

“We” is as true as “them”

The Swedish Left party’s construction of ethnic Swedishness
and non-ethnic Swedishness in Sweden in 2006-2016

Abstract

This study uses Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory to explore how ethnic identities are constructed by the Swedish Left party. The purpose is to examine if there is a political force that can resist ethnic nationalist mobilizations. A hypothesis is also formulated in the study to test if Left wing parties construct ethnic majority's ethnic identity in constraining terms and the identity's of minority's in more free terms. Left wing parties are operationalized with Thomas Sowell's theory on political visions. The result of the hypothesis is that the minority is constructed as free to choose their ethnic identity but no real construction of the majority's ethnicity was found in the study. Therefore the hypothesis was falsified. But the study was able to demonstrate how the Left party constructed the minorities as both ethnic and as free to choose their identities. The majority group was, however, not constructed ethnically as much as the minority group.

Key words: Laclau, mouffe, Sowell, discourse, ethnicity, identity, left, unconstrained vision, Sweden, Vänsterpartiet

Words: 7936

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Sweden, as many previous empires, has harbored many ethnic groups within its borders. Before Finland was separated from Sweden in 1809, the Swedes and Finns made out the biggest portion of the country. But after the separation and the Finnish language began losing its significance to Swedish in the 1900s, Sweden gained a more homogenous character. The Finns are not the only other ethnic group in Sweden other than Swedes. There is also the Sami, Romani, Jews and the Tornedal-finns. These groups, however, don't make up a significant proportion of the country (Bäck et al. 2015, p. 273). It was immigration that gave Sweden its contemporary heterogeneous character. In 1940, foreign born citizens made up barely 1 percent of the population. But from 1940, that population grew up to 9 percent in 1990 and then later up to 13% in 2009.

The increasing and more visible heterogeneous character of the country has led to changes brought by previous Swedish governments. One of particular interest for this study is that of the country's national character. A model that can describe the national character of the country is the model of Karin Borevi. It has two dimensions, one concerning if minority cultures should be subsidized or not. The second dimension is the topic that we are interested in, the country's national character, is it civic or is it ethnic? The four models she presents are as following. The first model supposes the national character of the country as ethnic and minority identities are not recognized or subsidized. This means implicitly that the minorities will assimilate to the natives with time. The second model is that the national character of the country is ethnic but minority identities will be subsidized. The third model is that the national character of the country is civic and no minorities should be subsidized. The fourth and last model is that the national character is civic and minorities should be subsidized. This model is called the multicultural model by Borevi (Bäck et. al. 2015, p. 275).

Sweden had traditionally been on the assimilatory path until the 1970s. Immigrants and minorities were expected to assimilate to a Swedish identity. The official discourse was that it was an assimilation to a "civic" Swedish identity, but it was still the ethnicity that decided if you were Swedish or not, since the civic identity didn't gain any proper recognition (Bäck et al. 2015, p. 275). However, in 1975 the Swedish government moved towards a policy that is closer to the second model. Minority cultures and immigrant associations were to be subsidized by the state and education in the mother tongue was going to be provided if asked for. But later in the 1990s the policies were to be reevaluated. A final report was presented by the Rosengren committee in 1996 which suggested that the national character of Sweden

should align itself towards a civic identity instead of an ethnic. Terms that hinted of a multicultural society was removed and it became harder to make policies that aligned with the ideals of the multicultural society (Bäcker et al. 2015, p. 276). But ethnic and religious elements were later on able to create their own institutions because of the New Public Management reforms. Part of this was the school voucher system that allowed the establishment of Muslim schools in Sweden. This meant that the government indirectly continued its support for minority elements (Bäcker et al. 2015, p. 277).

It is evident that the increasing heterogeneous character of Sweden has led to politicians bringing change to the national character of Sweden. But what are the consequences of these policies?

1.2 Translation and definitions

All translations from Swedish to English, unless stated otherwise, are done by me. The following terms require a definition early on.

Ethnicity - Ethnicity is a group of individuals who regard themselves of common ancestry, regardless if it is fiction or not, and are regard as such by others (Connor 1994, p. 115).

Nationalism/ethnonationalism - Nationalism is loyalty to one's ethnicity (Connor 1994, p. xi).

Ethnic Swede - Group of individuals who regard themselves as Swedish cause of a believed common ancestry or are perceived as such by others.

Non-ethnic Swede - Group of individuals who regard themselves as non-Swedish because of a differing ancestry from those regarded as Swedish, and are perceived as such by others.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of my thesis paper is to explore the relation between society, the state and ethnicity. More specifically, if it is possible for the salience of ethnicity to vanish in a multi-ethnic society. The doubtful future of this condition is expressed by Thomas Hylland Eriksen. He writes:

“The salience of ethnicity and ethnic conflict in the contemporary world may seem a paradoxical phenomenon. Rather than vanishing or losing its significance in modern societies,

ethnicity has become an ever more important principle for political organization [...]” (Eriksen 1993, p. 40)

What is more devastating is that ethnic awareness is created when two different groups are in regular contact with one another that they develop an identity of their own and the idea that they are distinct from the other. Ethnicity is not created as a result of isolation, but as a result of contact. The “other” is the one who creates the “us” (Eriksen 1993, p. 40f). Ethnicity, having a strong organizational power and appeal to people, may be a factor that may cause conflict. Especially if states are employing discriminatory practices based on ethnicity. Such actions may in turn lead to demands for ethnic separation (Eriksen 1993, p. 41f). Sweden, which has tried to redefine the national character of the country seem to have tried to accommodate for the increasing ethnic heterogeneity in the country.

