cultural and physical differences that surround the Swedes in their local context. However, even though these two terms were formulated for the sake of making it possible to talk about difference in general, more complex perspectives in relation to immigrants were also expressed during the interviews with the Swedish natives. That is, although many people in the neighborhood were looked upon as different compared to the Swedes, there also existed morally good and bad immigrants, in the natives’ understanding of the world. Thus, difference was accepted as long as it did not deviate from how the natives acted in their social worlds.

## 8.3 Narratives of morality

### 8.3.1 Fear of being defined as racist

The answers provided during the formal interviews often demonstrated discrepancies in comparison to what several of the Swedes said in more informal circumstances. When a tape recorder was placed on the table between us, several of the inform-

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<sup>84</sup> Interview conducted by Sara Johnsdotter.

ants disciplined themselves and tried hard to use a more politically correct language than they sometimes did during the flow of everyday life. There were, of course, individual exceptions to this rule. Some of the natives expressed themselves clearly enough on their positions toward immigrants: “*I am racist*” or “*Blacks should be sent back to Africa*”, were sometimes heard. Nevertheless, most of the Swedish natives censored themselves as soon as our interactions were formalized with the help of methodological instruments. Sometimes the most politically sensitive natives tried to silence the ones who were explicit about their basic attitudes. For example, when we were invited for a cup of coffee in one home, a man informed us that Swedes had told the landlord “*that we do not want any more immigrants here [in their block]*”, but he was soon silenced by his wife with a stern look. This is sometimes discussed as a general methodological problem: tape recorders or notebooks can have a stifling effect on informants. I believe, however, that our interviews also illustrate a rather typical Swedish phenomenon, namely: the fear of presenting oneself as xenophobic or racist, especially when an informant believes the person in front of them is anti-racist. The contemporary political context concerning immigration was, I would like to suggest, affecting the interviews in the sense that the informants were aware of the strong moral condemnation that is connected with racist or xenophobic attitudes; furthermore, I might add, they did not wish to represent themselves as such in front of a researcher from the University of Lund. In short, they wished to avoid being classified as bad or stupid persons.

What will become evident in the following is that the natives do not think with the help of theoretical concepts such as *culture*, *identity*, or *ethnicity*: they do not reflect about their life-worlds in a conscious way. Most of the informants reacted with unease when these words were mentioned; an illustrative example here is the man who suggested that Muslims “*prefer to socialize with their own race*”. The discourse of the Swedes is produced from everyday experience of the social space that surrounds them in the neighborhood and in the media. Small everyday events, such as immigrants driving around in BMWs or other expensive cars, the sound of different languages in the local grocery store, and veiled Muslim women, are the kind of observations used in the construction of knowledge about Swedish society. In their everyday lives, these people see and hear various examples of cultural differences which they experience as strange and troublesome, but they do not think of them as part of a *new* multicultural society. For the natives, immigration is not a theoretical question, as it is for the intellectual elite, but an issue embedded in a more complicated life situation with which they have to cope in a complicated economic and social context.

### 8.3.2 “Bad” or “strange” morality

Instead of representing immigration and immigrants (during formal interviews) through directly hostile or xenophobic language, the Swedes talked about immigrants by using various detailed, everyday examples of situations they had been involved in. At first, I found it quite difficult to find a methodological approach to

these narratives: what was the point in telling all these stories from everyday life? What were their intentions? Basically, however, the idea of using narratives as they did was to tell us, indirectly, that they were morally good persons. As Linde (1993) argues, a narrative is basically used as a “presentation of the self”, where the speaker wants to indicate that “*I am a good person, a proper person, a competent person; I did what any good person or what any extraordinarily good person would do in this situation, or as much as a good person could do when blocked by extraordinarily circumstances*” (ibid.: 81). Initially, I spent a great deal of time trying to figure out whether the Swedes spoke the truth, in a factual sense, in the narratives they related; had this really happened? Did they lie about their actions (as represented in the narratives)? These questions, however, are beside the point, since the Swedes had an ambition to convey, with the help of their stories, something about themselves and their social situations. Generally, their message was that these are the circumstances of our lives, and we are dealing with them in the best ways we can. The typical content of narratives about immigrants was basically concerned with two themes: a) *bad* or *strange* acts and b) *good* or *familiar* acts. To a) belonged acts that somehow annoyed the Swedes, made them experience unease, or caused them to feel as if their everyday lives had become problematic or fearful. In the narratives used to represent these troublesome acts, difference stands out as a negative aspect of immigrants’ behavior. To b) belonged those acts by immigrants that the Swedes interpreted as morally acceptable, as good. In the narratives used to talk about good morality, immigrants are not, however, understood as if they are acting in the same way as Swedes. Below are some examples of narratives concerned with bad morality, as the Swedes understood it.

Gun, a middle-aged, native woman, told various stories about the problems she had experienced in her relationships with immigrants. When she and her family moved to this part of the neighborhood, an anonymous immigrant family resided above Gun and her own family. One morning when Gun woke up, she found six diapers on her small terrace. She was very upset by this, in her view, extremely strange behavior, so she confronted the neighbor. Gun explains how the argument developed (my translation from Swedish):

They had lived here for a year before we moved in. When I moved in, I told them that now it is me who lives underneath you, and I don’t want to have any dirt on my terrace. The next day, when I opened the door to the terrace, I find six diapers on the floor. Then I asked them, “Where do you live?” And they answered, “We live in Sweden”. “Yes, but in Sweden we have garbage chutes”, I argued. “What do you do with those?”, they asked in return. “Well, you get rid of your waste in them, you don’t throw the waste out onto the terraces”. “You have lived here for a whole year, how would this terrace have looked like if no one had told you?”, I said. “Well, we don’t know, someone has always picked it up for us”. “I don’t do that”, I said, “you can come down and pick it all up yourselves”.<sup>85</sup>

Since she did not want live underneath “pigs”, she complained several times to the landlord about the neighbors’ activity, and the eventual result was that the immigrant family had to move from their apartment. She says nothing about any change of be-

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85 Interview conducted by Sara Johnsdotter.

havior. One solution to the conflict could have been that the immigrants learned to put their garbage in the right place, but nothing is said about that. The logic in the story is that Gun is responding to a situation which is regarded as untenable, and which she has not herself caused. Her specific way of dealing with what happened seems reasonable, according to the way in which the activity has been presented.

