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YOUTH AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN "MULTICULTURAL" SWEDEN

SUMMARY

The paper examines social exclusion of young people from an increasingly ethnically segmented labour market in Sweden. Discrimination of new ethnic minorities in the ethnically complex and socially charged environments of Stockholm, the author maintains, is hidden in a fog of stereotypical images of cultural differences. What is not usually recognised are social inequalities, and that the social struggle continues through the cultural. It is here, in the context of segregated living conditions, that not only new inclusive transethnic identities and composite cultural expressions but also new ethnic street corner fundamentalisms are emerging.

KEY WORDS: youth, culture, identity, ethnicity, social exclusion, immigrants, Sweden

Introduction

The public image is that there are "one and a half million immigrants" in Sweden out of a population of about 8.8 million Swedes. In official terminology, the word "immigrant" covers not only citizens of foreign countries but also people one or both of whose parents were born abroad. An immigrant can thus be a "second generation" Swedish citizen. In the everyday public debate, however, the word "immigrant" has rather pejorative overtones, being used as a generalising term to refer to people of "Third World" origins, i.e. coming from countries other than those of the European Union and (white) North America. The immigrant is in this sense a person defined and/or regarded in various ways as not being a real Swede but a kind of second class citizen. To quote Karaveli et al. (1995): "The word 'immigrant' became a hidden metaphor which replaced thinking and contributed to bolting and barring the door to Swedishness".

The pattern of post-war immigration into Sweden was like that in the rest of Western Europe. A first wave were the migrant workers in the Fifties, Sixties and

early Seventies (mainly from Finland and southern Europe). The second wave, from the mid Seventies, was dominated by family and relatives of those already in Sweden and increasingly by refugees from wars in various parts of the world seeking asylum in Sweden. During the Eighties, and even more so in the Nineties, controls have been tightened and the treatment, particularly of those seeking asylum under the Geneva Convention, has become more restrictive.

In the deepening crisis of the Swedish welfare state in the Eighties, coinciding with increased immigration of Third World refugees, the ideological climate gradually changed. While a refugee policy characterised by "solidarity and generosity" lives on in public rhetoric, actual practice since the early Nineties suggests that Sweden is moving closer to the exclusiveness and selectivity commonly associated with the so-called "Fortress Europe syndrome". Discriminatory treatment at the frontiers seems to correlate with discriminatory practices in the municipalities and with various aspects of ethnic segregation and the development of an ethnically segmented labour market.

A gradual change occurred in the character of the public debate in the Eighties, especially after 1988 when there was intense debate about "refugees as a problem". Public debate has become increasingly concerned with the alleged criminal behaviour of immigrants and with drawing boundaries between "cultures". The dominant ideological trend has been towards culturalising "problematic immigrants" rather than problematising the structural restraints. A shift in ideological orientation and institutional practices seems to have been taking place at various levels since the early Nineties. The complex processes of reorientation range from heavy-handed symbolic manifestations of new, ideologically and politically marginal, racist groups at street level (burning of crosses; assaults on refugee camps, etc.) to discrete and almost imperceptible reformulations of government reports which in general tend to focus on "immigrant problem".

A cognitive ordering system embedded in the culturalist discourse "The Immigrant as a Problem" has even penetrated the theories and practices of important popular movements such as the Trade Union movement, the youth movement, and the feminist movement. Among the consequences is a tacit acceptance of open discrimination against individuals with an immigrant background. There has been a movement away from the renowned political visions of "equality", "freedom of choice" and "partnership" which in the mid-Seventies marked Sweden's proclaimed egalitarian, multi-cultural ideology. At the same time, however, an hierarchical cultural division of labour has developed: the Swedish counterpart to the familiar phenomenon of the "vertical mosaic" (Porter, 1968).

It has been said that the integration of immigrants into the labour market is "the pulse" of their integration into society. I shall take this as the starting point for the following discussion on the development of increasingly problematic features of an ethnically segmented Swedish labour market. In the first part of the paper I will discuss differences between generations among ethnic minorities of immigrant background. In the second part of my paper I shall relate to my research on youth

in polyethnic suburbs of Stockholm (Ålund, 1997). Young people's experiences in everyday urban life, their hopes and dreams reflect the stigmatised position of being an immigrant. A significant starting point in this connection is a widespread, lingering feeling of being an outsider, a kind of new social heritage, connecting the situation of the various generations of "immigrants" in Swedish society and separating Swedes from "immigrants".

