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Abstract: *The paper examines the conceptual context of cultural diversity in Sweden. It describes the background in which the former Social Democratic Government declared 2006 as the Year for Cultural Diversity. A related concern is scrutinizing whether in fact this year would be a starting point for more deeply engaged diversity programs or if such policy definitions remain mere symbolic acts of window dressing. The study is based on analysis of official documents, diversity events and agendas, and interviews with different actors and diversity consultants, and participation in seminars and conferences on the topic of diversity and integration as the main topics. A major concern is whether the current interest on cultural diversity may lead to its institutionalization in the Swedish cultural and social organizations (Hamde, 2002a) and address the virtues of diversity, such as diversity for profitability and competence in workplaces, social justice concerns, and finally, societal cohesion. Alternatively, the paper explores if the debate on diversity merely remains a 'traveling' idea to appear occasionally and then occur in fashion-like manner as many management ideas do, leaving little traces on peoples' lives.*

Key Words: *Actors, Cultural Diversity, Diversity Consultants, Institutionalization, Multiculturalism, Multicultural Year, Sweden*

THE CURRENT DEBATE ON CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN SWEDEN

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The main purpose of the paper is to describe the discourse on cultural diversity among different actors in Sweden for the last few years, that is, to account for the conceptualizations, and not to explain the actual process through which cultural diversity is lived upon or realized. The paper examines if there are any emerging patterns from the debates and discourses to constitute a guide for the future, including the understandings and values people put on diversity and these may affect peoples' lives. Accounting for the discourse on diversity is a vital part in understanding how it is practiced in reality. The paper does not directly look upon how exactly cultural diversity is being implemented or accounted for in practical life, although this will come eventually in future studies. In order to do so, I have turned to qualitative research methods where relevant actors involved in the creation and dissemination of diversity discourse take a central place. The method consists of interviews with key informants and actors involved in the integration policies, research programs of cultural diversity institutions (Multicultural Centrum, Stockholm), participation in a couple of conferences and seminars with "diversity" as key topic, and interviews with two Cultural Diversity Consultants

(DC). The Swedish government established the Cultural Diversity Consultants in 2003 to work disseminate relevant information and create an arena for networking among diverse actors in eight counties. They closely cooperate with cultural institutions and leaders in the cultural realm. In two of the seminars and conferences, the debates and appropriate discussions by researchers on diversity were video-filmed.

In the following sections, I will introduce the *main concepts* prevalent in the current debate on diversity in Sweden. I will then turn to some of the work at the *Multicultural Centrum* in promoting the virtues of diversity in different contexts, especially the cultural institutions and organizations. I will also shortly describe the role of what have come to be known since 2003 as Cultural Diversity Consultants, shortened as Diversity consultants and sometimes as multicultural consultants, followed by a description of the increasing events, including seminars and conferences in which the author has participated. Finally, the paper examines whether the diverse diversity concepts and events are linked to generally acknowledged virtues of cultural diversity - profitability and competence in workplaces, social justice, and finally, societal cohesion - concluding that the debate takes different trajectories and exhibits differing assumptions that sometimes may lead to contradictory effects.

DIVERSE, DIVERSITY CONCEPTS

As in all subjects of the social sciences, different actors in the debate of diversity use different terms differently and thus it is difficult to find a definite, once for all definition of diversity. Three recurring concepts sometimes used interchangeably and sometimes used by the same or different actors in different contexts are: diversity, cultural diversity, and the multicultural (Westin , 1998, 2004).