Another theme concerned with bad behavior is violence. Almost every time the Swedes were asked something about immigration, they talked about relatively violent incidents or confrontations with different categories of immigrants. There were long descriptions of children coming home from school bleeding from their heads because of violent acts. Some men talked at length about confrontations with gypsies – one man who passed by a group of gypsies explained how his tongue had been badly damaged when he was beaten up with a chain. Michael, one of the middle-aged native men in the neighborhood, told a story about being confronted by a man beating his wife in the stairway (my translation from Swedish).

I don't like people who hit their wives and act as if they are allowed to do so in their home countries. I have threatened some who live on the second floor. One man beat his wife while she held a small, six-month old baby. But he should thank God because I never got to him. He managed to lock himself in. They bring their customs to Sweden. I mean, if I move down to another country, I have to accept the rules that they live by. I can't bring my wife down there, or my fiancée, and start to beat her up in front of everyone, if there exists a law which says that you are not allowed to touch your wife. And this they bring here. I have seen quite a few women that are so oppressed that they walk around in their own worlds when they are out in the neighborhood. While their men sit at the clubs playing poker and drinking beer in the evenings.<sup>86</sup>

Besides being an example of the representation of violent immigrants, this story also presents a typical native argument against immigration. Michael experiences, as do many other Swedes, that it is wrong when immigrants come to Sweden and continue to practice their own cultures instead of adopting Swedish rules. A spontaneous multicultural reaction to the content in this narrative would be to argue against it by saying that "all immigrant men are not aggressive", "Swedish men are also violent", or "you are full of prejudice". But what is Michael really saying? This particular narrative gets its moral strength from the fact that it is concerned not only with a man who beats up women, but beats up women while they hold innocent babies in their arms. Therefore, Michael is doing what any morally sane person would do: he is trying to save women (and children) from violence conducted by aggressive people. Here, difference is not only regarded as problematic: it is dangerous.

Lisa, a middle-aged, unemployed woman, was upset by an incident in one of the largest grocery stores in the area, *EG grossen* (my translation from Swedish).

Once I was buying potatoes in the EG. I stood and filled a sack with potatoes. I was pregnant at the time. Then a gypsy woman came and pushed me away. I pushed back, of course, because I thought it was a common practice to push when you are picking out potatoes. But I was afraid that the child I was carrying would get hurt, and I didn't want to make a scene.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Interview conducted by Sara Johnsdotter.

<sup>87</sup> Interview conducted by Sara Johnsdotter.

This is also an example of a kind of ruthlessness. Lisa is trying to put potatoes in her bag when she is confronted by a person who does not care about her or her pregnancy. The pregnancy is what gives this story its specific force. She is pulled aside by a gypsy woman even though she is pregnant, but she does nothing (besides leaving) to resolve the incident.

A Swedish mother remembered when she, for the first time, confronted the “strange” Muslim practice of fasting. This story is concerned with a child, and the Swedish mother thought not only that it was a strange activity, but also that it was a “pity” to include small children in this activity.

I really think it is a pity! A child came in to me; he was about four years old. My own children were about to eat some ice cream, so I offered him some as well. Then he said: “I want ice cream, but I can’t eat it until it’s dark outside”. “Dark!?” I said, “but then you will sleep”, because I did not know what he meant. “What do you mean,” I said? Then he told me that they fast once a year. I really felt sorry for this boy. Later, he did eat some ice cream, I mean, ice cream is not like a dinner, it’s just something cold. After that, I talked to his mother. I thought I should say something so that she would know that maybe I had done something wrong. I told her I had given her son some ice cream, and she said that it didn’t matter, since her children didn’t have to fast. <sup>88</sup>

In this narrative, the Swedish mother represents herself as a good person, even though she disapproves of fasting. She feels sorry for the Muslim boy, and invites him (together with her own children) to have some ice cream, an act that, when the mother realizes it, may be classified as wrong. She repairs the situation by talking to the child’s mother, who says that it does not matter. The Swedish mother believes that the Islamic fasting is strange, but she also feels sorry for the child who is part of that kind of activity. She also shows how good she is by talking to the child’s mother about what she did. Thus, even though she really does not sympathize with this kind of different behavior, she shows her good will by accepting it and realizing that her actions may cause the boy trouble.

### 8.3.3 “Good” and “familiar” morality

The examples above are typical of how natives represent immigrants from the point of view of what they consider to be bad morality (strangeness and violence). The native stories, however, also reflect another type of representation, namely, un-problem-atized situations involving immigrants. Instead of talking about immigrants creating troubles for Swedes, they show people who act in an acceptable manner. Benjamin’s story below is an explanation of successful interaction between Swedes and immigrants, a situation in which he participated one summer (my translation from Swedish).

When Kurt became a father last year we had a party in the middle of the week on his terrace. Somewhere between ten and eleven o’clock an immigrant chap passed by, an older man, maybe

<sup>88</sup> Interview conducted by Sara Johnsdotter.

in his 50s. None of us knew him. He asked if we were celebrating something or whether it was an ordinary party. We told him that Kurt had just become a father. We also asked who he was visiting. "Visiting", he said, "I live here". Then you don't have to go up just yet, we said, join us and have a drink or a glass of wine and celebrate with us. "Just wait, I have to go up and tell them [his family] so that they won't get worried. I also have to wash myself". He left and returned 15 minutes later with half a bottle of whiskey which he handed over to Kurt because he had become a father. He partied with us for two or three hours.<sup>89</sup>

In this incident, Swedes are represented as a group showing great hospitality towards immigrants. The Swedes invite the man – a complete stranger to the native group – to participate in their party. The man accepts the invitation, a sign of friendliness. Around a bottle of whisky, they construct a transethnic community that lasts for a couple of hours. The Swedes have no problem at all with difference here, since the guest does not practice difference but acts as a good Swedish male is expected to act on a hot summer night.

Successful interaction can, however, also take place without alcohol. Carina, an unemployed, single mother, describes what happened during a meeting with one of her female immigrant neighbors. (The natives were always quick to explain that they really tried hard to invite immigrants, and Carina is no exception). The situation takes place after a friendly invitation by Carina (my translation from Swedish):

Once I invited a foreign mother down to the yard. After two to three months she had learned a great deal of Swedish. Sometimes she asked me how to say things in Swedish, and I would explain the Swedish words. "It was very nice to come down here because I have not been able to speak Swedish before", she said. You can just come down and I will teach you more Swedish.