The ethnic division of labour

In the Sixties, ambitious, highly qualified labour migrants arrived in Sweden, primarily from Finland and southern Europe. They were a welcome labour force. Emigrant families had dreams: to get a job, make a career for themselves in their own field, and do better for their children. Children were to have a good education and everything else the post-war generation of parents had to do without.

The immigrant workers were known for their high level of participation in the Swedish labour market, considerably higher than for native Swedes. This situation deteriorated in the Seventies and Eighties. At the same time unemployment increased in the Eighties, when the shortage of labour was acute. In the Nineties the rate of gainful employment among immigrants dropped drastically. Corresponding changes have been observed concerning relative levels of income. In the early Nineties (1991) immigrants were paid less per hour than non-immigrants, their training, number of years worked and other factors taken into consideration (Wadensjö, 1995: 3). This does not seem to be because immigrants had foreign exam certificates. "With the exception of medical doctors and social workers, immigrants with Swedish examination certificates earn less (gender, age and other factors taken into consideration) than Swedes who had passed the same examinations" (Wadensjö, 1992: 3). A long-term comparative follow up of Yugoslav immigrants in Denmark and Sweden also showed that qualified people were employed on work far below their level of qualifications for a long time after arrival (Schierup & Ålund, 1987). A study of the Swedish car industry (Schierup & Paulsson, 1994) indicated that the same comparatively subordinated position persisted in the second generation. This development has been discussed in a number of recent studies. The children of migrant workers, it is claimed, experience a higher degree of unemployment than young Swedes of the same age (Leiniö, 1994), despite a comparatively more ambitious educational and training pattern (Eriksson & Jonsson, 1993).

Today those, mostly refugees, who arrived since the late Eighties find themselves in an obvious outsider position. Referring to differences in levels of unemployment between various segments of the population, the Swedish Labour Market Board (Arbetsmarknadsstyrelsen, "AMS") openly talks of ethnic discrimination on the labour market: "Swedish employers tend to prefer Swedish job applicants to immigrant applicants. The reason may be prejudice and discrimination on ethnic grounds, but it is probably more often ignorance and xenophobia" (AMS,

1993 Appendix: 11). The press (e.g. *Svenska Dagbladet*, Jan. 7, 1996) states that public Job Centre(s) in Sweden actively contribute to discrimination.

Ethnic markers thus seem to play an increasing part on the labour market. The degree of "foreignness" seems to have become more and more associated with unemployment as a reason for unemployment in itself, rather than the discrimination which obviously takes place. Unemployment is higher among "immigrant youth" than among "Swedish" youth, as well as being markedly higher among refugee parents' children than among immigrant workers' children. Even though the children of labour force immigrants from the Sixties have a harder time than young Swedes, their situation is better than that of young new arrivals from Asia and Africa who appear worst of all.

Ethnic background in itself seems thus to have become a decisive marker or obvious handicap (AMS, 1993). Reading the results of various studies reveals a pattern which points in the direction of the following situation: the rate of gainful employment is lower and the proportion of unemployed is higher for young "immigrants" than it is for young Swedes. As Leiniö writes (1994), young people with the slightest foreign background run into financial difficulty more frequently than young Swedes, adding that young people with a foreign background have nearly twice the level of unemployment as young Swedes. Regardless of gender, foreign young people have only one third the chance of gainful employment as young Swedish people, the situation only improving after the age of 25 to 29, and then more for men than for women. At the same time males with foreign citizenship have a significantly higher risk of unemployment than Swedish males, the risk being even higher for those who arrived after the age of 7. This general picture is no different if level of education is taken into consideration, Leiniö (1994) reports.

There are grounds for viewing trends on the Swedish labour market with concern. The growth and polarisation of a divided society seem to have increased during the Nineties. Whilst trends on the labour market indicate an increasing degree of categorisation in terms of ethnic background, discrimination and the appearance of "ethnic division of labour" (Schierup & Paulson, 1994), ethnically based inequalities are less marked in the field of education. Educational differences only become visible when ethnicity is combined with class, gender, date of arrival in Sweden etc. Research has not been able to show that an immigrant background is in itself negatively related to the course of education. One reason could be that the term "immigrant" comprises people of highly variable immigration history, ethnic background, period of residence in Sweden, previous education and training, levels of ambition, and general preconditions and qualifications of all kinds. It has recently been noted (Eriksson & Jonsson, 1994) that children of immigrants in general, despite their belonging to a category with wide internal variations, have a greater tendency to go on to theoretical upper secondary school than "Swedish" school children of the same social class. In general, second generation immigrants are also over represented in the upper secondary schools and the universities (Wadensjö, 1995).