Diversity

In the Swedish debate, the general term diversity refers to different societal groupings such as gender, age, ethnicity, immigrants, and the handicapped. Sometimes it is referred to as a social diversity, consisting of gender, ethnicity/origin, education background, functions handicap, and sexual orientation (Bjärvall, 2000). The concept of diversity - whether to be gradually institutionalized and gets the appropriate acceptance as a norm (Scott, 1995), or to just dominate for the time being as a fashion (Abrahamson, 1996, Hamde, 2002a) - has caught the attention of many actors, institutions, both in the private and public sectors. The differences and similarities among societal categories constitute the background and assumption from which diversity researchers get their point of departure. Depending on whether one emphasizes differences or similarities, actors attribute specific positions and roles to the different categories and form the content of diversity that shape it within the whole society (Czarniawska & Höpfl, 2002)

Cultural Diversity (*kulturell mångfald*) and Ethnic Diversity (*etniskt mångfald*).

In the Swedish context, most often than not, cultural diversity is interchangeably used with ethnic diversity,

the latter referring to immigrants or their culture or even more ambiguously to immigrant organizations. Research on cultural diversity takes place in such diverse institutions as the Multicultural Centre in Stockholm, the now defunct National Institute for Working Life, a PhD education programs at several educational institutions such as at the Linköping University (*Tema Etnicitet)*, and in other different non-.academic centers such as the Healthy Working Life (*Suntarbetsliv*) organized by the Swedish Federation of Entrepreneurs, and labor market partners which take cultural diversity as a strategic resource that could foster profitability and enhances competence. The above positive descriptions of diversity initiatives are also undertaken in the context of alternative trajectories of diversity where the emphasis is on the difficulty immigrants and other minorities face in the labor market, targeting discriminatory structural assumptions and measures in recruitment, employee maintenance and development (de los Reyes 2001). As a result, anonymous application for recruitment has been discussed among major political and labor market parties. Another ambiguity in the debate is uncritical use of the terms *cultural diversity* and *ethnic diversity*, often as interchangeable concepts. While ethnic diversity most often refers to immigrated groups relative to Sweden-born citizens, the scope of cultural diversity extends far beyond that. It includes also aspects of cultures within the same national group, such as Swedish and the Sami cultures, to take one example from the indigenous groups, or the journalist culture relative to academic culture. This is also related to the different ethnic groups in Sweden but in the mass media, quasi-academic debates, and in conventional discourses, the term 'ethnic' immediately is equated with immigrant groups. A more focused use of the term diversity, however, appears in the descriptions of the benefits of diversity in working life but that use has not yet minimized charges for discriminatory recruitment or maintenance of immigrants in the labor market.

Diversity at work (*mångfald i arbetslivet*)

Related also to the above discussions is the fact that the topic of "diversity at work" is getting heated interest in both research (Fägerlind & Ekelöv, 2001) as well as organizational contexts where the goal is to either view diversity as a strategic resource and/or as a tool against structural discriminatory practices (Essemyr, 2000, Mlekov and Widell, 2003). Working life is the arena where diversity is believed to find its place and meaning, and where heated discussions, reflecting class and ideological differences. Discriminatory and unjust measures are highlighted (even in the mass media), discussed, debated, and controversially held to apply in working life. This topic is also getting increasing attention among employers and employee organizations (de loss Reyes, 2001). Every interest on the topic of diversity takes working life as an exemplary arena for its implementation. Even the former Social Democratic Government policy on integration pointed out working life as an appropriate arena where an integrated society experiences its egalitarian values and virtues (Interview, Lars Göran Brandt, November 29, 2005). As Fägerlind & Ekelöv hold, "A whole industry has

grown up around diversity with numerous consultants and training programs, and we are starting to witness a growing interest from the research world in studying the issues on diversity in working life" (2001: 6). Different industries, institutions and workplaces are examined within this framework, such as diversity in education (Runfors, 2003), diversity in cultural institutions (Pripp, 2004) or diversity in business organizations (Bjärvall, 2000), among others. As the debate was augmented by top-down, short-term oriented, and publicly financed projects initiated by the former Social Democratic government (1994-2006) dominated the public scene until 2007. The following sections give an example of this.