Friedman and Friedman proposes the idea that the Swedish state is trying to transform Sweden from a nation state to a plural ethnic society. The aim being, trying to create tolerance between different groups and achieve coexistence (Friedman - Friedman 2006, p 88). If this is to be achieved, then the government must be neutral towards all of the ethnic groups who are governed by the state (Friedman - Friedman 2006, p.89f). But is this possible? Friedman and Friedman (2006, p.89) draws parallels to the Habsburgian and Ottoman empires, where the governors were of alien descent to the governed and had a cosmopolitan character. But is it possible for the state to remain neutral in the eyes of the various ethnicities in a multiethnic state?

Walker Connor, considered a leading student on the origins of and dynamics of ethno-nationalism comments on a paper discussing disunity in sub-Saharan Africa. The author of the papers brings up many examples such as ‘exaggerated notions of the actual power of the centralized government’ and ‘the reduction of links between the state government and segments of the population’ (Connor 1991, p. 55). But Connor draws attention to that the author doesn’t ask the root of all these problems, which Connor comments with:

“The prime cause of political disunity is the absence of a single psychological focus shared by all segments of the population. Admittedly, ethnic homogeneity is not in itself sufficient to guarantee such a consensus. The intraethnic Vietnamese struggle illustrates this point. But in the case of the multiethnic state, we have note that, for most of the inhabitants, primary identity will not extend beyond the ethnic group” (Connor 1991, p. 56).

Primary identity in multiethnic societies is the ethnic one. Ethnic identity, being a powerful force for political organization, has the potential to create conflicts in the country due to its nature of not extending beyond its own borders. It is even a growing force in the world, not a descending one. Connor writes:

“No multinational structure has been immune to the surge of the nationalism. Authoritarian and democratic, communist and non-communist societies have been similarly affected.”

Nationalism is described as force that can’t be stopped from appearing. Eriksen describes how ethnic mischief with the state may create organization against the state. Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to explore the possibility to stop such a political force.

1.4 Hypothesis

Popper states that if a theory is to be scientific, it must be possible to falsify it (Hollis 2002, p. 72). I subscribe to this notion. It is essential for the intersubjectivity of a theory that it can be tested against the empirical world that the researcher constructs through her ontological and epistemological presuppositions.

I believe that what is described as the left in politics has a consistency on how they view ethnicities in a multiethnic society. Ethnicities belonging to the majority (or who are seen as “natives”) are expected to be assimilate into a non-ethnic citizen identity while minorities (or “non-natives”) aren’t given any such expectations.

The issue is important since it is the left that is critical against division by ethnicity. The “left” perspective on research on race and ethnicity in South Asia was even seen as problematic since it reified ethnicity and race by studying it (Coomaraswamy 1994, p. 137). Similar claims can also be found in the Swedish Left wing party’s party program.

“[...] Nationalism has no place in democratic left-politics. Its function is to hide class and gender antagonism and replace them with myths about cultural and ethnic loyalty. The left is international and acts accordingly to the needs and interests of the working people, indiscriminately of nation borders or cultural differences.” (Vänsterpartiet 2017)

However, ethnicity is spoken in the program about when it is made salient by racism (Vänsterpartiet 2017). But my hypothesis is rather about how the left has differing views on the freedom to an ethnic identity when it comes to a majority member and a minority member. Ethnicity is made salient for no apparent reason and collides with the principle that Friedman and Friedman expressed, about how the state must have a neutral stance against all ethnic groups if it’s going to be an ethnically plural state. It may also provoke ethnic groups into political organization (see Chapter 1.3).

If it is so that the left, who make the claim that they wish to erase the salience of ethnicity, reifies it in such a way described above. Then I believe that it is justifiable to have doubts that ethnic polarization is unstoppable by any political force.

My operationalization for the left will be described in chapter 4.2. I’ll be using a theory by Thomas Sowell, where the left is described as an “unconstrained view”. I’ll be using the term “unconstrained view” to describe the left from now on.

The case that I’ll be testing my hypothesis against is in favor of the theory. Sweden is a relatively homogenous country. It should be noted that in a study of 132 states, 29,5% of all states didn’t have an ethnic group that was in majority, only in plurality (Connor 1994, p. 29). The majority/minority dichotomy is not universal at all and I’m aware of that. I tried to solve that by formulating identities in native and non-native forms. However, if I’m going to test my hypothesis, I must then “prove” that the organization or person I’m trying to study regards particular groups as natives. That would prove a too big task for this study and therefor I will accept my hypothesis in its infantile form instead with the majority/minority dichotomy. The hypothesis is then as follows:

Unconstrained discourses create subjects who are discursively considered an ethnic majority in equivalence chains with moments limiting their ethnic identity but

creates equivalence chains for ethnic minorities with moments that encourage an ethnic identity.