Among children born or brought up in Sweden, class seems to be more significant than ethnic background in explaining the proportion going on to higher education. Children of working class parents generally show a lower frequency of progress to higher studies. Social class does not play a completely unambiguous role however. Many highly qualified immigrants from Southern Europe and Latin America finish up in working class jobs in Sweden. This may be part of the reason that children of non-Scandinavian immigrants show a comparatively higher frequency of translocation to higher studies. The hidden cultural capital of the children of immigrants has not been investigated in any studies of educational careers. Migrant workers are generally regarded as energetic people who dared to take a step into the unknown. Their ambitions, including their dreams for their children as well as themselves, may have played a significant part in determining the various choices of course of education amongst their children. A comparatively high level of educational ambition is also observed in more recently arrived refugee immigrants and in those coming in after the age of 7 (Eriksson & Jonsson, 1994; Leiniö, 1994), despite the fact that this category, too, is characterised by a polarised educational distribution.

Various studies indicate the great significance of class and gender background. It appears that although men have a higher educational level than women, they are on average more unemployed. Sons of foreign working class people have twice the risk of only having had basic schooling as sons of Swedish working class parents (Leiniö, 1994). But, the higher unemployment risk for men of immigrant background is valid independent of their level of education. Male immigrant youths – those brought up in Sweden as well as those who arrived later – are in the worst situation. Young male immigrants are in the popular image stereotypically connected with criminality and, if they also come from working class homes and stigmatised suburban areas, their future prospects on the labour market are pretty thin.

While it appears obvious that “second generation young immigrants have a harder time on the labour market than Swedish youth of the same age” (Wadensjö, 1995: 6), our knowledge of what happens on completing study and entering working life is but fragmentary (Wadensjö, 1995: 6). Swedish investigations do not seem to have analysed the “connection between the course of study and the young people’s subsequent success or failure on the labour market” (Wadensjö, 1995: 6). More or less systematic uneven recruitment to higher education may also be related to housing segregation, school differences and the internal structure of the educational system. There can be little doubt that the local environment as well as rules of competence and admission and steered guidance via the SYO (vocational counsellors) plays a major part in the individual’s course of education (Eriksson & Jonsson, 1994).

Young people continue to be pointed towards working class careers by teachers and vocational counsellors in the schools. Experiences at school lay a foundation, which appears to be reinforced by their meeting with the labour exchanges (Job Centres).

“I was advised to drop-out...”

In the course of my fieldwork in the suburban area of Stockholm (Ålund, 1997) I was informed that quite a few teachers had advised my young informants to choose practical (i.e. to learn a trade) rather than theoretical courses. Selection seems to start at school: the foundations of the ethnic segregation of the future are laid in the schools. Subjection and debarment are manifest. Inferiority and feelings of having been selected in advance were often expressed in my interviews with pupils.

As far as education is concerned, the picture – as in nation-wide studies – is complicated and ambiguous: young people seem to be steered into practical courses by teachers and vocational counsellors who do not really want to face the challenge/burden of dealing with new floods of immigrant pupils in the day-to-day life of the schools.

The principal of the local elementary school tells me that 90% of her pupils are ordinary, well-behaved young people and that most go on to upper secondary. But she points out that the transfer to grammar school is not without problems. Pupils swap courses, leave difficult theoretical subjects in favour of two-year ones, and so on. But some still enrols in “harder”, longer, theoretical courses.

My informants among school staff tend to regard the guidance the schools give as confusing or disappointing. On the one hand, hopes are set too high and the child cannot live up to them. Some of the teachers I spoke to also consider that immigrant parents project their own dreams onto the child’s choice of schooling, pushing their choice of subjects in an unrealistic direction. On the other hand they would rather see a more directed and limited choice of subjects, since they do not think their pupils would succeed in more demanding courses of education.