MULTICULTURALISM AND THE MULTICULTURAL

According to the Director of the Multicultural Centrum, Leif Magnusson (Interview, December 6, 2005), the idea of multiculturalism was behind the establishment of both the Multicultural Centrum (in the 1980s) and many other institutions that developed programs and strategies to manage cultural differences among many different groups of people. He also noted that 'the multicultural' connoted different meanings at that time than it does now, consequently sounding more outmoded because it has been used in public debate and research contexts since the mid 1980s without specific practical effects. He maintains that the idea of multiculturalism is gradually paving the way for "diversity" because multiculturalism or the 'multicultural' denoted combinations of fixed cultural groups that essentially remain un-mixed or having less to do with each other. The debate on multiculturalism, according to this usage, connoted essentialised identities and differences than the way the term diversity has been used. In the Agenda for Multicultural Year, multiculturalism is defined as "an ideological, political and societal ideal with a demand for equality and justice for all people, regardless of origin, and the right of groups to their own roots" (2005: 53). Moreover, the concept, which became the basis for determining the Year 2006 to be a year for diversity is multicultural (*mångkultur*), perhaps as a result of the influence from the 1990s when the Multicultural Centrum was established and many programs aimed at creating a multicultural society flourished. However, critics still maintain that the multicultural programs and policies resulted in increasing or augmenting differences among different groups rather than leading to societal cohesion or social justice (de loss Reyes & Kemali, 2005). de loss Reyes (2001) also holds that the failure of multicultural society programs itself triggered the promotion of the idea of diversity, which was viewed as bearing positive connotations. Researchers and practitioners alike use it, but perhaps with different meanings. Some critics of the term multicultural also note that other European countries have already abandoned the term multicultural in favor of the "intercultural", because of the fact that culture is difficult to keep separate in one group, state or nation (*DN*, January 10, 2006).

Integration

In this section I am interested to account for the discourse on diversity from the policy of integration point of view. Integration and immigration have been closely related topics in Swedish public debate and studies. One can only note the increasing interest and activities, research programs, conferences, and academic programs and courses related to the well-known studies on International Migration and Ethnic Relations (IMER). In 2005 and 2006, the author participated in some conferences with the topic of integration and diversity as the main contents. In such events, the discourse used, attitudes expressed, and topics raised by participants in order to illustrate the topic lacked other concepts raised above. In all of them, the general policy statement for formal acknowledgement of integration as the future road to *social cohesion* was stressed, with specific reference to immigrant groups in Sweden. For example, in one of the conferences arranged by the Municipality of Umeå in cooperation with other municipalities and bodies in the county, integration was taken to be the task for the majority to integrate the (different) minorities, although dissenting voices were not lacking. Moreover, some participants, especially politicians, were satisfied by the extent to which the majority is shifting from racist and discriminatory attitudes and expressions in the 1950s and 1960s to more appropriate terms. The time range for the change was assumed in the discussion to be *generations*. An anonymous interview argued that the term culture was not part of the integration work in the political arena because "we deal mainly with individuals to get work and enjoy the opportunities Sweden provides; when other actors deal with groups, then perhaps culture may be raised as important" (Anonymous interview, November 29, 2005).

In this section, I have discussed how complicated the topic of integration, culture, multicultural, and ethnicity have become. The terms not only invite interest and genuine concern, but also raise issues that tend to be contradictory, expressing paradoxical attitudes and hesitant practices. Partly, the different projects and programs about diversity tend to be separated from each other, as they tend to be based on different assumptions, different perspectives and methods, and diverse theoretical frameworks. An example in point is the absence of the idea of culture in integration policies, and the absence of direct mention of discrimination in some diversity discourses, as these are mainly based on the "diversity pays" strategy in companies (de loss Reyes 2001). Moreover, the diversity debate also equates ethnicity with cultural diversity, making both concepts still ambiguous. Thus, the debate on diversity can be argued to have been overloaded by unfitting viewpoints and policies that demand adequate follow-up and research in the future. Within this ambiguous conceptual context of multiculturalism, the former government decided to set a particular year for multiculturalism as a symbol for tolerating differences, if not leading to practical steps towards a multicultural society. This is discussed below.