To test this hypothesis, I must prove that there I'm testing an unconstrained vision. After that, my hypothesis will be falsified if the sources I analyze don't construct the equivalence chains I have constructed.

1.5 Research questions

My research questions are the following two.

1. Does the (Swedish) Left Party constitute the world through an unconstrained discourse?
2. What subjects does the (Swedish) Left party create of "ethnic Swedes" and "non-ethnic Swedes"?

1.6 Previous research

A previous thesis with similar aims as this one is *Vi och dem - en diskursanalys av konstruktionen av gruppidentitet hos Moderaterna, Sverigedemokraterna och Vänsterpartiet* by Pierre Sunneborn. Sunneborn (2013, p.1f) writes that he wishes to discover if Swedish political parties construct group identities through their discourses. For this he chooses the Moderates (Moderaterna), Swedish democrats (Sverigedemokraterna) and the Left party (Vänsterpartiet). While my work solely wishes to analyze identities that are related to ethnicity Sunneborn also analyzes how the parties construct identities based on class and gender too (Sunneborn 2013, p.23). On his analysis of the identities created by ethnicity and culture by the Left party he writes

"In relation to the struggle of racism, the party speaks of "swedish and foreign born", not for example "swedish and immigrant". The pattern is such that culture and ethnicity is only discussed through a perspective of oppressing structures. "Swedishness" is not discussed at all" (Sunneborn 2013, p.26f).

Sunneborn has a different theoretical framework than the one I'm planning to use. I believe by constructing equivalence chains of Swedish and immigrant identities one could find that the Left party actually creates identities of outside the racism discourse. Sunneborn also analyzes only the party programs of the parties. I believe that the results of my thesis will be different than what Sunneborn arrived to since I'll be analyzing the texts that the party publishes at the parliament.

1.7 Disposition

In chapter 1, I explained why I chose to research on this subject. In Chapter 2 I will introduce the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe, which will be then followed up by Sowell's theory on political visions which will be modified to fit into the theoretical framework of Laclau and Mouffe. In Chapter 3 I will present my method and materials. In chapter 4 the results of the analyses will be presented and Chapter 5 will end with a final discussion about future research cases.

2 Theory

2.1 Discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe

Laclau and Mouffe's theory are described by Jørgensen and Philips (2000, p. 13) as a poststructuralist one. There is no essence to the real world but it is constituted through language. The meaning that it gains through language can't be fixed since it changes all the time as usage of language changes.

2.1.1 Foundations of discourse theory

If we consult Laclau and Mouffe's book *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* we learn that in their construction of the concept of hegemony, the authors explain the prerequisite for articulation. If articulation is to happen, then the objects that the articulation seeks to redefine or articulate must be separated from each other (Laclau - Mouffe 2001, p. 93). These separated fragments can be interpreted in two ways. Either they are part of a natural whole or they are parts of something that may be constructed or reconstructed. For articulation to happen, the second view must be accepted (Laclau - Mouffe 2001, p. 94). Because of this, the structure of society must be seen as open to construction, it cannot have an essence (Laclau - Mouffe 2001, p. 96). This means that everything is constituted by articulation as expressed earlier.

There is also no such thing as a discursive and non-discursive thing. Laclau and Mouffe exemplifies with:

“A is building with building-stones: there are blocks, pillars, slabs and beams. B has to pass the stones, and that in the order in which A needs them. For this purpose, they use a language consisting of the words “blocks”, “pillar”, “slab”, “beam”. A calls them out; B brings the stone which he has learnt to bring at such and such a call” (Laclau - Mouffe 2001, s.108).

It is not the idea of a particular of a particular object, such as “block”, that pushes B to bring the “stone”. It is rather the object's own place in the discourse, it is rather the relational position to the expression of the wanted object that makes B bring the object to A. The linguistic and non-linguistic signs are the same discourse and that is what makes B take

action. What this means that discursive articulations are not restricted to linguistic signs and that there is no such thing as a non-discursive practice (Laclau - Mouffe 2001, p. 108f).

Discourses are united by the differential positions of the signs. Laclau and Mouffe borrows this from Foucault. The differential positions of the signs are called moments. In a system like this, the identities of the moments become relative. It gains its character by its differential position against other moments. This makes all the relations in the discourse between the moments necessary, which means that without no relation to any other moment, the moment (sign) will mean nothing (Laclau - Mouffe 2001, 105f). Articulation is all practice that establish a relation between signs that change the identities of these signs. The structured totality that comes of this is called discourse. Differences that are not articulated are called elements (Laclau - Mouffe 2001, s, 105).