This interaction between the two women is of the *teacher-student* type. Carina teaches the immigrant woman how to speak Swedish, and the immigrant woman shows a grateful attitude for the help. Carina does two things that make her stand out as a morally good person: she extends an invitation to a foreign mother, and she also tries to help her with language training.

There are various examples which could be used to illustrate what Swedes thought to be instances of good morality, but one example will do. In the area there was a Muslim man who worked as a caretaker for a housing company. His work was public in the sense that he spent several hours a day fixing things in the homes of the residents or in the houses; thus, he has an everyday relationship with many of the natives and the immigrants in the area. This man spoke Swedish with a heavy accent; all in all, he was a bearer of various ethnic cues which could be used to identify him as being different. But, from the native's point of view, he was not classified as belonging to *them*, the immigrants, but to *us*, the Swedes. What did this man do that made him accepted and respected by the natives (and by immigrants as well)? Basically, he was respected and liked by the natives because he acted in accordance with Swedish morality. He was humble, nice, hardworking – in other words, he had accepted a Swedish moral order. Thus, he was also, like the immigrants mentioned in the positive rep-

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89 Interview conducted by Sara Johnsdotter.

representations above, acting on the correct side of the ethnic boundary. As one of the natives said about the man (my translation from Swedish):

I like the caretaker in our yard. He strives for the same things I strive for. He tries to become something in society. I like people that try to do their full share, who are friendly, and who try to look for work without messing around with others. That type of human I respect 100%.<sup>90</sup>

If this logic holds true as a more general characteristic of the relationship between natives and immigrants, then the construction of a multicultural society will be problematic, at least as long as there exist native Swedes who are emotionally attached to national space. According to the logic in the narratives related above by Swedish natives, it may be difficult to construct a society which tolerates new-comers who live by their own rules and fail to accept a native definition of how to act in the world. Hence there is an obvious risk involved in paying too much homage to cultural diversity. The problem appears to be that, from a native Swedish point of view, the more difference that is practiced, the more powerful the negative attitudes toward immigrants.

#### 8.3.4 Bad acts versus good acts

In the Swedes' perception of immigrants, and in the act of objectifying their experience, two things are quite clear. First, parallel to the representation of *them* runs an implicit representation of *us*. In the negative examples, this *us* is always made up of victims who defend themselves against an intrusion of something attacking (*us*) from the outside. Throwing garbage at the terrace is experienced as an intrusion into the personal sphere; the man beating his wife in the stairway is also experienced as a kind of threat to the native's personal identity; and being pushed in the grocery store is a physical attack on a native woman's person. Another way to interpret the attacks is to view them as ethnic conflicts, in the sense that the representations illustrate what is implicitly described as a trespassing of *boundaries*. The examples show immigrants that do not care about, or do not respect, the natives. But, the victimized *us* is not composed only of victims in the negative narratives. The victims are also *agents* who are prepared to defend themselves against their violators, *actors* who fight back and who walk victoriously away from the situations described, undefeated.

In the positive narratives, the *us* is not represented as victims at all, only as agents in control of the situation. But not as someone defending him or herself; here the actor dominates the situation and is represented as a hospitable *us*. Both situations describe successful interactions, depicting the *us* as "good guys". A complete stranger is invited to the Swedish men who are celebrating the birth of a child, and they sit together and talk for several hours; an immigrant woman is invited to learn Swedish at the playground by a kind Swedish woman. The representations presented here illustrate that the prerequisite for nice treatment of immigrants is grounded in circum-

<sup>90</sup> Interview conducted by Sara Johnsdotter.

stances where the natives are in control of the situation, because that is what makes them feel comfortable with immigration.

These two different ways of representing immigrant identities – either as violent and troublesome strangers or as nice people anyone can interact with – are two sides of the same coin. They present a dichotomization showing immigrants as aggressive attackers who break everyday rules or as peaceful people who follow everyday rules. What the speakers are really talking about, but are not explicitly aware of, are what kind of *practices* (*rules?*) they are ready to accept in their lifeworlds. The negative stories are descriptions of various immigrants acting in ways that threatens the social order in their world. Throwing garbage at the terrace, being pushed in the grocery store, etc., are representations of a lack of morality and a trespassing of boundaries, while the positive representations are examples of an accepted moral stance. What is also striking in the quotations is that the positive examples demonstrate a specific social logic, namely that successful interaction always takes place on the Swedish side of the ethnic boundary. The accepted immigrants are people who adopt the natives' rules of the game. In other words: the natives are ready to accept immigrants who adopt Swedish social rules of how to do things in the world, or they are comfortable as long as Swedes are in control of the situation. This logic reveals one relatively simple characteristic of *xenophobia*: natives reject foreigners not because they are foreign, but because they do not accept the native way of life.

## 8.4 Problems related to Swedish identity

### 8.4.1 Swedish experience of discrimination

A classic aspect of the relationship between natives and immigrants is the connection between immigration and economic conditions. A rather common argument against immigration is that *they* come here and take *our* jobs and/or *our* money (welfare payments). The economic aspects of immigration are both academic and popular topics: academics try to determine the actual costs of immigration, while common native citizens often use the costs as reasons for closing the border to people coming from outside the nation. The economic costs of immigration is also found in the native discourse from Rosengård. On one hand, some natives believe that the arrival of immigrants in Sweden and the economic burden that this creates for society risks destroying the whole social structure. On the other hand, their criticism is closely connected to their perception of who receives of social welfare. Benny, a middle-aged, unemployed man, explains his general perspective (my translation from Swedish):

Sweden has never been so poor as it is now. This is 90% due to the immigrants. We can not bring more people here than we can support. Soon we will not have enough money for ourselves. To place imbeciles like Göran Persson [the Swedish prime minister] in government and run a



country. What kind of experience has he got? He upturns things for us who already live under harsh conditions and helps the ones who can already manage. He takes away rent allowances, and lowers government child benefits and all the things that are needed in Sweden.<sup>91</sup>

This quotation illustrates a general feeling that the Social Democratic government's immigration policy has created a complicated and fearful situation for Benny and other natives like him. Most often, however, the connection between the economy, immigration, and natives is discussed, as I said above, in reference to *social welfare*. In the context laid out here this is not unusual, since (for the natives quoted in this chapter) social welfare was what has kept them from social disaster.

