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## Media, Nation State and Minority Rights

How can media help promote social cohesion and human rights of ethnic minorities in nation states?

## **Table of contents**

### **1. Introduction**

### **2. Method and material**

### **3. Thesis and theoretical framework**

### **4. The rise of modern national state – Peace of Westphalia**

6. Problems related to geographic defined state

7. Nation building and minorities – the identity of nation

8. The role of media in shaping the national identity

9. Good vs. Evil - media practices on minority reporting

### **10. Assimilation, multiculturalism and integration – different policies**

11. Migrants in Europe – Example of Sweden, Germany and Netherlands

12. Discrimination, Racism and Xenophobia – European phenomenon?

13. Discriminatory elements of Media and Journalists – Sweden and Europe

### **14. The Defining Power of Media – Unity or Segregation**

15. Media, everyday practice and ethics

16. Minority Reporting and Social Cohesion

### **18. Concluding Remarks**

## Introduction

It has been more than 50 years since the international debate on human rights took form in institutionalized international human rights documents and a comparable human rights regime became reality. In these 50 years that have passed ever since the human society have undergone tremendous changes, and so has many forms of the violations of universal human rights. Although human rights may well be universal and eternal, but their exercise is an ever changing process and so are the threats or violations of those same rights. Today the violations of human rights in most western, democratic nation states have by large taken a sublime and physically non-aggressive form, best understood in a discursive and institutionalized perspective, when talking about racism and minority rights, that is. This process has been defined as “new racism” where discriminatory elements justify themselves not by referring to the “race” of those discriminated, but to their culture, religion, ethnic traditions etc<sup>1</sup>. At the same time, never before have migration and settlement of different ethnic minorities into predefined territorial areas commonly known as nation states shaped the societies they migrated to in such a pregnant and obvious way. This essay focuses on the role of media in the nation states and how media through its different practices can at the same promote and/or halt minority rights and social cohesion. The thesis can in short be described as “how can media in western nation states facilitate the full enjoyment of human rights for ethnic minorities in those communities”.

This analysis is hence built upon the presumption that the ethnic minorities of today’s western societies are not fully capable of enjoying their rights guaranteed both in national and international legislations. They are hindered from doing so through “new racism” described above, and media takes a central roll in this discriminatory process by its racist discourse. If media would change its discourse from its homogenic, nation state centred scope of today, it would have as effect that ethnic minorities would be subjected to less negative stereotyping and prejudices, hence coming closer to realisation of an equal society, which is the goal of the both national as well international legal documents. Although media in itself is not party to different conventions and human rights instruments, it is the responsibility of the states who are party to the same conventions to ensure that media functions in the desirable way through legislation and other government tools such as directives, positive/negative sanctions etc.

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<sup>1</sup> Barker, 1981; referred in Ethnic Minorities and Media; p. 33

## **Method and material**

The material in this essay is divided in three categories. First follow the international human rights documents, which make up the juridical basis for the arguments that follow. Second are the different academic theories on racism, new racism, critical discourse analysis, minority reporting, and minority rights. Third category is made up from different examples from media practices, comparing Sweden to other countries, which seek to prove the different arguments presented and the legal framework. A thorough examination of all legal sources that can be referred to exceeds the scope and proportion of this brief essay by large, why some of the major legal documents referred to can be seen below:

### **Universal Declaration of Human Right**

Article 2(1) “Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status”.

Article 12 “No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to protection of the law against such interference or attacks”.

### **International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination**

Article 1(1) “In this Convention, the term “racial discrimination” shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life”.

### **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**

Article 2(1) “Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to respect and to ensure to all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction the rights recognized in the present Covenant, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status”.

Article 20(2) “Any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law”.

Article 26 “All persons all equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. In this respect, the law shall prohibit any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any grounds such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status”.

### **International Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities**

Article 1(1) “States shall protect the existence and the national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity of minorities within their respective territories and shall encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity”.

Article 1(2) “States shall adopt appropriate legislative and other measures to achieve those ends”.

Article 2(2) “Persons belonging to minorities have the right to participate effectively in cultural, religious, social, economic and public life”.