But articulations have it limits. A discourse without any restrictions would fixate every element into a moment and the discourse would mean everything and nothing and change would not be possible (Laclau - Mouffe 2001, p. 110). To create unity, a discourse would need to discriminate certain signs from its discourse. The field, which discourses exclude signs to, is called the field of discursivity. However, a discourse can never be fully fixed either. Signs from the field of discursivity may enter the discourse at any time. For example, acupuncture, that never had had a place in the medical discourse, take up a spot in the medical discourse in time and gain meaning there (Jørgensen - Philips 2000, p.34f).

Since absolute fixation of meaning is not possible, there may only be partial fixation of meaning. It is the nodal points in the discourse that has this trait. They achieve partial meaning by being the signs that connect several signs together into moments in the same discourse (Laclau - Mouffe, p.112). An example is in the following quote:

“Signs as “symptoms”, “tissue” and “scalpel” gain their meaning in the medical discourse by their relation to the “body” by fixed ways” (Jørgensen - Philips 2000, s.33).

2.1.2 The subject in discursive world

The vital part of Laclau and Mouffe’s theory that is of interest to my study is that of the subject. The subject is nothing but a position in the discourse. The subject has no power in creating its own subject position but is given it by the discourse (Laclau - Mouffe 2001, p.115). The subject position that a subject can take is called a master-significant. The master-significant are nodal points, but they are positions that the subject can take up as an identity for itself. These identities are then defined, like every position in a discourse, by the moments that are in relation to it. The identities gain meaning by equivalence chains. Equivalence chains are chains that link the identity with other moments. This means that, when a subject takes up the position of a certain identity in a chosen discourse, the subject becomes equivalent to the moments that the master significant is linked to (Jørgensen - Philips 2000, p. 51). Silverman (1985, p. 55) describes this with an example:

“Within an articulation, each element comes to evoke another element which becomes treated as an equivalent. So, for instance, within Nazism being a worker = being a German worker = being a racist = being a Nazi.”

As said previously, the quote illustrates how the worker is not merely a worker in the Nazism discourse, but also becomes a racist and a Nazi. This is done by articulation of the element “worker”. In this study, we will look at the discourse of the Left party and study their articulations. In the next chapter, I will describe my method to accomplish this task.

2.2 Theory of (un)constrained visions by Sowell

I will be using Sowell’s theory of political visions to differentiate between the right and the left in politics. Sowell (2007, p. 3ff) writes that visions are senses about how the world works, senses of causality. Visions controls humans in how they act in areas that they do not have much knowledge about. In politics conflicts arise due to differing views on the nature of man (Sowell 2007, p. 7f). These visions are divided to two, the constrained vision and the unconstrained vision (Sowell 2007, p. 10).

The constrained vision sees the human nature as something unchangeable and therefore not a liable object to attempt to change. Rather, the task at hand should be instead to find how the desired moral and social outcomes can be achieved, given the unchangeable nature of mankind (Sowell 2007, p. 12).

The unconstrained vision doubts even the idea of a human nature. What is morally and socially good can be achieved without minding the human nature. The human only needs to be reconfigured in such a way that will lead to the fulfillment of the desired moral and social outcomes (Sowell 2007, p. 15f)

Sowell’s theory is objectivistic in contrast to discourse theory. Therefore it must be modified so it fits with that theory. Sowell writes that visions do not stop existing because they are proven, they are only reborn and take a lesser extreme position (Sowell 2007, p. 232f). But visions can also dominate each other, one vision may be hegmon in one “room” and the other may be in another (Sowell 2007, p. 8).

These characteristics of political visions, as described by Sowell, can easily fit with discourse theory. The unconstrained and constrained vision are to be regarded as discourses which give different meaning to signs. The differential positions of the moments differ in the two discourse, but the nodal points are usually the same. The two discourses are fighting over constituting the world through their own realms. From now on they are discourses.

Sowell’s book will fill its purpose by being a “map” on the discursive struggle between the unconstrained discourse and the constrained discourse. The map will fill the role as a measurement tool to determine if an articulation is made in the unconstrained or constrained discourse. This makes it easy to classify if the Left party is constituting the world through an unconstrained discourse or a constrained one.

Sowell goes through the differences the two discourses have in three nodal points: justice, equality and power. I will present the how both discourses articulate these.

2.2.1 Discourse on Equality

The two discourses differ in what they articulate as related to equality. The constrained discourse doesn't articulate outcomes as something linked to the nodal point equality, which the unconstrained discourse does. It is rather processes only, such as equal legal rights that are articulated as moments to equality in the constrained discourse (Sowell, p. 134f). But even on processes do the two discourses differ in the differential positions of signs. In the unconstrained discourse "process" is a nodal point linking the moment, "equal probabilities to achieve given results". Such processes that the unconstrained discourse articulates are things such as "affirmative action" (Sowell 2007, p. 135f)

Concerning inequality, the unconstrained discourse rarely articulates it in its discourse, it is just an element (Sowell 2007, p. 137) But in the unconstrained vision, profit is articulated as 'overcharge'. Inequality is articulated as a result of theft from the poor (Sowell 2007, p. 138).