A general feeling among the natives is that it is easier for immigrants to survive in society than it is for native Swedes; natives feel that it is easier for immigrants to qualify for social welfare benefits than it is for Swedes to do so. This interpretation was expressed in almost every native interview, and the natives experience this situation as deeply unjust. When the natives talk about this, it is always discussed from a position from which they feel discriminated against. In their interpretation, the world is turned upside down compared to the received multicultural view on immigration: *the natives feel that it is they, not the immigrants, who are the category most discriminated against in the Swedish society*. The natives feel that they are being left behind by their own society, and that the immigrants are being unfairly favored by the Swedish welfare system. The belief that Swedes are being discriminated against in society, rather than the newcomers, was expressed by all the native informants. Sven, an unemployed man, says (my translation from Swedish):

I have exactly as much as I need in order to support myself now that I am unemployed. But I mean, if my name had been Mohammed or Hassan or something, I would had been given money without having to fill in a lot of papers. They [the social service department] do not demand anything from an immigrant. When I should have received supplementary benefits after my treatment, they demanded that I should be down at the shelter [a place for drug addicts], I should contact my supervisor, sit and wait down at the office for temporary work every morning, and many more unnecessary things only to put me under pressure. I mean, immigrants ... sometimes you stand behind them in the post office and sometimes they receive payments with sums that reach 14-15,000 [crowns]. If I get something from the social welfare department, I get a month of subsistence.<sup>92</sup>

In this quotation Benny explains how the welfare system benefits immigrants over natives. What the social workers do, according to Benny, is to put a strong moral pressure on him and other Swedes to actively search for work, participate in courses, sell their belongings (such as cars and houses), etc. And in his perception of the world this is completely wrong, especially when in his everyday life he observes immigrants who receive thousands of crowns via the post office. A woman, Barbro, points out that "*they [immigrants] have more rights than we have. They get more money than we do. That is, they know that they can go to the social welfare office and get money*". Lenart, another unemployed man, expressed the same feeling:

91 Interview conducted by Sara Johnsdotter.

92 Interview conducted by Sara Johnsdotter.

It is strange that it is so easy for immigrants to receive money from the social welfare department while it is so hard for us Swedes. Probably this is what creates bad attitudes toward immigrants ... when a Swede suffers he is supposed almost to have his head under his arm in order to receive help. Immigrants just walk up and receive money with no effort at all. <sup>93</sup>

Lennart not only feels discriminated against, but claims that the Swedish society is working against him; that society caused him to lose a job because he was refused temporary financial assistance. After a violent attack at a pub, his eyeglasses were broken and impossible to use. In order to be able to carry out his work, Lennart needed new glasses, but he did not have enough money to buy the new ones. He made a visit to "socialen" where he explained his situation and asked if it was possible to get financial assistance to purchase another pair of glasses (a loan or whatever), but his request was turned down (my translation from Swedish):

I did not get any help. Their point was that I had been working for a month, and therefore I should have been able to save some money. Or have an extra pair of eye-glasses. So, when my probationary period was over I was not employed. The boss said it was because I had been reported sick for too long. It did not help to say that it was because I had no eye glasses. Thus, the social welfare department helped me to lose a job. It's as simple as that. <sup>94</sup>

The feeling of being in a discriminated category is a general aspect of the natives' perception of how things are in the relationship between Swedes, immigrants, and society. Of course, this is also a more general native experience than that, and it is often reflected in the "redneck" pages in the press, in the so-called letters to the editor. For example, under the rubric "*Who is discriminated against?*", a Swedish man distinguishes between the Swede with bad teeth who cannot afford to visit the dentist and the immigrant who gets new teeth paid for by society, the Swede who has to move from his home because he can not afford to pay the rent and the immigrant who is helped by society to rent a larger apartment. <sup>95</sup>

The native feeling of being discriminated against by society in comparison with immigrants was also highlighted by one of the men who works as a street cleaner in Rosengård. During the last couple of years he had been ill for periods of time and the result of this was financial losses that forced him to move to a smaller apartment. He was both depressed and upset by the fact that he was forced to move and that there now lived immigrants in his old apartment. What made him angry was the fact that he, a native Swede, could not afford to pay the rent while the immigrants could; for them there was no problem since the rent was paid by the social welfare system. The feeling of being humiliated and badly treated by his own society was further fueled by his observations in the local neighborhood space; everyday he saw immigrants doing nothing; he saw them sitting in cafés, drinking coffee, and talking while he, a Swede, was forced to clean up after them.

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<sup>93</sup> Interview conducted by Sara Johnsdotter.

<sup>94</sup> Interview conducted by Sara Johnsdotter.

<sup>95</sup> *Sydsvenska dagbladet*, 980906

### 8.4.2 Some immigrants are treated differently

Are these native experiences of discrimination pure fantasies, or is there some empirical validity to the claims? Johnsdotter discussed some of the remarks with a civil servant who worked with financial aspects of immigration, both with direct payments of money and with more general issues. The question was: is it easier for immigrants to receive help from the social welfare department than it is for native Swedes? This was the answer she received:

Both, I would like to say. That is, sometimes I can imagine that it is like that. And, sometimes I can think that this is not the case. The [immigrants] we meet are relatively new arrivals in Sweden, and that means that they have a different path to obtaining supplementary benefits compared to a Swede. If a Swede has managed to get by well, and has a background of employment and self-support and applies for social benefits, that person will probably receive different type of treatment compared to the refugee who visits us. For a refugee family who [after having been granted asylum] come from a refugee camp [in Sweden] there is really not much of an investigation to make.<sup>96</sup> If they are newly arrived and don't speak Swedish, we don't require them to search for jobs, because that is pointless, and that we know. Instead, they have to apply for courses in Swedish and we plan this together with them. You have to listen and find out what [the immigrants] are interested in. This is the way we approach the problem, and we know that while they are [learning Swedish], they must receive supplementary benefits. The only thing that interests us is whether they have any resources themselves. If they have sold a house before they left their homeland, or have other means they could live on. But, at least according of what they say to us ... no one has any means and then they have the right to help. It has not got that much to do with investigations, and it can be discussed whether it is good to be taken up so quick by the social welfare system. But when we sit here, there it is not much we have to consider. But, for the person who has had a job, maybe his own house ... well, then we ask if it is possible to lower his expenses, maybe sell the house with a profit and move to a cheaper place if the person has problems supporting himself. Is there a car which can be sold, and so on.<sup>97</sup>

This civil servant confirms the natives' experiences of the welfare system, since it points out a certain built-in logic in the system which seems plausible in explaining how natives experience their life-world. Immigrants are treated differently compared to native Swedes in the sense that immigrants are not subject to bureaucratic demands. From the perspective of social workers, it is complicated or almost impossible to investigate whether immigrants have any economic or other resources which could be used instead of Swedish welfare money. The different treatment appears also to be based on the social workers' assumption that being a native Swede opens up possibilities for obtaining work, while it is more complicated to live in Sweden as an immigrant; that is why immigrants are treated more humanely than natives.