Ellen, who came to Sweden in 1984 because of the war in Eritrea, put it as follows: “The shabby thing was that we got no support from our teachers. They told us that we immigrants were handicapped by our bad Swedish. One feels different right from the start, and that saps one’s will to fight”. Linguistic ability at Swedish may have been a problem, but so was the teachers’ engagement (or lack of it) and the high turnover of staff. “We had teachers who didn’t know what the other ones were doing. In the upper forms we had ten different form teachers. Always new. Not until we were in the top form did we get a nice teacher who would have us(!). Others moved away: they thought we were too disorderly, they wouldn’t take the responsibility. The changes of staff were worst in 7th grade. I think that was where our insecurity comes from”. When she went on to upper secondary school afterwards, she ran into all sorts of difficulties. “The Stockholm kids spoke much better Swedish. I got a shock when I first heard them talking Swedish. Real Swedish. It gave you an inferiority complex”. Ellen started on the three-year theoretically based course. She was rapidly advised to go over to the “easier” two-year practically based course “which suits your abilities better, my dear”. Low level schooling and bad Swedish limit one’s choice of job. But the feeling of being treated collectively as inferior is always there and results in one concluding that it is not worth making an effort.

The adults' ideas and opinions are reflected in the young people's opinion of themselves and other people. Pupils' choice of further education or training and job are shaped by stereotypical images about their ethnic background. Cultural differences between ethnic groups are frequently described as follows: "Chilean children are better qualified. The Iranians are very good at adapting: those who come here are frequently upper middle class with a solid financial background. They are very individualistic and highly adaptable. The Turks are traditionalists who import their whole big families: you can't teach them Swedish". Turks are seen as a particular problem. It is frequently said that school children's language abilities deteriorate as the schools become dominated by Turks. The topic of gender differences between Turkish pupils comes up over and over again. "Boys and girls live different lives", I am told, "boys being more capable of crossing cultural boundaries. They go about with other immigrants and Swedish children in class and outside school. Turkish girls only mix with other children at school. They live in two worlds. At home, they have to do the housework and look after their little brothers and sisters. They do not get out and about in the afternoons like the boys. Nor in the evenings. They are frustrated by constantly having to change worlds: they can be a bother in school, with unpleasant behaviour...". Such categorical attitudes support boundaries both within and outside school.

It seems that teachers started out very enthusiastically and seriously trying to get to grips with the problems that schools in suburbs with a high density of immigrants have to contend with. But they feel they have failed; that they are beaten and in retreat. Things never went the way they hoped. But when they look at the social tensions in society, family difficulties, the significance of segregation and so forth, they tend to blame "the immigrant culture" for their failure. Ideas about culture and origin are applied in a stereotype way to explain consequences which really ought to be laid at the door of situations related to subjection, outsiderism and discrimination.

New Swedes under siege

During the Nineties a mosque and a Greek Orthodox church have been set on fire in Sweden. Countless attacks on refugee centres, fires and plundered ethnic businesses are increasingly seen on our TV screens. Politicians march in torchlight demonstrations against racist terror and the desecration of Jewish graves. The police mount massive forces to meet the confrontations between racists and antiracists in connection with the paradoxical celebration of the great Swedish cosmopolitan and conqueror, King Charles XII. The racists celebrate rather paradoxically the memory of an adventurer who internationalised Swedish culture and political praxis. They, on the other hand, want to rid Sweden of all "foreign races". Stockholm's streets and squares are no longer safe. The memory of the "Laser man" who killed and wounded a number of men with foreign appearance has struck terror amongst the entire Swedish population with "foreign" and "un-Swedish" appearances.

At the same time, new voices are spreading like rings on the water. The local rap artist, Lucco, sings: "Because they have the name of the country... no somos criminales no nos tratan como animales... fuck the gringo con el sabor de latino, Huh...". Gringos and Latinos meet in Sweden and the history of colonial oppression relates to closed doors, disco security guards, and patronising glances here and now. Rhythms of resistance are televised to private rooms, redrafted to texts and mediated through meeting places to embrace the uniting and common, as a collective insight on being outsiders. Young racists in the hard rock group, Ultima Thule, sing on a TV program about racism "out with the riffraff" while a TV camera zooms in on a nazi flag. While young Jan from the group says that "we need very high walls around Sweden", the young immigrant rap artist, Dogge, from the group Latin Kings, answers: "Brown Latino with black hair, ten fingers and ten toes, just like you, here and now...".