2.2.2 Discourse on Power

The constrained discourse constructs market economies in terms of being uncontrolled and decentralized. Because it is constructed as free, there is no need for change to make it serve the public better. The unconstrained discourse instead articulates the economy as being deliberately being controlled by powerful groups and serving particular interest. These differential positions mean that it must be regulated to serve the interest of all (Sowell, p. 172).

With regard to war, the constrained discourse constructs war as part of human nature, while the unconstrained discourse constructs it as a consequence of institutions (Sowell 2007, p. 159).

2.2.3 Discourse on Justice

On social justice, the unconstrained discourse articulates transfers from the rich to the poor, not as an act of humanity, but as a matter of justice (Sowell 2007, p. 215). In contrast to this articulation, the constrained vision doesn't articulate transfers as an issue of social justice. Rather, transfers are articulated as dangerous for society (Sowell 2007, p. 217f).

3 Method and sources

3.1 Method

3.1.1 Method for determining if the Left party has an unconstrained vision

Master significant are nodal points for identities. To determine the meaning of the nodal points one must look at the moments in the differential positions against it. By comparing the meanings of the nodal points of the unconstrained and constrained discourse, acquired through *A conflict of visions: Ideological origins of Political Struggles*, with the meanings that the nodal points that the Left party creates I believe I can determine if the Left party is creating articulations in an unconstrained discourse.

It is possible to say that a theory is not true, if it is falsified when tested against empirical evidence. However, it is not possible to infer that a theory is true, unless one has tested the theory against all possible empirical evidence, which is impossible (Hollis 2002, p. 74f). Therefore, I will determine if the Left party's discourse is, rather, more likely, an unconstrained discourse than a constrained one by proving that its discourse is not a constrained one. I will however compare it with both. I will do so by comparing the Left party's discourse with the constrained and unconstrained discourse with how they articulate the three nodal points of power, equality, and justice.

3.1.2 Method for analyzing subject positions

For this study, I'm planning to use the theory of equivalence chains to study which subjects the Left party creates of the "non-ethnic Swede" and "ethnic Swede". My aim is to find out how the equivalence chain is created for these two subjects. An example on how to go on about when using equivalence chains is shown in Silverman (1985, p.62-68) when he displays how Laclau and Moloney examines discourses by political movements and parties. Silverman writes how the author begins by telling which terms are being related to the subject and then followed with a quotation of a text and then followed with a figure which describes an articulation and the equivalence chain that that articulation creates (Silverman 1985, p. 65).

I believe that it is possible to make similar studies as Laclau and Moloney on my subject. The difference is that I want to examine an equivalence chain that I presuppose to exist. I have already presupposed the master significant positions to be “ethnic non-swede” and “ethnic swede” in the discourse. However, these two terms may not be referred to by their names, but by different terms. Therefore, the master-significances will not be “given” to me by my sources but will instead be “found”. I plan on doing this by searching for all the possible terms in the discourse. Any negligence on this point will lead to the suffering of the paper’s validity because every sign is important because the subject is defined by the differential positions of the signs and any change in these may lead to a change of meaning. I have decided to solve this by looking at how previous researchers have solved this issue. I chose papers that would provide guidance by searching in the Lund University database, LubSearch. I searched “discourse”, “ethnicity”, “nationalism”, “identity” and “Sweden”, in its various combinations. After the search, I chose the papers that were close to my subject and read their methods and some parts of their results.

In her master thesis Söderberg (2015, p.5) wishes to analyze the discourse on multiculturalism (mångkulturalism) in the Swedish library context. In her overview of multiculturalism, she describes how the term multiculturalism (mångkulturalism) has come to be replaced by diversity (mångfald) and interculturalism (interkulturalism) because of the latter’s negative connotations (Söderberg 2015, p. 9). Another term that Söderberg relates to the discourse she wishes to analyze is ethnicity (Söderberg 2015, p. 16).

In another thesis by Viktor Vesterberg (2016, p.8), who aims to analyze constructions on certain group’s ethnicized employability in Sweden. He emphasizes that two groups are especially ethnicized about their employability, Somalis and Roma people. Vesterberg also emphasizes the close relation between race and ethnicity. They are described as essentially different by the literature but the two terms are used interchangeably so the distinction by the two has been criticized (Vesterberg p. 36f). This brings up the question whether I should search by the ethnicity of the immigrants, such as Somalis. I however believe that it would be proper to do a study of Somali and Swedish ethnicity alone if someone wants to contrast the two. Also, it is doubtful that the equivalence chain of the Somali can be generalized to the equivalence chain gotten by non-ethnic Swedes identity.

Tholin (2014) does a study on how Swedishness is seen as the norm in the English curriculum in Swedish schools. He examines this by using a discourse analysis and writes that:

“While this analysis focuses on local steering documents, we will first analyze the central steering documents to provide a context for analyzing the local documents. The starting point is ethnicity” (Tholin 2014, p.257).

Another study that underlines ethnicity as an important factor is one by Håkan Rosén, (2006, p. 2) who wishes to understand how the People’s party (Folkpartiet) conceptualizes “Outsideness” (utanförskap), a term describing a state of being fragmented from the majority.