Article 3(1) “Persons belonging to minorities may exercise their rights, including those set forth in the present Declaration, individually as well as in community with other members of their group, without any discrimination”.

Article 3(2) “No disadvantage shall result for any person belonging to a minority as the consequence of the exercise or non-exercise of the rights set forth in the present Declaration”.

Article 4(2) “States shall take measures to create favourable conditions to enable persons belonging to minorities to express their characteristics and to develop their culture, language, religion, traditions and customs, except where specific practices are in violation of national law and contrary to international standards”.

The argument itself is based upon theories on nation state and media, delivered by Benedict Anderson, Edward Said, Teun A. Dijk, Gunilla Hultén, Ylva Brune et alia. These are dealt with in next chapter. Furthermore news articles and media practices from around Europe have been used to concretize the theoretical discussion. These are referred to individually in the notes. The essay is normative in its disposition and approach and tries to establish a new interpretation within the field of minority rights, discursive racism and media analysis. This is a rather new field and way of interpreting human rights in information age, why some references are based upon individual researcher and scholar’s work, as well news articles and forthcoming books on minority reporting and human rights.

## Thesis and theoretical framework

The human rights agenda has been centred on the different theories of rights of humans originating in both moral and judicial doctrines. Concerning racism, discrimination and rights of minorities this discussion needs a review since most theories dealing with racism focus on the visible discriminatory – often aggressive – results for those subjected to it. So was the case with the early conventions prohibiting racism and xenophobia, and looking at the preambles of the UN documents it stands clear that they are written for a time long gone, with colonies, apartheid and slavery still in effect. Today the racism, negative stereotypes underlying it and the discrimination resulting from those are more expressed in a subtle way, and here media has a central role as the single most important carrier of messages and values in the information society<sup>2</sup>. The discourse is essential to how we understand various phenomena and their respective impact on the society as media, bound by its editorial limits in time and space, tells us stories with many underlying assumption about our understanding and values of the matter. Since this essay heavily relies on theories on discourse and especially racist discourses in the media it is important to define it early on.

Some ideas such as the importance of media in information society, the justification of colonization through racist ideologies about colonized peoples inferiority etc. are presumed to be as widely accepted so no further account and argument for them is need here. The mere length of this essay makes it also impossible to grant these discussions a thorough examination. Discourse in this essay refers to racist discourse, and specifically racist discourse in the media as described by Teun A. Van Dijk among others. According to Van Dijk, if racism is understood as social system of ethnic inequality, then we can examine these social practices by analyzing the various forms of their appearance in society - in this case, in media practices<sup>3</sup>. Using a discourse analytical approach towards media practices on minorities it stands clear that the result of those practices leads to inequality and negative attitudes towards minorities.

Media in its practice of reporting news on far-flung societies, people and cultures further uses pre-understanding and discursive integration of alien elements when trying to disseminate news to “ordinary people”. In many cases media relies on the theory of the homogenic nation

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<sup>2</sup> Teun A. Van Dijk, *Ethnic Minorities and the Media*, ed. Simon Cottle, 2000

<sup>3</sup> Teun A. Van Dijk; in *Ethnic Minorities and Media*; ed. Cottle 2000; p. 35

state with predefinitions such as a common language, cultural heritage and history<sup>4</sup>. The idea of a firmly defined nation state regarding above cited categories (language, culture etc.) is a rather new, but extremely important one, looking back at human history. The rise of nation state after the Peace of Westphalia required building of a national identity, an identity that was different from “others” not belonging to “us”. Globalization, information age, migrant movements, to name a few elements, have radically challenged the idea of a sovereign, territorial defined nation state, with a single cultural/social identity and a common language and history. In this “new world of nations” or popularly called global village, it is a heavy blow to those ethnic minorities living in western nation states when media does not take their ethno-specific life conditions into account, and further more, through negative stereotyping worsen their possibilities to an equal enjoyment of basic human rights such as housing, job, equal treatment before law, public recognition etc.