There is no expectation that immigrants will be able to find work, while Swedes are expected to make an effort to find jobs. This might have been the case, I believe, during the days when Sweden was a highly industrialized country with a strong national economy. The global economic shift has, however, created a situation where

96 The term "investigation" refers to the economic history of the client looking for help. Generally, this means looking for valuable assets or possessions which can be sold before granting welfare.

97 Interview conducted by Sara Johnsdotter.

members of the uneducated working class face extreme difficulties in finding work. Being a native Swede is not enough if you want to get a job. The native Swedish underclass is in a sense exposed to a double punishment: first you lose all your private investments because of outside (global) forces and then a civil servant subjects you to a moral punishment for a situation for which you are not yourself responsible. In the meantime, your immigrant neighbors are receiving benefits, any protest about which leads your being called a racist.

The natives experience themselves as relatively pure Swedes, and this identification lays a foundation when they symbolize the meaning of social welfare. The benefits given to immigrants are not perceived as some kind of neutral objects, but are looked upon as *our* money, as our Swedish money. This is not synonymous with an attitude that immigrants should be denied social welfare, however. The native underclass, socialized as it has been in a Social Democratic political context, embody a national identity that contains a relatively strong ideology concerning *equality* among humans. The problem for the natives is not that immigrants receive economic assistance from society, but that it is (perceived as) easier for them to obtain that help. The symbolic importance of this is that people from the outside are given a higher value than the "sons of the soil" (Horowitz 1985). A minimum demand from the native point of view is that natives should be treated at least as well as immigrants. The economic situation that the natives find themselves in has produced an experience of competition: they believe, because of what I discussed above, that a consequence of immigration is that Swedes are being ethnically out-competed in the welfare client market.

The solution to the problem of xenophobia is not basically a question of a change of attitudes *per se*. What must be understood is that the negative perception of immigration is produced from an underclass position, where native actors feel that it is easier for immigrants to survive in society. In other words, it is not a question of whether the natives are right or wrong in a factual sense, but a question of eliminating the *feeling of discrimination* which seems to be a consequence of how the system presently works. Programs showing the human suffering during the Holocaust or the dangers of Nazism, articles claiming that multiculturalism enriches society, or viewing the situation as an information problem (native citizens are not yet well-enough educated) miss the point as long as members of the native underclass feel themselves excluded from the economy and discriminated against by the welfare system. An implication is that it would be easier for the native underclass to show solidarity with immigrants if the natives experienced that it was easier to be a native Swede in Sweden than to live here as an immigrant, or, at least, if native Swedes experienced themselves as equal to immigrants. The first of these alternatives is politically unrealistic since it opposes the notion of equality which forms part of a multiculturalist ideology. The second alternative seems, however, to be realistic, since it would only demand that the welfare system remove the moral pressure that native Swedes must currently face.

### 8.4.3 Language problems

An experiential undertone in several of the discursive statements made about Swedish space can be summed up with the words *too many immigrants*. This structure of feeling is what organizes linguistic expressions and interpretations of the social world. The content of the sayings vary, however. Generally there are two themes which stand out in the interviews, namely *culture* and *economy*. The cultural difference which is most noticeable and which also produces strong anxiety among the natives is *language*. Language differences produce two feelings: a) a distrust of interaction with immigrants and b) a fear that Swedish children will embody a weak Swedish-language competence. In their everyday lives, native Swedes experience these differences in those public places where they come into direct contact with immigrants, such as when buying food or in daycare centers or schools. As an example of a) above, one of the native women says:

When they talk, you do not understand what they say. And sometimes it feels as if they laugh ... that they think "stupid Swede" or something like that. Sometimes I notice this in the store. Even if you don't understand exactly what they say, you can grasp the meaning. That is, it is noticeable in the way they look at you. And when they walk behind you. You can notice it in their tone of voice.<sup>98</sup>

The language problem in schools and daycare centers is not connected to any specific different language, but must be understood in the context of the whole multiethnic situation where several languages are being used. Being a native Swede in this multiethnic context means belonging to an ethnic minority (in relation to a large group of immigrants speaking different languages), and this produces a danger of linguistic creolization which most of the natives experience as a problem. The feelings of distrust which are experienced in everyday interactions with immigrants is an expression of the kinds of distrust produced in a social space that does not correlate well with your own identity. It is the same kind of experience which can be felt during visits to other parts of the world where we are confronted with a space which we have problems understanding.

Some of the Swedish mothers noticed that their children displayed problems in learning what they interpreted as correct Swedish, and they therefore moved the children to a place where the number of immigrants was fewer. Barbro (a mother of two children) pointed out that the high concentration of immigrants in the neighborhood made her children speak "Rosengårdsswedish" (my translation from Swedish):

That there are so many immigrants in the area is the only negative aspect of living here [in the neighborhood]. You can notice this in your own children. My daughter speaks with a dialect now and then. I could notice it when she attended her daycare center, since many of her friends were Arabs. I could hear it in her language ... she did not speak Swedish, but she spoke the dialect of Rosengård.<sup>99</sup>

98 Interview conducted by Sara Johnsdotter.

99 Interview conducted by Sara Johnsdotter.

The experience with her daughter made Barbro decide to move her youngest child from the daycare center to another kindergarten where the concentration of immigrants was fewer. She was worried that her child would learn Swedish poorly. She explains her decision like this (my translation from Swedish):

There is only one Swedish girl left at the daycare center, and she will attend school next year. That would mean that my son will be the only Swede, since they did not manage to recruit any new Swedish children. There will only be Arabs and Turks left. This was the right thing to do, since my son had language problems. He can not say r, s, and t correctly. In the new place, there are only two languages, Spanish and Swedish, and they also practice Swedish a lot. <sup>100</sup>

This type of ethnic act is not necessarily synonymous with *xenophobia*; it is not necessarily a question of negative attitudes to immigrants in the sense of a dislike of cultural difference. To live as a Swedish parent in Rosengård forces one to take a stand on how your children should be socialized. Multiculturalist rhetoric celebrating how many languages enrich society is irrelevant to those who must live an everyday life in a multiethnic neighborhood where social reality is more complicated. All the Swedes who live in the area experience it as troublesome that their children must spend several hours each day in un-Swedish environments where they interact with young people who speak extremely poor Swedish, in all senses of the word. Some of our middle-class informants chose to move to another part of Sweden before one of their children began school, in part because they were worried about their child's language development.