Lucco's and Dogge's words illustrate the political importance of emerging popular youth culture and its relation to formation of new suburban social movements and processes of identity. "Inside the city there is always another city", as Ian Chambers wrote (1986: 183). In research, the evolution of a popular youth culture in multiethnic cities has been associated with the revolt against subordination. Through cultural expression, symbolic conditions are created for recognition of a collective outsider status and for the emergence of transethnic identities (Ålund, 1991, 1993).

In the ethnically complex and socially charged environments of Stockholm, especially in the suburbs, culture has developed a new sound: an expansive artistic symphony in an avant-garde key and with political undertones expressed in text, sounds and images. Exhortations to self-respect, pride and solidarity inspired by reggae and hip-hop blend with attacks on discrimination and demands for equality. The situation is reminiscent of the political and artistic feeling among the blacks in Britain in the Seventies: "Get up, stand up ... fight for yo' right". Youth music from suburbs of Stockholm which I will refer to below has to a large extent to do with the state of siege which characterises the living conditions of the coming generation of new Swedes.

The new Swedes of multi-ethnic suburbs of Stockholm are fighting for membership of a society, which still does not regard them as part of itself or as real Swedes. Their search for an identity is characterised by conflicting experiences of local integration and a broadly based feeling of being excluded from the community. What kind of identity flourishes in these conditions depends least of all on the person's cultural heritage. In the multi-ethnic city of today, young people develop complex life forms related to changing social conditions and the entire polyphony of cultural styles and ways of living. Diverse cultural elements are mixed and crossed; new identities and ethnicities are created (cf. Gilroy, 1987; Hall, 1994). Local, national and global influences cross with each other to produce a cultural hybrid that transcends all frontiers.

At the same time they feel socially and culturally excluded from the community outside the multiethnic anchorage of their own personal space. The Under-

ground to the City, skinheads in the city centre, potential employers who turn one away... “When we tell people our names, when we walk outside our own neighbourhood; we know we are immigrants”. I have heard stories of people changing their names, dyeing their hair and having cosmetic operations done on their faces. When Gulevski takes a Swedish surname and goes for a job interview with blonde hair and wearing blue contact lenses, he is still recognised, turned away, and insulted yet again.

When young people apply for jobs in Stockholm their “Swedishness” is tested by various obstacles and assessments of their linguistic ability, training, cultural background and upbringing. The outcome frequently depends on the person’s class background as well as his/her ethnic background. The situation which the new working class, the ethnic working class of the suburbs, finds itself in today will have consequences for society for many years to come. In public debate the roots of the problem are usually located to the young people themselves. They cannot talk proper Swedish, and they come from homes where their parents do not encourage them to go on to higher education. This may not quite be the case. But the consequences of the public view of them are clearly seen in the exclusion of young people from the labour market in Stockholm.

“...Jobs in the service sector where their parents work”

Young people with an immigrant background – migrant workers’ children, and particularly the children of more recently arrived refugee families – have indeed met difficulty on the labour market.

Young job-seekers of ethnic background frequently have to make do with the ethnic labour market. In a report on conditions in Stockholm the Labour Relations Board (AMS) states that “the overwhelming majority of young immigrants serve their apprenticeship in ‘immigrant businesses’ in the service sector, i.e. working for fellow countrymen doing comparatively unqualified work in traditional ‘immigrant jobs’” (AMS, 1993: 9). These jobs seem highly unstable.

Segregation of labour and unemployment have an ethnic profile in Sweden, and a new immigrant-social inheritance is appearing in society. The new generation demands different things of their work than their parents did. The fact that young people continue to be pointed towards working class careers by teachers and vocational counsellors in the schools as a result of stick-in-the-mud thinking or prejudice is in this connection a problematical attitude on the part of public institutions.

I shall refer to a conversation I had with a member of staff of a Job Centre in a Stockholm suburb. Our conversation illustrates the discourse that lies behind ethnic rank order and direction towards the lower strata of the labour market.

I went to a local Job Centre to look up statistics on work and unemployment, educational and training background, ethnic affiliation and working career. The civil servant in charge told me they had no combined employment statistics of the kind I was asking for, but that they regarded statistics of this sort technocratically and market-orientatedly as a yardstick of the effectiveness of their work. When I asked about the employment situation for young immigrants, he replied: “Young

people can easily get jobs in the service sector where their parents work". The idea was, of course, that young immigrants take the same jobs as their parents because neither they nor their parents talk Swedish.