Western nation states, although conscious of their role in the old word racism through colonization and imperialism, have yet not fully integrated these wisdoms in their every day understanding and practices of their institutions. Some states such as USA, Canada, Great Brittan and Netherlands have been much more effective and willing in adopting the relationship between institutionalized and structural racism in every segment of society and the rights of ethnic minorities, whereas other countries such as Germany, Sweden and France have a long way in coming to terms with their respective national identity – where today ethnic minorities and their right to acceptance for their differences have little or no space<sup>5</sup>. Negative stereotypes towards ethnic minorities in Western societies find their origin in these societies historical background of colonization and its justification through racist and biologist theories<sup>6</sup>. By making general assertions about people from other nations and cultures – the category race has since long been discredited, why it is not appropriate to refer to in official discourse – it is possible to separate “us” from “them”. In this process, “us” and “we” are described as good, rational, modern, law-abiding, gender-conscious and at the same time “them” and “others” are described as backward, traditionalist, criminal and so on<sup>7</sup>. This essay will examine different shapes of this complex problem – namely ethnic minorities, media and human rights.

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<sup>4</sup> Gunilla Hultén, in *Mediernas Vi och Dom*, red. Massoud Kamali, SOU 2006:21

<sup>5</sup> Paul Lappalainen; *Det Blågula Glashuset*; SOU2005:56

<sup>6</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 1976 Vintage Books

<sup>7</sup> Ylva Brune, *News from the front*, Gothenburg University 2004

# **The rise of modern national state – Peace of Westphalia**

## **Problems related to geographic defined state**

Although nations always have been represented throughout human history, the modern sovereign nation state is defined by its territorial and ethno-cultural significances instead of monarchical and religious preferences. The peace of Westphalia in 1648<sup>8</sup> is widely regarded as the starting point of a new political Europe and the rise of nation states. This dividing came to last into our days, creating a new leadership for many ethnic groups living in border-areas and some of the problems – such as the division of Poland – echo even in our days. The homogenic states – which never were all that homogenic – have through the mass migration in the later part of 20-century metamorphosed totally and rapidly. Many religions, languages and cultural customs now inhabit the countries such as Sweden, Germany, Netherlands etc. and its becoming more and more difficult to define “Swedish” or “German”. The European Union and Globalization process further leads to a weakening of the Westphalian System.

## **Nation building and minorities – the identity of nation**

Once the borders that dominate the European Map of today were set, the work started to form a national identity corresponding no longer to the religious or monarchical fixtures, but to the territorial and ethno cultural boundaries of the specific nation state. Sweden experienced this through a massive campaign after the southern region of Skåne was turned from Denmark to Sweden in 1658. With brutal force the Skåne and its freedom fighters that would rather be a part of Denmark was forced to accept the Swedish leadership. Still today the wounds from that massacre years have not healed, and several regionalist parties – although marginalized – strive to once again return Skåne to Denmark<sup>9</sup>. The identity building was administrated through the church, the universities and the war propaganda against the Danish. The citizens of Skåne were restricted in their contacts with Denmark – for example it was forbidden for students from Skåne to enrol at Copenhagen University until 19-century.

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<sup>8</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peace\\_of\\_Westphalia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peace_of_Westphalia)

<sup>9</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skåneland>



The idea of an ethno-cultural homogenous state where people speak the same language, share the same religion and have similar ethnic background is by closer examination only an illusion. At the time of French Revolution there were only 50% of the population in “France” who understood French and only 12-13 % spoke French well, according to Eric Hobsbawm<sup>10</sup>. Something that also the historian Etienne Balibar has noted regarding the development of a minority language – French – into the official majority language. Another important academic in the field of the identity and national state is Benedict Anderson<sup>11</sup>, and his thesis about “the Imagined Community”. Anderson refers to the abstract idea of national cooperation and identity, something that in fact is very vague and not easy for the members of the community to access. What is a Swede after all? A tall, blond, blue-eyed person working at Ikea or Volvo, voting for the social democrats, have about 2,5 children, a dog, a Volvo and travels abroad often? How many Swedes do actually look and live like that? And how about the 300.000 Muslims living in Sweden today?