So far I have pointed out that Swedish adults consider it to be a problem that their children speak Swedish poorly. Other languages may also, however, be a practical problem for parents in their dealings with the institution in question. Another mother, Sonia, explained how she experienced attending a multicultural P. T. A. meeting (my translation from Swedish):

It is quite irritating to attend P. T. A. meetings with many immigrants. The teacher says something, and the interpreter interprets in two or more languages. This is negative, since you do not get anything out of the meeting. And it is hard to establish contacts with other parents. It is hard to establish a feeling of community. On the other hand, it was very nice when the other parents brought with them various food dishes. That was nice! <sup>101</sup>

As stated above, this quotation does not reveal hidden racism or xenophobia. It is more about reflections concerning practical issues related to an everyday life involving children and other parents. The situation Sonia describes may be enriching for an anthropologist interested in multicultural communication, but for a parent in a multiethnic neighborhood, other aspects of multiculturalism come to the forefront.

This more practical aspect of having a public space characterized by multiculturalism too often disappears in the discourse on national identity and racism. This is clear in Louise Victoria Johansen's (1999) discussion about how Danish parents avoid multicultural schools for their children because they have a negative pre-un-

100 Interview conducted by Sara Johnsdotter.

101 Interview conducted by Sara Johnsdotter.

derstanding of cultural difference. Johansen conducts an analysis of discourses provided by the Danish parents. The problem, however, is that these discourses avoid the actual background of concrete social problems. These problems are not necessarily related to a negative attitude towards cultural difference. To put it simply, most parents who move their children to Swedish/Danish schools are not doing so because they are racists. From a grassroots perspective, it is absurd to label a negative attitude towards cultural diversity as morally wrong or as racist. From this perspective, parents would act wrongly if they avoided taking the responsibility (toward their own children) for considering problems of cultural diversity in their everyday lives.

## 8.5 Summary

In this chapter, I have tried to show how a certain group of native Swedes represent their life-worlds in the neighborhood Rosengård. I have described the group as “an enclave within an enclave” in order to point out the position of the Swedes in relation to the larger neighborhood space. In a multiculturalist ideological understanding of the world, the native majority population is regarded as an obstacle to the construction of a society characterized by cultural diversity: the native Swedish population is defined as xenophobic, Islamophobic, or racist. This chapter has shown, however, that native Swedes who belong to the working-/underclass, and who have to cope with diversity in their everyday lives, have a more complex understanding of reality than one characterized by being against immigration or cultural difference *per se*. It has also been shown that in spite of relatively harsh living conditions in economic and social terms, the natives’ representations of immigration are less xenophobic than one might have expected.

The chapter illustrates that native attitudes towards difference in general must be understood in relation to the social context with which these people must try to cope in their everyday lives. The natives make, without being theoretically aware of it, a distinction between bad and good acts when they describe immigrants. This distinction is used as a means of describing the kinds of difference they are ready to accept in their world. Thus, what has become evident in the chapter is that native Swedes accept difference when they perceive it as being in line with how they (Swedes) act in the world, and they reject all acts which are understood as bad in general, such as violence or negative attitudes towards themselves or the national space in general. One conclusion to be drawn from the discussion in the chapter is that a “politics of similarity” could have a more positive effect on integration than a “politics of difference”.

In the chapter it has also been demonstrated that an important aspect of xenophobia is that the natives see themselves as being in a disadvantaged position vis-a-vis the welfare system when compared to immigrants. The natives feel that it is they, rather than the immigrants, who make up the category most discriminated against in soci-

ety. From a multiculturalist position, this type of experience is often ridiculed or rejected as wrong. A second conclusion to be drawn from this chapter is, however, that this is real experience which needs to be eliminated if it is going to be possible to come to terms with native racism or xenophobia. Thus, if the welfare system treated Swedes in a manner which made them feel as though they were being treated as well as were the immigrants, it would be easier to gain attention for arguments which emphasize the value of tolerance among various groups in society. Needless to say, for the natives in this chapter a well-functioning welfare state is a prerequisite for their material survival, since it is the state that, in the last instance, guarantees that they have (a small) income.

It has also been shown in the chapter that negative attitudes towards diversity are embedded in a *practical* rather than *racist* logic. This has been illustrated by the problems faced by native parents and children who try to participate in public arenas characterized by diversity. For these parents, cultural diversity is far from an enriching aspect of their lives since it makes it difficult for their children to learn Swedish correctly, and because it fills their public contacts with friction – which no one wants in everyday life. These parents reject diversity basically because they want to be good parents, not because they are racists.



## CHAPTER 9

# Summary and Conclusions

The central argument in this thesis is that the multiculturalist ideology is an intellectual obstacle to understanding multicultural society. How this ideology affects thinking and writing about multicultural society has been shown by using the example of how Islam is represented as a Swedish phenomenon for Swedish readers. In the various chapters it has been argued that the central dictates of the multiculturalist ideology are used by most actors involved in describing Islam in Sweden as a coherence system to help determine what may be expressed publicly and what must be kept in the “dark”. The main methodological tool used to illustrate this argument has involved contrasting statements in the discourse with empirical findings from anthropological fieldwork in a Malmö neighborhood called Rosengård.

In Chapter Three we saw that multiculturalism assumes ideological hegemony in Sweden on issues related to cultural difference/diversity. This chapter, even if it also contained empirical examples, was intended to provide a theoretical basis for the rest of the thesis since the discourse of Islam in Sweden is dominated by the outlook on society which is stipulated by the dictates of the multiculturalist ideology. It also showed that the multiculturalist order of domination is upheld due to the structure of affirmations and sanctions which form part of all ideological systems. Even though not all citizens disagree with what is stipulated in multiculturalism, all citizens must consider the ideology when they wish to express themselves publicly about multicultural society. This is true because there is always a danger of becoming a target for symbolic – or material – sanctions if the wrong words are uttered in the public domain. The multiculturalist ideology is (something which was discussed more than shown) grounded in the psychological strains which are produced by globalization. Hence, just as is nationalism, multiculturalism is used by actors in order to cope with profound cultural, economic, and social transformations.