invitation. Those institutions that are given the *mandate* for the Diversity Year 2006 are expected on behalf of the government to reflect diversity issues in their activities, and those aiming to include so far excluded groups. These include 22 authorities in the field of culture, 10 foundations and publicly owned companies, and 13 Universities and collages. Some Swedish embassies are also given this mandate. These institutions are expected to carry out specific activities that highlight cultural diversity and the agenda is regulates as to when and where, as well as by whom these will be done. However, the majority of institutions were not given a mandate in the directive but were simply *invited* to participle in the multicultural year 2006. These include all municipalities, counties, county councils, and the Region Skåne, 21 authorities, 26 universities and collages, 29 scene arts, regional (29) and other (13) museums, 21 libraries, 23 archives, 17 periodic festivities, and 68 miscellaneous institutions. Interestingly enough, almost all of the immigrant cultural associations, such as the *RE: Orient, Selam Cultural Association*, etc, were merely invited, which means that their participation to contribute to the multicultural year remained at their own will.

Seminars and conference.

Partly as preparation for the Diversity year, and partly as part of the ongoing discourse on diversity, many seminars and conferences were held both in the private and public sector. The information in this section is based on participant observation on four conferences and seminars between in 2005 and 2006. The topics dealt with were directly related to how to tackle cultural diversity issues and how to introduce, establish and eventually integrate (read assimilate) immigrants into the Swedish majority society! The latter expression has raised heat discussions in one of the seminars held in 16th November in Umeå, organized by the adult education forum, SENSUS, and led by an organizational consultant. The seminar topic was formulated as *"Integration, in whose terms"*; contrary to this expressive formulation where the connotation was integration has to be done in cooperation and participation of the majority and the minority groups, some of the seminar participants repeatedly used the expression "integrating immigrants into the Swedish culture', which was seen by many participants, immigrants included, as provocative and assimilatory. Regardless of whether the term assimilation or integration was used in the discussion, it was clear that two parallel discourses on immigrants situation where handled at the same time – assimilation and integration. Those who favored the discourse on integration emphasized that the formulations of certain programs and strategies concealed, and so accentuated, power and domination, rather than uncover and eventually weaken them, thus encouraging assimilatory measures. Their concern was on integration policies and programs bearing social justice. The alternative view rested more on diversity as useful for profitability and competence, thus emphasizing early entry of immigrants into the labor market as a channel for what they also called integration in spite of their discourse connoting assimilation. Some other actors, especially politicians, used the term 'integration' as a tool for societal cohesion, which is used ambiguously because it often connotes bringing the Other (deviants) into the mainstream societal core by educating or instructing them about the Swedish social values, norms and traditions. In that direction, some political parties have even advocated for the controversial language tests as part of the process for acquiring Swedish citizenship.

In the conference "Mobilizing for Integration" (*Mobilisering för integration - flaggskepp, fallgropar, förändring*) arranged by the Ministry of Justice and the Multicultural Centrum (7-12-2005), many interesting topics on diversity were discussed both from the private and especially the public sectors. The language used in this conference was more formal and more academic, mixed with public sector civil servants explaining their projects and programs for diversity.

DISCUSSION: CAN THE DIVERSITY YEAR MAKE AN IMPACT ON DIVERSITY ISSUES?