### **The role of media in shaping the national identity**

The role of media and printed literature in shaping the public opinion and disseminating official policies among the population is of great importance. Something that Benedict Anderson also refers to, namely the role of printed literature and its dissemination in how a common national identity and an Imagined Community are formed. The rise of nationalism is thus connected with the growth of printed books and with technical development of print on the whole. According to Anderson a new emerging nation, imagines itself antique and full of historical backgrounds and justifications – the best example in this case is Israel. Once a new nation is taking form, it is important for it to locate its roots, something that becomes more and more important the older the nation gets and new threats to its identity arises. The role of the media in definition of ethnic minorities is therefore crucial.

### **Good and unfortunate media practices on minorities**

The tendency has been that media defines “Us” against “them”. “Them” are those who do not belong to “our” community, they might be of another ethnic origin – visible minorities in case of skin or hair colour – or share another religion and cultural heritage – non-visible

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<sup>10</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_French#\\_note-1](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_French#_note-1)

<sup>11</sup> Benedict Anderson; Imagined Communities, Verso Books; 1991

minorities. This defining is normal in media practices in order to be able to tell a story. But the problem arises when different attributes are prescribed to these different groups of “we” and “them”, where “we” are always defined as good, law-abiding, modern, non-criminal, non-prejudice etc. and “them” are always defined as bad, criminal, backward/traditional etc. By changing the substance and content of these attribute media can change the way people from different communities view each other. Media portrays not only minorities who have since long been around the majority society, but also new minorities who are being formed through migration.

Media has a choice, in either reporting about “the others” in a fair and balanced way that seeks to eliminate the prejudices among the population or contribute to further cementation of named prejudices. One example of unfortunate media practices is the way the local Swedish Paper Landskrona Posten portrayed the young Kosovo-Albans in the city<sup>12</sup>, something that drew condemnation and critic from around Sweden. A good practice example is the Swedish Radio youth channel Din Gata who just recently received the Swedish Radio Award.

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<sup>12</sup> Landskrona Posten; Vi har våldet i blodet; 2006-03-12

# **Assimilation, multiculturalism and integration**

## **Migrants in Europe – Example of Sweden, Germany and Netherlands**

In the aftermath of the WWII Europe faced the first waves of migrants. The sixties opened up for migrants from former European colonies, and in the seventies the political refugees found their way to Europe, only to be followed by war-refugees in the eighties and nineties. But in the same period a massive migration by guest workers – Gastarbeiter – changed the demographic of many European countries for – as we have seen – ever. The view on migrant and integration policy is closely interlinked with the self-image of the countries. When the refugees and guest workers did not returned to their home countries as expected, but stayed and gave birth to children in their new home country, it started a demographic change that is still continuing. The different eras of migration and integration policy has meant different situations for the life of migrants in Europe and for the media practices towards them<sup>13</sup>.

Countries such as Great Britain, Netherlands and Spain has been much more exposed to immigration and multinational policies throughout the history. Not only different religious groups have affected the self-image of these countries, but also their position as former colonial powers have implication for their policies towards minorities. In these countries the migrants were seen as a justified part of the society with the right to preserving their own culture, language and practices. Other countries such as Sweden, Denmark and Norway but also Germany to some extent were keen on integrating the migrants into the society as soon as possible. These have meant that the legislation of integration policies and migrant rights have differed a lot between the countries. Since the emergence of European Union and the heavy refugee-waves of early 90:s, this has changed and now more and more harmonization is taking place.

## **Discrimination, Racism and Xenophobia – European phenomenon?**

An important fact affecting the minority situation around Europe is the history of Europe itself. Throughout its history, Europe have been deeply struck by Racism and Xenophobia, with its culmination in Nazi Germany and the ethnic cleansing of former Yugoslavia. The age of colonization and imperialization also contributed to forming an

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<sup>13</sup> Ylva Brune; Nyheter Från Gränsen; Göteborgs Universitet; 2004

unfair and unbalanced view of the non-european people and cultures. Edward Said has expressed this as Orientalism, i.e. the doctrine of an “oriental” race, culture and life, that was actually only to be found in books and reports about “The Orient”. Although the people who inhabited the areas referred to as the Orient expressed huge differences in culture, language, religion and traditions, they were reduced to an anonymous group, not much different as the group of “Muslims” today. The West was described to be rational, modern and good, whereas the Orient was described as barbaric, backward, traditional and basically evil<sup>14</sup>. This is also what causes so much debate about the inclusion of Turkey into the European Union, to name a recent example.