In Chapter Four the general contours of the Swedish discourse of Muslim difference was illustrated via a discussion of how three actors in the multiculturalist political field presented their arguments. Here it was shown that pluralist writers (actors who sign up to the central values of multiculturalism) ground their discourse in a

normative discussion about religious rights, rather than in an empirical analysis of Muslims/Islam in Sweden. It was also shown that these writers assume the same ideological position in the debate about Islam as do the Islamists; pluralists even provide Islamists with secularist arguments for the right to be different. Another conclusion to be drawn from this chapter is that pluralists have the desire to speak on behalf of all Muslims, while in actuality they speak only for a group of Islamists who have the express political goal of separating Muslims from Swedish contexts. These two actors, pluralists and Islamists, wish to break down what they believe is a too homogeneous Swedish nation-state in order to establish a society characterized by, in the case of Islam, a religiously heterogeneous social structure. This political project is, however, contested by the third actor whose ideological stance is described and discussed in the chapter: the nationalists. It was shown that nationalists, in contrast to the others, argue that Sweden should be a culturally homogeneous society. The nationalism formulated in the documents used as references in the chapter show that nationalism is here used to provide a shelter for what is regarded as a global invasion of difference. Thus, although the chapter discusses how three political actors approach Muslim difference, the general conclusion is that the original three perspectives on the issue boil down to only two perspectives which stand in binary opposition to each other. What pluralists/Islamists argue for, nationalists argue against, and vice versa. In the public debate about cultural diversity, pluralists and nationalists are often discussed as if they held two incompatible perspectives on the world: pluralists, in their positive stance towards diversity, are regarded as the “good guys” who approach “evil” as embodied in nationalism. In Chapter Four, however, it was demonstrated that all three actors adopt the same basic perspective towards difference: all argue that Muslims are so different when compared to Swedes that the two groups should be separated from each other. The whole discourse is characterized by a fixation with difference, rather than similarity, and the basic distinctions among the three actors really concern how to value difference.

Chapter Five was partly an excursion into two aspects of Islam in Sweden that is avoided by pluralist writers: Islamism and ethnic/religious segregation. By using examples taken from the discourse, it was shown that these aspects are kept in the dark by pluralists. The reason for this is that these two phenomena do not fit into the multiculturalist ideological position because this position has as its main focus on describing cultural difference in terms of enrichment rather than as problematic and/or threatening. It would surely be difficult to construct a coherent argument about the rights of a group of Muslims to construct their own separate public sphere in society, if that particular group of Muslims consisted of Islamists. Islamism is not considered to be an enriching aspect of diversity; on the contrary, it frightens both Muslims and non-Muslims. That the multiculturalist ideology dictates this omission was shown in this chapter by quoting actors in the discourse who claimed that scholars desire to construct a positive image of Islam rather than analyze any of the implications of Muslim demands on society. The chapter also illustrates how pluralists, instead of trying to analyze Muslims and Islam from an empirical point of view, make normative claims about what will happen in the future. These normative claims

(about the Swedification of Muslims) are not problematized or discussed in a distanced manner; instead, it is taken for granted that all Muslims want to be in Sweden, and that they are all involved in trying to act like Swedish Muslims. The arguments about Blue-and Yellow Islam make it clear that most pluralists adopt positions as ideological gatekeepers *vis-a-vis* the Swedish general public.

In Chapter Six the aim was to challenge two pluralist arguments of Islamic institutionalization: a) that Islamic institutions are a self-evident aspect of integration into Sweden and that these institutions will make Islam more Swedish, and b) that it is an inherently morally good act to give Muslims the right to establish their own institutions. It was shown that – from an empirical point of view, i.e., from a perspective rooted in the everyday social context which exists in a Muslim neighborhood – institutions must be understood in relation to other institutions. After doing so, it became possible to show that Islamic institutions are parts of a larger network of institutions which keep Muslims separated from Swedes, rather than helping them to become part of Sweden. If one views the Muslim ghetto from below rather than from above, it is possible to see that several Islamic institutions have been established by Islamists who wish to isolate themselves from the larger society, rather than to participate more actively. The chapter has thus shown that it appears to be most fruitful to attempt to gain an understanding of Islamic institutionalization in a manner opposite to that suggested by pluralists. It was also pointed out, however, that Islamism is far from a general phenomenon *per se*, and that the Muslim group as a whole is characterized by ideological heterogeneity. There exists internal criticism among Muslims against those actors with an ambition to isolate themselves from Swedish contexts. These critical voices have, however, no voice in the discourse of Islam in Sweden, since this discourse is organized by multiculturalist arguments about the right to be different – and those Muslims who claim this are Islamists, not modest believers with an ambition to establish themselves in Europe.

Chapter Seven was written as an extension of Chapter Five. The aim here was to show that the right to establish institutions, in combination with marginalization (and all of what that means in terms of chaotic experiences), makes it possible to see that there is a process of Muslim enclavization also taking place in Sweden. The term enclavization is not used in Sweden, and the existence of ethnic enclaves is denied. In the thesis, it has been shown that spatial divisions are not regarded as important factors by pluralists (who, in actuality, argue for a more well-developed division between Muslims and non-Muslims). Swedish experts on segregation (which is the most common term which is used for spatial division) apply a too narrow definition of what an ethnic enclave is. If an enclave is only understood in economic terms, and as an either-or phenomenon, it is difficult to see that there exists a process of enclavization in Sweden, illustrated here by the city of Malmö. The ethnic/religious enclave in Malmö is not, however, as well-developed (economically or otherwise), as are enclaves in other parts of the world; as is the case in, e.g., Berlin or Miami. The chapter further shows that, for many individual Muslims, an important function of the ghetto is as a social shield, for protection from various dangers that flourish in the outside world. Adult Muslims can protect themselves and their children from various threats,

such as discrimination, racism, isolation, chaotic experiences, Swedish ideologies concerning with equality between men and women or between parents and children; inside the ghetto it is possible to construct a life-world based in a symbolic, religious language.