As elsewhere, there is no lack of criticism to the multicultural year. Some hold that "this is only talk and no talk really leads to real action (DN, 3, 10 January 2005). Some participants at an Integration Conference in Umeå (October 22 2005) emphasized that they have been working on integration and diversity issues for the last few decades but that was only talk, and "mere talk leads nowhere". This comment was on the background note that Sweden has changed its policies from "immigrant policies' to "integration policies" in late 1990s. But those who worked with these issues have noted no significant change on action. Other critics of the Diversity Year 2006 also point out that some of the criteria developed in and by the researchers at the Multicultural Centrum are already neglected in the design of the year. According to Teshome, who worked as a Diversity Consultant in the County of Stockholm since 2003, "when the policy makers and the government designed the year 2006 as diversity year, no one was interested to make use of the knowledge and skills of individuals and private association leaders or skilled members in the cultural area specially those by immigrant groups" (DN 3 January 2006).

In the same manner, the artist Özz Nûjen also criticized the diversity year as a foolish idea (*ett mångkulturär är en dum idé*). "Have we not reached farther? No one can learn diversity. No one can think of that. It is by working with people from other cultures that we learn about diversity. When you work with a homogeneous group of white culture artists, it is clear that there will not be any diversity out of that" (DN 10 January 2006).

From integration to what?

Integration connotes a multicultural society where many different groups of people mutually coexist and respect each other's ways of living. Integration policies and programs in Sweden, however, have been limited to introducing immigrants to the majority working life, and not in any way related to their cultures, diversity rhetoric and discourses. According to a director of integration in one of the counties where a diversity consultant also has been coordinating diversity initiatives since 203, there

PREPARATORY WORK AT THE MULTICULTURAL CENTRUM

The public debate gradually turned to making the work less ambiguous by creating projects in the short-run. Two important preparatory programs can be mentioned. One is the establishment of Diversity consultants since 2003. Another is the detailed criterion for promoting diversity by and for cultural institutions in their work for diversity. Both are meant to promoting the virtues of diversity – diversity for profitability and competence development, diversity as bearing social justice, and finally diversity for societal cohesion social justice. But which of the aims was target by which project were not clear. The Multicultural Centrum at Fitja, Stockholm, became famous for its programs and commitment of its researchers since the mid 1990s when diversity was catching the attention of communal, governmental, and immigration authorities, not least employers. The idea of the multicultural year as well as the multicultural consultants was originally worked out at the Multicultural Centrum. The position of multicultural consultants was such a novel idea in Sweden to the extent that it caught the attention of the mass media and politicians at the county level. When the government established multicultural (or diversity) consultants in 2003, the idea was that they could enhance stimulating the consciousness of different actors on the importance of diversity in publicly financed cultural institutions, such as the music, theater, the opera, and libraries. The multicultural (or diversity) consultants work in seven counties and are supposed to cooperate with different public actors (the state, regional and local actors), cultural institutions and especially with immigrant organizations.

However, a consultant held that the position of the multicultural consultant was decided and thrown into the field of diversity without much thought and sufficient resources, resting as it is on a hasty decision and carrying an ambiguous role (Interview with Teshome, December 6 2005). An evaluation of the diversity consultants has shown both worrying observations and hesitant commitment from institutions. According to Nina Edström, their performance have varied from careful observation on their offices to bolder penetration into the activities of cultural institutions (Interview with Nina Edström, December 6 2005).

The second main work of the Multicultural Centrum is to create structures and criteria for cultural institutions in their work on diversity (Pripp, et al, 2005). This can be defined as methodological support. This section is therefore based mainly on the report titled "The Time for Diversity", edited by Pripps (2005). The Multicultural Centrum devised certain methods to guide institutions and other actors in their diversity programs. These methods can also be described as perspectives on diversity work. The methods simplify diversity work by requiring their users to look for answers to the questions posed below.

By whom?
This method encourages diversity researchers and program leaders in the cultural arena to ask if the work to be done or desired is done by and with the appropri-

ate actors that are the beneficiaries, that is, all actors, including immigrants (Pripps, 2005). The question asked is by whom or who plans, creates, and leads and implements the programs for diversity?

For what?
To which extend do the activities and programs relate and link to the ethnic and cultural diversity audiences and categories from which they were designed?

How?
How are activities and program presented: as minority expressions, as mixed or in a different form?