Although racism in Europe mostly is associated with the Nazi Germany and the Holocaust, Sweden was one of the leading countries in ethno racism through the establishment of a race biologic institute in Uppsala in 1922, with the purpose of research on the purity of race. Although the end of the WWII and the fall of Nazi Germany led to a strong opposition to racism in Europe, the migrant waves of 60s throughout the 90s paved the way for rightwing, populist parties such as Le Pen in France, Deutsche Volks Union in Germany, Jörg Haider in Austria and Pim Fortyn in Netherlands, but also Ny Demokrati and NSF in Sweden. Various research materials show that the European societies still suffer from structural discrimination regarding both visible and non-visible minorities in all field of society, such as labour market, education, housing etc. The European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC)<sup>15</sup> annually publishes reports on the situation of minorities across Europe, and these reports often make grim reading regarding the attitudes of majority towards minorities. The EUMC has also examined the role of media in this situation, and have founded – as for many other scholars – that media plays a key role in either strengthening or weakening of these attitudes.

### **Discriminatory elements of Media and Journalists – Sweden and Europe**

Given the fact that the existence of racism and xenophobia in multinational European societies are undoubted, how does this come to expression in different media houses? If we assume that the society in general is sceptic and ignorant about ethnic minorities, then it is logical to assume that also the media is affected by these structures. One important quantitative fact is the number of people of ethnic minorities active in the media as

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<sup>14</sup> Edward Said; Orientalism; Vintage Books; 1976

<sup>15</sup> <http://eumc.europa.eu/eumc/index.php>

journalists, producers, managers etc. This percentage varies from country to country, but in general about 2-5 % of media workers do have a visible ethnic minority background, this being in societies where ethnic minorities comprise 15-20 % of the total population<sup>16</sup>.

Not only ethnic minorities are discriminated through unnecessary stress on importance of language perfection, the whole application process is discriminatory since it does not take the multicultural experience of the ethnic applicants into account. Furthermore old prejudices against minorities keep being repeated in the media discourses until they take the form of unofficial truth, for example that the women are oppressed in Muslim families or that criminality is much higher among ethnic minorities than general population. Also the use of language and terms by the media reflects the point of view of the media workers and the general public, this being discriminatory to most ethnic minorities who do not feel represented in a fair way in media outlets. Around Europe much has been debated on this matter and Sweden has also begun to review its standard lately, now most of media organizations clearly state that they look for people from ethnic minorities when looking for new staff.

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<sup>16</sup> Lasse Sandström; Sanningens Många Nyanser; forthcoming on Carlsson Förlag in 2007

## **The Defining Power of Media – Unity or Segregation**

Although in the age of Internet and new media such as blogs, for most citizens old media still works as the main source of information about far-flung places, people and cultures. These far flung cultures can now be found next door in your neighbourhood, and the way media portrays migrants and ethnic minorities is essential for understanding and social cohesion in the society at large. A fair, balanced and diligent reporting will help bridging the gap between the different ethnic enclaves, at the same time a biased, inconsequent and short-sighted reporting will lead to prejudices flourishing and xenophobia gaining in power. Although media cannot be blamed for the rise of populist parties with a racist agenda, theirs is the task to portray the whole nation in all its colours and shapes. By its use of language and words media can choose many different ways to report on subjects such as the cost of migration, criminality among ethnic minorities etc. The Anglo Saxon journalist tradition of objectivity is also in need of change – is there any objective journalists? The need for a distinction between impartial reporting and objective reporting is necessary.

### **Media, its everyday practice and human rights**

The day-to-day logic of journalism is often contradicting the moral and social responsibility of the media. Like the old saying goes, news is defined by a man biting the dog, not the dog biting the man. Therefore, it is more common that media tends to report on negative issues and problems rather than sunshine stories, that would probably make a poor reading. But it is not so simple, as many media houses around Europe have shown. It is possible to maintain high quality journalism and still be mindful of portraying ethnic minorities in a fair and balanced way – actually you tend to get better stories when you apply elements of minority reporting in every day journalism. The basic for minority reporting in accordance to human rights law is to reverse the angle, and instead of reporting on minorities in an excluding way, instead moving to an inclusive way where dialog and respect is fundamental for practicing the journalism.