"But isn't there any difference between parents and the children who have been to school here in Sweden?", I asked. The official's opinion was that this did not mean much, pointing to immigrants' marked culturally conditioned lack of motivation for going on to higher education. "They are not mentally disposed to learn things in the way Swedes are. They would rather go out to work early and earn their living. It is different with ordinary young Swedes".

When one tries to put a bit of the light and shade of variation into the picture, all the cultural stereotypes are trotted out. "Middle Eastern people have a proper education, but it is on a different level. Lower than here in Sweden. They go after the unqualified jobs". In addition the official pointed out that there is a difference between them and Europeans and Iranians. "Refugees from Iran are quite differently educated from ones from the Middle East". But, I said, highly educated Iranians still find it difficult to get jobs. "Oh, that's because they're so arrogant – too proud and demanding". Ethnic discrimination on the labour market? No, he couldn't agree there. He said: "Able refugees find it easier to get on now than they did ten years ago. They couldn't get anywhere in those days. Employers' attitudes have changed". That was his firm conviction in 1993.

Unemployment statistics for 1996 indicate that a significant proportion of the young people in suburbs with a high density of immigrants are shunted around like leftovers in the social and economic transformation of society. With their much proclaimed outsiderism they constitute a problem which nobody knows how to handle. They are frequently exposed to ethnocentric overbearingness in various forms of culturalisation and individualisation of social problems when trying to cross the threshold into the normal life of society.

Young people are also exposed to the youth project "industry", with its little niche of professional so-called "youth experts", offers all sorts of activities, all competing against each other for funds. It appears that unemployment, social outsiderism and marginalisation of young people are enrolled into short lived projects which in more than one way are controlled by the market. It is easy to see behind this the inability on the part of the dominant order to do anything about the serious segregation and discrimination that appear to exist and to be getting worse.

The conclusive point is that young people are exploited by being trapped in an ideological web of more or less prefabricated conceptions of the association between culture and conditions of life. Their identity and mental "free space" are squeezed into pre-programmed moulds. One frequently hears young people from the suburbs describe themselves in standard lecturers' phrases like "cultural clashes" and "cultural conflict", though such culturalising explanations might be in direct conflict with their own experience. When unemployment and outsiderism have closed the ring round young "immigrants", they do not see culture but discrimination as the reason.

Youth, culture and identity

The working conditions and access to jobs of the working classes have changed drastically, particularly for those with an ethnic minority background. Class differentiation has shrunk the working class, and the growth of unemployment has created insecurity, widespread debarment and social tensions. When traditional identity and affiliations crumble away, e.g. through the disappearance of various working class environments, reactive tendencies easily arise (see e.g. Willis, 1977; Cohen, 1994).

The winds of Rightwing extremism are once more blowing through Europe (Wrench & Solomos, 1993; Silverman, 1992). The sense of national community is weakened or threatened by homogenizing internationalisation, the decline or even collapse of the welfare state, and the growth of political anonymity in the shadow of the supranationalism of the EU. The answer to this insecurity is more and more frequently identity-wise rearmament based on negative comparisons between Europeans and immigrants.

The sweeping economic transformation and consequent class differentiation, the dissolution of traditional ways of life, and widespread unemployment and social debarment have resulted in extensive uncertainty of identity. The skinheads syndrome, with its fixation on the national – on local, traditional identity – and their hostility towards foreigners and the authorities represent a symbolic drama reflecting uncertainty of identity in the wake of social marginalisation (Chambers, 1990; Hall & Jefferson, 1975). The harsh social climate of the cities, with their crime, riots and gang wars, is all part of the same picture.

The emerging social problems of a multiethnic society tend to be understood in simplistic culture-related terms. The uniting core of different exclusionary practises is often a cultural rationalization of social tensions regulated and controlled through definitions of normality (Ålund, 1988); i.e. problematising “immigrants” and refugees as burdened with backward traditions that create differences and conflicts. “Culturalisation” – a culture-related smoothing out of social inequality and discrimination (Ålund & Schierup, 1991; Ålund 1992, 1994, 1995) – occupies a prominent place in the processes of change currently affecting European society. A blanket of obscurity is all too easily cast over segregation and discrimination of immigrants by culturalisation of social differences.