With whom?
Are activities being implemented in cooperation *with* co-workers and/or references groups, experts or other involved which represent cultural or ethnical diversity?

About what?
Do the activities and programs deal *about* the perspective and themes which link to ethnic and cultural issues?

Where?
Where are the diversity activities and program presented, in the ordinary activities or in project form, in the main office or particular arenas, as particular expressions or part of a greater ordinary context?

In addition to these guidelines, the researchers at the Multicultural Centrum developed diversity issues to be dealt with in the following areas: Diversity in production of cultural services, in the organization itself, as well as in and for the audiences.

TOWARDS A MULTICULTURAL (OR DIVERSITY) YEAR, 2006

The government motivated its decision for a year for cultural diversity by highlighting the social diversity Sweden has found itself since the 1970s. The policy directive describes the situation as follows.

> "Sweden has developed into a country that is characterized by cultural, linguistic and religious diversity. It is important to highlight that every publicly financed culture institution and culture-enhancing organization takes the responsibility in their activities to all of the citizens in the country. The starting point is that all citizens' experiences, knowledge and values should be reflected and taken into account in order to enrich and develop the publicly supported cultural life (Kultur Kommitté direktiv, Dir.2004.169, translation by the author).

The policy points to an inclusive strategy where people who have no yet got the chance or opportunity to enjoy cultural services created by publicly financed institutions and organizations will be able to do so and thus be part of the wider society. To this end, the government has given two types of orders: mandate and

has been no working relationships or interest between the two offices; The director of integration also noted that 'multicultural' was not the dimension from which politicians work in the integration/diversity field, illustrating the lack of cooperation in integration programs at different levels.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

In this paper, the interest was to look closely at the conceptual context in which emerging ideas and discourses on cultural diversity from very narrower angle, such as the decision to have a multicultural or diversity year, and describing diversity issues in the ongoing debates on seminars and conferences. It is beyond the scope of this paper to account all of the concepts and programs used to describe diversity issues in Sweden. The paper also raised recurring reasons for diversity in the Swedish discourse, which revolve around three important concepts: diversity for profitability and competence, diversity as bearing social justice, and finally diversity for societal cohesion. There seems to be two research areas that need closer investigation in the future. One is the way different actors use the terms cultural diversity, integration, assimilation and societal cohesion. So far, the discourse on cultural diversity is complicated by the change in government when the coalition of the centre-right parties won the parliamentarian elections, with invigorated integration policies and programs in September 2006. The other is to look closer why different actors (individual, organizations, state organs) still cling to the idea of diversity as a better one compared to the previously dominating idea of multiculturalism. It was noted in the paper that the projects on multicultural issues tend to be less related to integration issues, and that diversity is taking over multicultural dimensions as it tends to be viewed as a neutral connotation.

It was also observed that the different actors in the field of diversity tend to working separately from each other. It was clear whether actors in the cultural field were really interested in integration policies for any of the above discussed goals, or if they looked for getting more legitimacy from the public that puts a notice on them whenever they used the terms integration or diversity (Meyer and Rowan, 1977).

The issue of power in the discourses was also less studied with some few exceptions (Ds 2005: 12). According to an anonymous integration worker, it seems that "people are tired of diversity issues. First was gender, then nondiscriminatory policies, now multicultural issue, and finally, diversity that embraces all" (Anonymous interviewee, November 29 2005). Yet, few seminar participants already were dissatisfied by the absence of minority groups and their associations from the important events, eventually affecting their lives, which allude to the failure of such programs taking into account local competences that would require alternative treatment rather than lamping them into existing institutional frameworks that are difficult to change, thereby enhancing existing routines and conceptual models for social participation.

Finally, I conclude the paper by raising the question: Is diversity a concept whose time has come, or is it one that just appears to disappear soon - a fad, fashion, a passing construct? This topic constitutes the next step in my study about diversity in Sweden.

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