Knowledge about and network among minorities that are being portrayed is therefore essential. Many cases of poor and biased journalism on minorities depend on either poor knowledge of the culture, religion and traditions of the group, and/or prejudices among those who report on these issues. If there is a commonly spread opinion that ethnic minorities are

more often engaged in criminal activities than the majority population, it is easier that some stories about unjust justice system or abuse by police force goes unreported. Therefore, these acts against ethnic minorities do not get due process. This is in clear violence of articles 1(1) of International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination and 1(1), 2(1) and 4(2) of International Covenant on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities.

Also, media works in a social context where the existence of racism and discrimination has been proven many times over, without leading to significant change in attitudes towards minorities. For example in the case of Mohammed-Cartoons published by the Danish paper Jyllandsposten it was not only the cartoons, but also the whole debate about Muslims in Denmark that was problematic. Looking back at Jyllandsposten previous actions and journalism, it is clear that the paper has a bias against Muslims living in Denmark, and furthermore, there were clear bands to the rightwing and populist party of Danske Folkeparti<sup>17</sup>. Those who wrote to paper criticizing migrants and ethnic minorities where later offered a membership in Danske Folkeparty, this being possible through cooperation between the paper and some party officials. Something that has been proven by the Danish scholar Peter Hervik.

### **Minority Reporting and Social Cohesion**

The city of Leicester in Great Britain will probably be the first European city where the percentage of non-ethnic citizens soon will exceed the number of ethnic citizens. This is a new situation that is emerging all around Europe, also in Sweden. The city of Malmö in southern Sweden gathers some 160 different nationalities that make up a third of the population<sup>18</sup>. Among children below 18 years the percentage is almost 50%! In this context the local media has an important role to play in social cohesion. Social cohesion is best described as opposite to inciting prejudice and hatred among the audience, and instead contributes to a meaningful development of the whole community. The local newspaper, Sydsvenska Dagbladet, provided us with an unfortunate example of poor journalism in 2001<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> Peter Hervik; Malmö University; 2005

<sup>18</sup> Statistics gathered from official records Malmö City; [www.malmo.se](http://www.malmo.se)

<sup>19</sup> Sydsvenska Dagbladet; Malmöbor flyttar bort från invandrarna; 2001-11-20

The much debated article in the local Swedish paper Sydsvenska Dagbladet was based upon a highly dubious interpretation of statistics regarding what reasons lie behind peoples decision to leave the city of Malmö. This was identified by the paper as the high percentage of ethnic minorities and criminality, often caused by the ethnic minorities according to those who had written the comments in the statistics. The headline read “Malmö citizens move away from foreigners”. In a city where 30 percent descend from ethnic minorities it is not fruitful to incite ethnic tension by making a distinction between “Malmö citizens” and “Foreigners”. Who is the foreigner, really? And what consequences does such an article lead to, regarding ethnic minorities and their enjoyment of their civil, social, cultural and political rights, in accordance to the different UN documents cited in the beginning of this essay?

This article could be done with much more delicacy if it was combined with statistics about ethnic migrants and criminality that will clearly show that the percentage is not of great importance. Although the school situation was mentioned, and both those who chose to move away from Malmö and the paper referring their decision blamed the ethnic migrants for the poor school situation. This also could be done with regard to the cutbacks on education that have crippled the education system, instead of blaming the ethnic minorities. And how many of those who moved away were foreigners themselves? Probably a lot of people, maybe up to 30% as the rest of the Malmö population! We do not know, because media did not care to find out. The story fitted well into the racist discourse of media, and it had acceptance in the negative attitudes and stereotypes of their imagined “white” reader.