In Chapter Eight it was shown that xenophobia among native Swedes must be understood from a point of view based in the everyday lives that individuals must cope with. Xenophobia or cultural racism is not, primarily, a question of whether someone is morally good or bad in themselves. Xenophobic ideas are always embedded in the life-situation with which a particular individual actor attempts to cope. The native Swedes in Rosengård belong to a class of individuals who have been severely influenced by the global economic shift. During the time of fieldwork most of them had to deal with a harsh economic situation because of unemployment. In addition to this, they were forced to negotiate a local social space which was dominated by culturally different practices. Hence the natives, in contrast to several middle-class multiculturalists, had to cope with *real*, rather than imaginary, diversity in the public space which surrounded them. In a situation like this, where individuals feel that it is easier for immigrants to survive in society than natives – in combination with the constraints and friction generated by the diversity practiced by immigrants – it becomes difficult to think of multicultural society unambiguously. It was also shown in the chapter that something which on the surface may look like a racist act (avoiding overly multicultural public spaces), is rather a purely practical action based on a fear that children may learn the Swedish language poorly (and thereby risk reinforcing their working-class identities); furthermore, the situation becomes problematic when many different languages are used in the public sphere.

## 9.1 Globalization, the nation-state, enclavization, and Islamism

In sum, this thesis has generally argued that all the actors who are involved in the discourse of Islam as a Swedish phenomenon are also involved in a political struggle for how multicultural society should be structured. All the actors – pluralists, Islamists, and Nationalists – use, in different ways, the multiculturalist ideology in their arguments for and against Muslim difference and religious rights. Pluralists and Islamists, on one hand, use the ideology in arguments for breaking up the public sphere and making space for Islam. Nationalists, on the other hand, use the ideology as the enemy in their struggle to protect what they believe to be cultural homogeneity. The discussion in the thesis therefore raises several questions which are concerned with globalization in general.

### 9.1.1 Intellectuals and ideological hegemony

It has been demonstrated that intellectuals (in this case scholars from various universities), are involved in reproducing multiculturalism, the ideology which assumes hegemony in Sweden (and elsewhere) on issues concerned with difference. This raises questions of the role of intellectuals in a democratic society. What type of relationships should intellectuals adopt *visavi* the state and other political actors and institutions? That a state has as a political project whose goal is to work for ideological control of its citizens seems quite natural; it is the job of the state to attempt to dominate the nation-state's political space. But, what about intellectuals outside the state? What is their job? A few decades ago it was self-evident for many intellectuals to – if not stand in direct opposition – at least assume a critical role towards hegemonic ideologies. In contemporary Sweden, however, the political situation (when it comes to multiculturalism) is that anarchists, Marxists, liberals, conservatives, Social Democrats, the green party, scholars in universities, etc, all reproduce the multiculturalist hegemony or stand on the same side. They all agree that the most important political struggle to be involved in is the struggle against (the hidden) enemy of racism, in order to break up the contemporary homogeneity. But is not this struggle, when all comes around, a *eurocentric* battle for the right of differences which do not actually exist? As soon as the Other turns out to be someone who does not fit into the multiculturalist fantasy of the Other, the eurocentric mechanism comes into play and everyone demands human rights. Who is this Other who is supposed to enrich us? It is easy to formulate who he/she is not: all those immigrants who practice culture in ways that Westerners dislike. Islamists belong to this category: male Muslims who live by patriarchal ideas of how to organize their world.

It is, of course, problematic when intellectuals, for multiculturalist reasons, omit certain central aspects of a field of knowledge. To keep Islamism in silence makes it difficult to understand relevant factors. One such is the insight that the multiculturalist ideology may be used instrumentally by actors with weak, or no, ambitions to become integrated into Swedish society. These are actors who take advantage of the right to be different in order to make space for their own political projects. Another neglected factor is that the arguments about general rights encourage scholars to construct essentialized definitions of the group in question. This has also been shown implicitly in the thesis: the representation of Muslims which are used in order to argue for collective rights is grounded in a definition of the category Muslim which tells us that he/she is someone who has arrived in Europe, carrying an unaltered type of religion, characterized by the idea of Islam as a total way of life. The problem with this definition is that it is fantasy if used to understand Muslims in general; it is only relevant for use in an understanding of Islamists – even if they are also involved in a reconstruction of Islam in Europe.

Another problem highlighted in the thesis: organizing knowledge about society with multiculturalism makes it impossible to understand the problem of Muslim difference in its totality, because the general context is left out of the discussion. For most pluralists, the problem of Muslim integration is regarded as a problem about

attitude or morality (that is, about xenophobia or racism *per se*). Therefore, what is not discussed by pluralists is the material base which grounds the problem of cultural diversity. Symptomatic for the pluralist discourse I have discussed in the thesis, but also for other intellectuals dealing with multicultural society, is that the discourse about culture floats above a capitalist economy which is seen as being in a stable *status quo*. No (global) economic transformations are considered: society's material base is the same as it has always been. The problem with this perspective is that it does not allow the aspects I have tried to illuminate in the text, Islamism and enclavization, to be understood. Islamism, nationalism, multiculturalism, enclavization, globalization, and the break down of the nation-state are related phenomena. Thus, Islamism and enclavization are responses to marginalization, which is a consequence of global economic transformations (de-industrialization in the West), which effects natives who experience downward mobility, which effects their attitudes towards immigrants. That is, the capitalist economy is a job culture, and when no jobs are available, people feel threatened and try to organize alternative careers by opening various kinds of commercial and cultural institutions. Thus, as I have tried to show in the thesis, the hegemony of multiculturalism leads intellectuals – whose work is to interpret reality for the Swedish public – to become preoccupied with a struggle against xenophobia, and the right to be different; in doing so, they refrain from trying to understand social processes which take place below them.

One of the most important conclusions to be drawn concerns the process of enclavization. This process may be understood from two different perspectives. One way to understand it, is to interpret it from a utopian standpoint, and regard it as an example of how Sweden is becoming a multicultural society where various exotic items enrich us. It is good that immigrants establish institutions in society, both for themselves and for the welfare state. Another way to understand the process of enclavization is to frame it in a dystopian perspective, and suggest that enclavization will make it more difficult for Muslims and other immigrants to become integrated into Sweden, because it keeps people within the confines of their own group. If immigration to Sweden continues, new arrivals will become integrated into the enclave rather than into Sweden. If so becomes the case – if the process of enclavization continues – the enclave will successively expand, making it easier and easier to practice the original culture. There is a great danger that this last development will enhance the level of ethnic and other conflicts in society, since, as I have shown, many natives express powerful negative emotions toward cultural diversity. In sum, multiculturalism may provide the individual subject with a feeling of being a good person, but it is a problematic ideology when it is used to organize the thinking of multicultural society.

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