Weiner (Weiner, p.96) describes how terms such as “Christian traditions and western humanism” appeared in the government teaching plans (Läroplanen) but were later removed. Another topic that appears is racism and Nazism (Weiner 2008, p.97). I believe the terms

Christian and western are used as operationalizations of what is considered part of ethnically Swedish, therefore I believe they are good search words to use. I also believe that the terms racism and Nazism will be used when discussing ethnic Swedish nationalism and non-ethnic Swedes in general. We can add the word fascism to this list too, it also appears together with ethnic Swedish nationalism (Bäck et al. 2015, p. 274).

Lastly, I'd like to comment that during my search for sources I discovered alternative forms of the terms used, such as multiculturalism (multikulturalism) appear in the form of "manyculturalism" (mångkulturalism). This is due to the Swedish prefix for many (mång-) being used interchangeably with "multi".

As a result, the terms that I believe will have a part in the equivalence chain are as follows: "Multikulturalism", "multikulturell", "multikultur", "mångkulturalism", "mångkultur", "mångkultur", "interkulturalism", "interkulturell", "interkultur", "multietnisk", "mångetnisk", "etnicitet", "etnisk", "minoritet", "invandrare", "nation", "nationalism", "rasism", "nazism", "fascism", "västerländsk", "kristen", and "identitet". I will be searching for these terms in the documents.

This solves the first step of my method, to search the sources with chosen words. The second step is to discriminate between the discourses that I do not wish to analyze and those that I want. For example, the word nation may bring up sources about national industry. These documents may contain the sign that may be a master-significant, but it is not in the equivalence chain of defining "non-ethnic Swede" or "ethnic Swedes". Therefore, these documents are of no interest and will be ignored.

The third step is to examine the articulations in the sources. Which moments are in the equivalence chain? Which equivalence chain does the chosen source create? This will be done by identifying the master-significant and then the moments that it puts together in an equivalence chain.

The fourth step is to categorize which discourse the equivalence chains are created in. Is it for example in a discourse of racism, nationality, or migration?

The fifth and final still will be to analyze the results, this by comparing the identities for "non-ethnic Swedes" and "ethnic Swedes", and testing my hypothesis about unconstrained discourses.

Summarized, the steps are as followed

1. Search the possible signs in the source.
2. Remove the sources not creating a subject of "non-ethnic Swedes" or "ethnic Swedes".
3. Examine the articulations. What is the created subject?
4. In which discourses are the subjects created in?
5. Analysis of results and testing of hypothesis.

3.2 Material

To answer the first research question, I will use the party program of the Left party from 2006 to 2016. The program itself will be analyzed to determine if the party constructs the world through an unconstrained vision.

For the second research question, I have decided to look at the publications of the Left party in the parliament. The sources that I will analyze are from the website of the Swedish government. These documents are motions, propositions (bills) and interpellations written by the Left Party. I have decided to limit my search to documents from 2006 to 2016. The time span was not chosen with any rationality. What is important is that the Left party constructs the world through an unconstrained discourse in these years. This is essential for the hypothesis. The validity of an analysis on a document from a year when the party is not constructing the world through an unconstrained vision would be devastating for the study. The second research question is heavily dependent on the first.

The research material that I will analyze is defining for results that I get. The ideal would be to analyze every single discursive practice by the Left party, but I must limit my ambitions due to the lack of resources and time. However, it is very important that I search all the possible “moments” in the equivalence chain and that I don’t leave out any. Any negligence on this point will lead to the suffering of the paper’s validity because the differential positions of the moments define the subject.

Laclau and Mouffe wrote, as previously explained, that there is no distinction as a discursive or non-discursive practice since all practices constitutes the discourse. With that in mind it is only proper to investigate the non-linguistic discursive articulations too when trying to conceptualize a discourse and then analyze it, or else the validity of the discourse may suffer. But it is difficult to operationalize the non-linguistic articulations by the Left party about ethnic Swedes and non-ethnic Swedes. Also, it would be hard to document these and the intersubjectivity of the study would suffer greatly. Therefore, I will only use available text documents for my discourse analysis. These are open to access for everyone and will make my study open to critique and development.

4 Analysis

4.1 The subjects created

I believe that the subjects are created in three different discourses. These are, in a discourse of racism, discourse of identity and in a discourse of migration.

4.1.1 Subjects created in the discourse of identity

In a motion concerning preschool, the Left party writes:

“Pre-school has [...] a great importance [...] and is to support cultural diversity and affirm multiple cultural identities. According to the Läroplan for pre-school [...] the pre-school should contribute to the development of a double cultural identity for children who are national minorities or has a foreign origin” (mot. 2006/07:Ub256).

By referring to the Läroplan, the Left party articulates an equivalence between non-ethnic Swedes and double cultural identities. The following can be derived:

Non-ethnic swede = double cultural identity

Similar equivalence chains are created in other publications too (see mot. 2015/16:100, mot. 2007/08:Ub231 - mot. 2006/07:K348).