In Leicester, the local paper chose another path. The Leicester Mercury News have gathered a panel of religious and cultural leaders from different ethnic communities inhabiting the city, and concurs with them before reporting on sensitive issues. This is not to censor the paper, but to increase the fairness in reporting. More often than not the stories get printed anyways, but with much more precision. Also a great databank of different religions and cultures in Leicester have been established at the paper, and a solid network among communities where it is often hard for journalist to enter in a single day, because they are neither familiar to the language nor to the culture. The Leicester Mercury News opted to stop a rightwing, Nazi-march through the city, because they found it to be contradictory to the idea of social cohesion and their responsibility to assure that. So they



called to meeting with the representatives of ethnic communities to hear their meaning, and once it was confirmed that the Nazis were not welcomed, they went all the way to Home Office to stop the march. This is a unique situation for the paper acting so vigorously for ethnic diversity and social cohesion<sup>20</sup>.

## **Concluding Discussion**

Today media is the central carrier of and channel of disseminating information on various parts of society and its members, their culture and life situations. Which discursive approach media uses when it comes to the national identity, minority rights and the national self-image is crucial for ethnic minorities and their respective human rights. Media is of vital importance in the process of “othering” that occurs as a result of negative stereotypes in the society. Most people in western societies don’t personally know a member of say, Muslim community, but they have already a prejudicial view that finds its root both in the colonialist and racist history of the country, as well as the discursive framework delivered by media about this minority. These negative attitudes lead to social gap, which in turn leads to disadvantage in full enjoyment of the rights and opportunities, for example in housing, employment, education etc<sup>21</sup>. Again in direct conflict with the legal framework cited above, and in many cases, also in conflict with the national constitution.

According to different understandings of equality, there are three forms of equality. First we have formal equality which is guaranteed by the national and international law, second we have equality in practice, which can be measured and is dependant on institutional practices and finally equal rights, which means everyone have equal opportunities that somehow are guaranteed by a combination of laws and practices. Media can help facilitate equal opportunities through a fair and balanced reporting on minorities, their life conditions, their human rights and violations towards these rights. Formal equality is something much debated and not so easy to hold account of, since although formal equality is guaranteed in the different constitutions, the racist practices of institutions such as judiciary, the police, media and other organs make it difficult if not impossible for ethnic minorities to achieve those guaranteed rights. Equality in result can be measured through an evaluation of ethnic minorities representation in various field of public life. Finally, equal opportunities which is a

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<sup>20</sup> Lasse Sandström; Sanningens Många Nyanser; forthcoming on Carlsson Förlag in 2007

<sup>21</sup> Timo Makkonen , Ett rättvisare Samhälle, International Organization for Migration, 2003

combination of the two perspective above, focuses on the actual possibilities and opportunities for the disadvantaged to achieve same level of standard of rights as the other members of the society. This essay have been circled around the two first categories, i.e. what formal rights apply to ethnic minorities in comparison to the majority population, and how the results from different processes – in this essay referred to as discourses – affect the outcome for the disadvantaged when talking about realisation of rights, recognition by the majority society etc. The discussions above have been normative in their nature, hence no direct measures have been presented. Although states party to the different legal documents have since long ratified and recognized the rights guaranteed therein, the full enjoyment of those meets many obstacles. One of these being the racist discourse in media, which reflects the larger problem, that being new racism in western countries towards the ethnic minorities living there.

Ylva Brune among others has made a close examination of how Swedish media reaffirms and spreads negative stereotypes about migrants and ethnic minorities through its everyday – many time unconscious - practices and how these reports later take form of overall “truth” upon which official policies are based, which in turn further limit the enjoyment of human rights of the ethnic minorities. Something that is prohibited in the different legal documents cited above. Media can as shown help minorities be recognized as a full grown member of the rights society – such as the case in Leicester – and to voice their concerns and ambitions. The discursive approach that media uses is crucially important for the later results, by focusing on the negative sides of the ethnic minorities and often negative stereotypes, the prejudices towards this group gets more vitality. Later on in policymaking or everyday attitudes towards the disadvantaged group, these media reports are in a cognitive process transformed to truths that help justify the injustices laid upon members of ethnic minority. The conclusion is hence to advocate awareness of legal rights of ethnic minorities and the racist discourse in the media. This way we can help establish a new media discourse that is inclusive and acknowledges the rights guaranteed in the legal documents cited in the beginning of this essay.