Culturalisation, which in so many ways affects our understanding of the process of change in modern society, with all its social tensions, conflicts and inequalities, has a powerful effect on choice of direction in immigrant policies in Sweden as well as in the rest of Europe. It is therefore highly important to look critically at its extent and the part it plays, so that real social inequality is not hidden in a fog of stereotypical images of cultural differences commonly described as imported “immigrant problems”.

“The immigrant problem” – particularly in connection with the youth of the multiethnic cities – is primarily a social problem. As a cultural problem it appears

at most as derived: a problem produced in the country immigrated to (cf. Grillo, 1985; Ålund & Schierup, 1991). Social debarment, discrimination, stigmatisation and residential segregation evolve in parallel with under-representation in the political system. Everywhere in Europe we see immigrated ethnic minorities being debarred and excluded. The ultimate effect of different processes of social exclusion of new ethnic minorities carry the risk of proliferation of what Hans Magnus Enzensberger has called Molecular urban warfare.

Outsiderism can also help to create exclusionary subcultures. Modern cities tend to fragment into a patchwork of apartheid-like “homelands” of subordinated outsiders. The formation of gangs, conflict, symbolic disputes and violence reflect the new poverty, civil insecurity and homelessness in society.

The economic crisis hits the multiethnic areas and the traditional working classes particularly hard. This is where implosive charges are formed, where the weak turn on the weak, working class children on working class children, skinheads on “immigrants”. Not infrequently such conflicts are disguised as cultural symbols in an age in which attempts are made to tame insecurity and subjection with identity and control. Skinheads chant the traditions of a bygone age, and ethnic young people identify themselves by looking for cultural markers in their widely differing images of themselves. What becomes “the genuine article” here and now rarely has much to do with ancient tradition. The gangs dress up for modern use in the iconography of the past. In Sweden, Thor’s Hammers (Scandinavian mythology) are swung against turbans. The new cultural expressions have no direct connection with the traditional life styles and cultural identities of the countries the people emigrated from. Rather than appealing to the past, they signal a need to belong here and now against the insecurities of the present and the future.

The cultural markers are frequently cosmopolitan in nature. An instance of this is the Harlem-inspired hip-hop culture. Hip-hop trousers, Rasta hair and new linguistic expressions are scattered around the symbolically loaded dramaturgy to provide new roots. The cultural markers act by uniting divided young people. They pave the way for cultural upheaval and cultural merging. The symbols can also evolve into supportive elements in ethnic street corner fundamentalisms. Relations to the “outside” world are than shaped in an “us against them” framework. It is in this connection, in the context of segregated living conditions, that not only new inclusive transethnic identities and composite cultural expressions but also acts of violence arise.

This is the social context of cultural identity: the conditions of life as it is lived set the stage for the drama of the formation of identity, its space and symbolic forms. An important backdrop to this drama comprises the cultural hierarchies which accompany society’s social differentiation, regardless of whether the cultural pecking order is based on class, gender, age, ethnicity or race (cf. Gilroy, 1995).

The social contexts and immediate life-worlds, with their inequalities and tensions, carry fundamental conflictual forces (belonging/not belonging), which are particularly important for young people who are called “immigrants” and strangers,

generation after generation. They are equipped to mediate but forced to struggle (Ålund, 1995). Their culture(s) are unintelligible outside the social landscape they live in and their exclusion from what is called “multicultural” society.

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MLADI I DRUŠTVENO ISKLJUČIVANJE U »MULTIKULTURNOJ« ŠVEDSKOJ

SAŽETAK

Članak istražuje društveno isključivanje mladih iz sve više etnički segmentiranog tržišta rada u Švedskoj. Autorica smatra da je diskriminacija novih etničkih manjina u etnički složenom i društveno opterećenom okruženju u Stockholmu sakrivena u magli stereotipnih slika kulturnih razlika. Ono što se obično ne prepoznaje jesu društvene nejednakosti i nastavak društvene borbe u kulturnoj sferi. Upravo ovdje, u kontekstu odijeljenih životnih prilika, nastaju ne samo novi uklapajući trans-etnički identiteti i složeni načini izražavanja nego također i novi etnički fundamentalizmi.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: mladi, kultura, identitet, etničnost, društveno isključivanje, imigranti, Švedska