In the following motion, the Left party problematizes the lack of ethnic Swedish children in the suburbs:

“[...] children from the majority society and their norms and culture are almost completely absent. It is almost an impossible situation for those who work with integration of values and rights issues in our country. In the segregated big cities with miljonprogram areas [are] emptied on people with Swedish background” (mot. 2015/16:988)

Ethnic swedes are ascribed with certain norms and a certain culture that are desired for the suburbs. The ethnic Swede is made equivalent by not being a non-ethnic Swede. The following equivalence chains can be derived:

Ethnic Swede = carrier of needed norms for non-ethnic Swedes = carrier of needed culture for non-ethnic Swedes = Ethnic swede ≠ non-ethnic Swede

The Left party writes about the importance of minority languages in a motion. They express that:

“The Left party wants to, by different means, create availability and inclusion for all groups in society. That including people with different language-cultural backgrounds [...]. Whoever who loses their mother tongue [...] loses an important part of their identity as an individual and as member of society. [...]” (mot. 2013/14:Kr5)

“The minority languages position and development is very important [...]” (mot. 2013/14:Kr5)

The mother tongue of minority's is articulated as being an important part of the minority's identity and states that without it the minority loses its identity as an individual. A person becomes more of their ethnicity with their mother tongue. An equivalence is created between mother tongue and ethnic identity. With that in mind, the party begins by stressing the intent to create inclusion for those with a different linguistic-cultural background than Swedish. The means to this is by strengthening support for the mother tongue, but with the equivalence in mind, it also means strengthening the ethnic identity. The party also writes that the mother tongue is important for one's identity as a member of society. This means that there is an equivalence between ethnic identity and inclusion to society. The following equivalence chains can be derived from this text.

Mother tongue = minority ethnic identity

Strengthening of mother tongue = strengthening of minority ethnic identity = stronger inclusion

Strong mother tongue = strong ethnic identity = inclusion to society

The equivalence mother tongue = inclusion are articulated in other publications by the Left party (see Int. 2006/07:537, mot. 2006/07:Kr272, mot. 2008/09:So554, p. 14, mot 2013/14:Kr309, p. 11, mot. 2006/07:Kr279 - mot. 2006/07:Kr273).

In the same document the party writes about international culture change and the party stresses that it is important that cultural expression and traditions of the peoples don't lose their character because of globalization. The party also states that culture is an important way for minorities to develop their identities (mot. 2013&14:Kr5). An equivalence between minority ethnic identity and culture is made. However when speaking about peoples, referring to all groups in the world, no such equivalence is made. The following equivalence chains can be derived from this.

Minority ethnic identity = minority culture

The Left party parliament member Siv Holma states in a written question to the incumbent government that:

“[...] the purpose of the [multicultural] year was to start an intercultural process where the majority culture and the minority cultures cooperated and enriched each other.” (S.f. 2006/07:545)

Holma articulates the ethnic Swedish identity and non-ethnic Swedish identity as each other opposites. No mention is made of cooperation and enrichment between non-ethnic Swedes themselves. The following equivalence chain can be derived from this:

Non-ethnic Swede = enrichment for ethnic Swede
Ethnic Swede = enrichment for non-ethnic Swede
Non-ethnic Swede \neq enrichment for non-ethnic Swede

4.1.2 Subjects created in the discourse of racism

In a written statement, parliament member Elina Linna of the Left party states in a written statement about a survey on men’s violence against women in national minority communities, that:

“It is a laudable ambition to learn more about these [national minorities] groups vulnerability [...] the task is however a sensitive one. The historical experience tells that registration of ethnic origin is something very risky. Even if it is with all the good intentions there is reason to be act very cautiously” (S.f 2008/09:698)

The state is implicitly given an ethnic character by articulating it as a threat towards minorities. So an equivalence chain between the state and ethnic Swede is created. But an equivalence is also created between non-ethnic Swedes and exposure to threat and an equivalence between ethnic Swinishness and threat. The following can be derived:

Swedish State = Ethnically Swedish = threat
Non-ethnic Swede = Threatened

The Left party writes in a motion about human rights:

“When government representatives and big parts of the right say that the country is full, that we can’t take much more and that a system collapse is imminent. By this, people who come to this country are painted threats. This fuels fear that becomes gasoline in the racist motor. Such a split affects everyone who, in any way, is regarded as “new” to Sweden, even those who have lived here for generations” (mot. 2016/17:3515)

From this quotations, the following equivalence chain can be derived:

Exclusion of non-citizen = non-ethnic Swede = less of a citizen

The left creates the non-ethnic Swede as less of a citizen of the state due to immigration to non-citizens being restricted.

The Left party writes in a motion concerning health care that there has been a process of exclusion since the creation of Sweden as a nation. The party writes that:

“The Swedish racism against the others who have been excluded by the years hasn’t only targeted people in other countries. It has even resulted in the oppression of ethnic groups inside the borders of Sweden who are today called national minorities. [...] It is in the light of the historical guilt of the Swedish national project that the discussion about national minorities must be made in.” (mot. 2006/07:So309)

The party creates the national minority as oppressed and as a victim. Ethnic Swedishness is articulated in the form of oppression and as guilty, but the party do not create the ethnic Swede as a racist or as a guilty subject. The following equivalence chain can be derived from this text:

National minority = oppressed = victim
Ethnic Swedishness = oppressing = guilty

The text of the previous motion was a reuse of a previous motion from 2005 about the same subject (mot. 2005/06:So357).

The equivalence chain of non-ethnic swede = oppressed can be found in other publications too (see mot. 2010/11:Ju406, mot. 2016/17:1737, mot. 2006/07:Fi245 - mot. 2006/07:C333)

The equivalence chain of non-ethnic Swede = oppressed = victim can be found in other publications too (see mot. 2007/08:A8, mot. 2016/17:3642,

4.1.3 Subjects created in the discourse of migration

The Left party writes in a motion about refugees that:

“Increased ethnic plurality in the job market is positive for the whole society” (mot. 2012/13:Sf352)

The statement is made in a motion about refugees so those who are supposed to increase the ethnic plurality is immigrants, people of non-ethnic Swedish descent. An equivalence chain is articulated between non-Swedish ethnicity and positivity for society. The following can be derived:

Non-Swedish ethnicity = positive for society

A similar articulation is done in a motion about establishment of newly arrived immigrants into the labor market. The motion states:

Similar equivalence chains have been articulated in other publications too (S.f 2006/07:1162, mot. 2013/14:A301)

“An increased ethnic diversity is necessary for the society to fulfill its task to provide service to all its citizens” (mot. 2009/10:A11)

The discourse that it is expressed in is about non-ethnic Swedes place in the labor market. So the increased ethnic diversity is, means an increased number of non-ethnic Swedes in the labor market. An equivalence chain is created between non-ethnic Swedes

4.2 On the discourse of the Left party

The Left party writes in its party program that:

“We live in world-encompassing capital class society. The division based on class build on the different relations humans have in relation to means of production and services” (Vänsterpartiet 2017)

“That little minority who owns and controls the capital in such an extent that it gives them a decisive power over society. It is they who govern over the production and control the labor of others and the value that they [the workers] create” (Vänsterpartiet 2017)

This articulation on free market is definitely not the same as constrained discourse. The Left party shows similarities with the unconstrained discourse by articulating the system in such that it serves particular interests. This construction appears in other places on the party program too.

“But also, the worker and women’s movement can through their struggle get the state to support their interests. It is by this way that the commonly financed facilities have been formed to possible tools for justice and solidarity” (Vänsterpartiet 2017)

About equality as process or result, the Left party articulates that tertiary education should be available to anyone for no fees (Vänsterpartiet 2017). This is in contrast with the constrained discourse articulation of equality as merely a process. The Left party has a similar discourse to that of the unconstrained discourse.

The Left party is also close to the unconstrained discourse on war. The party wishes in their party program for a world without any war which is possible by changing the institutions of the world. Dominant position of the USA in international politics is regarded as the cause of aggression and wars in the world (Vänsterpartiet 2017). This in opposition to the constrained discourse and in similarity with the unconstrained one.

When discussing the benefits about financing the state and distributing income with a progressive tax system, the Left party writes:

“[the progressive tax] also contributes, by large, to liberate citizens from the benevolence of the rich.” (Vänsterpartiet 2017)

This statement is also similar to how transfers are articulated in the unconstrained vision. The good will of the rich is not seen as a humane act. It is nowhere close to the construction of constrained discourse.

We can conclude that the Left party does not construct the world in the discourse of the constrained discourse. It instead has many similarities with the unconstrained discourse.

5 Discussion

5.1 Results

The results show that the Left party creates both a non-ethnic Swedish and ethnic Swedish identity through their discourse. However, the non-ethnic Swedish identity was being created repeatedly through by equivalence chains with language. The racism and identity discourses were discourses where equivalent chains were established the most. If we compare with the previous study, that stated the Left party didn't create a subject of Swedishness, we can conclude that we arrived at a different conclusion.

But one could still come to the conclusion that the Left party is provoking ethnic conflict by encouraging ethnic identities of minorities but not of the majority group. The majority group was constructed ethnically explicitly only twice, and it was not a recurring equivalence chain.

The unconstrained and constrained theory worked very well when I was determining what discourse the Left party constituted the world with. This shows possibilities that can be made with Sowell's theory of political visions.

The study showed that agents using an unconstrained discourse constructed ethnic minorities as ethnic in both discourses that are absent of racism and abundant of.

5.2 Hypothesis

The hypothesis was falsified due to ethnic Swedish identity not being constructed in a manner that limited its freedom. However, the non-ethnic Swedish identity was repeatedly constructed, but also in the form of "double identities". No such discourse was created around ethnic Swedes.

I still believe that the hypothesis is worth testing again. I didn't observe non-linguistic articulations of the Left party and I only consulted one source for my materials, publications from the parliament. If another source for material is examined, then maybe my theory might stand a test.

5.3 Future research

Future research should try the same hypothesis and same research questions in another country. A country with not a majority/minority dichotomy would be more interesting. Will the parties in the unconstrained discourse also construct the non-ethnic majorities as ethnic?

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