

Racial Stereotypes and Swedish Antiracism: A Swedish Crisis of Multiculturalism?

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Introduction: Racial scandals in a Swedish context

The so-called ‘crisis of multiculturalism’ is but one of many crises as the editors Kristín Loftsdóttir and Lars Jensen point out in the first chapter of this book, and in the Swedish case the economic crisis has hardly hit Sweden at all, with regards to the environmental crisis the nation prides itself of being one of the most sustainable and eco-friendly countries in the world, and concerning issues of migration and diversity, the self-image of Swedes as well as the image of Sweden in the world is still that the country and its people is firmly antiracist. However since 2011, numerous public debates have taken place in Sweden regarding the presence and use of different racial stereotypes across a range of media. Seen collectively, they can be viewed as challenging Sweden’s self-image as the world’s most antiracist country – and they can also be conceptualised as the Swedish version of the ‘crisis of multiculturalism’, which within the Swedish context becomes an antiracism in crisis rather than a crisis of multiculturalism, although there are certainly similarities between them. These debates are either caused by a race scandal, that is for example when a politician or a celebrity is “caught” saying something demeaning about migrants and minorities, or by someone criticising a certain representation for being racist despite claims that it is antiracist or at least non-racist (see, for example, Eriksson Henrik 2011 and Lundberg 2011, 2012).

In the spring of 2011, a race scandal erupted at the elite Lund University when a group of white students in blackface, chained and half-naked, performed a slave auction at a dinner party having a jungle theme (Eriksson Gustaf 2011). A media debate ensued, with many white Swedish voices defending the students’ behaviour as an expression of a non-racist liberated humour, which is especially common among university students. Several non-white Swedes however pointed out that such an event could only take place in a country, which refuses to regard itself as racist. The slave auction scandal at Lund University was reported not only nationally but also in many other countries. It led the American politician Reverend Jesse Jackson to write to the Swedish Minister of Education asking that the Swedish school system place the topic of slavery, and Sweden’s participation in it, on the curriculum, while the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) sharply condemned the incident at one of Northern Europe’s most prestigious universities in a letter to Birgitta Ohlsson, Sweden’s

Minister for EU Affairs (Centre against Racism 2011). In other words, the whole affair became embarrassing, and Reverend Jackson was subsequently invited by Lund University to give a public lecture on the new multiracial Sweden and the new diverse Europe, with the clear message that such racial stereotypes cannot be tolerated.

Despite this message, in the autumn of 2011, the slave auction debate was followed by a heated public discussion over a stereotypical image of an Asian man used for many years as the logo of a popular chocolate bar. Throughout 2012 more than a dozen public debates concerning racial stereotyping of Africans, Moslems, Jews and other minorities followed. Practically all of these debates resulted in polarised positions along racial lines, just like the debate on the slave auction scandal. Particularly during the course of 2012, a general feeling of country being in crisis developed as new debates on different racial stereotypes replaced each other seemingly without an end. The critique of racial stereotypes principally comes from Swedes of colour who argue that the presence of such stereotyping in contemporary Sweden hurts and humiliates minorities and hinders the development of a new Swedishness wherein non-white Swedes can be fully included as Swedes and feel at home in Sweden. The defensive perspective is dominated by a majority of Swedes who argue that they cannot see that such stereotypes can be racist in contemporary Sweden, and sometimes also that they need to be preserved for the future as they are a part of the national cultural heritage.

According to opinion polls taken since 2011, approximately 90-95% of respondents defend the use of certain racial representations (see, for example, Sandahl 2011). Many also associate such representations with their own childhood experiences by using sentimental language to describe the pleasure that is associated with some racial stereotypes. Critics, mainly non-white Swedes, are repeatedly accused of espousing censorship eagerness (“censuriver”), aggressiveness (“våldsamhet”) and over-sensitiveness (“överkänslighet”), all emotional registers strongly associated with extremism and “non-Swedishness”. At the same time, the mainly white defenders of racial stereotypes are increasingly accused of being racist and of reproducing racist structures by the mainly non-white critics, something which leads to polarization.

By examining three recent public debates concerning different kinds of racial stereotypes as case studies, this article aims to elucidate the needs, desires and the affective energies that are articulated to defend the various racial stereotypes debated within the last

years in Sweden, and within the framework of this book's crisis theme – in this case the 'crisis of multiculturalism'. Key questions include: what are the relations between the racial stereotypes, Swedish whiteness and Swedish antiracism? Why do so many white Swedes want to use and defend racial stereotypes in spite of the critique coming from Swedes of colour who explicitly express that they feel offended and humiliated by them? What is at stake and what is felt to be under attack, and how can this crisis be conceptualised and analysed? How is it possible to understand why so many white Swedes, including highly educated, leftist, liberal and self-identifying antiracists, want to defend and preserve racial stereotypes in the name of antiracism? Is it a matter of an old-fashioned colonial type of racism, as many critics of the racial stereotypes claim when they label the defenders of racial stereotypes as downright racist? Why do these debates develop similarly with comparable dynamics, and why do they almost always end in a destructive deadlock situation, traumatising both parties and polarising the country as a whole? And for whom is this a crisis, and how can this crisis be analysed within the framework of the 'crisis of multiculturalism'?

At the end, I argue that all these public debates concerning racial stereotypes can be analysed as a particular form of a Swedish multiculturalism in crisis, and which in the Swedish case is about an antiracism in crisis. Such an analysis does not mean that I condone antiracism as a political movement and as an ideological standpoint, and that I want to essentialise Swedish antiracism, and I am also aware that although hegemonic antiracism in Sweden means a colour blind antiracism, there are also oppositional voices and actors. This article also aims at understanding antiracism as a position that can be deployed and articulated for many different purposes, and with Swedish antiracism and its current crisis as the case study, and it is therefore also a contribution to the emerging field of the study of white antiracism in Western countries. Finally, as a Korean adoptee I acknowledge that I have been active within several debates on different racial stereotypes, particularly when it comes to speaking out against Asian stereotypes, so this article speaks to personal experience (Hübinette & Räterlinck 2012; Hübinette & Tigervall 2011).

Swedish antiracism and Swedish whiteness

While the concept of antiracism is evidently the core national ethos of contemporary Sweden *par excellence*, meaning that being Swedish is putatively equivalent with being antiracist, it also becomes clear according to studies of the Swedish antiracist movement that antiracism in

Sweden is principally a white business, contrary to the situation in the English speaking world where the minorities themselves have been in the forefront as the primary actors, for example in the American civil rights movements and in the creation of the academic fields in the US of ethnic, postcolonial and critical race and whiteness studies (Jämte 2013; Malmsten 2007; Omi & Winant 1994).

Another fundamental difference is that Swedish antiracism is heavily invested in colour blindness as its hegemonic ideology, and which again makes it different from the situation in the English-speaking world (Hübinette, Hörnfeldt, Farahani & René León Rosales 2012). This official colour blind antiracism comes from the conviction that race is not a relevant category in Swedish society, and is symbolised by the historically unique parliamentary decision of 2001 to abolish the word race in all law texts and official documents and which all parties agreed upon (Hübinette & Lundström 2011). Thus, Sweden became the first country in the world to remove the word race itself from its language – something which truly must be seen as the most radical colour blind performative speech act ever in modern history, to allude to Sara Ahmed's (2006) analysis of white antiracism and its futile understanding of racism as something which can be done away with once and for all and left behind by the way of antiracist legislation and rhetoric. The removal of the word has also lead to it being more and more difficult to speak about racism and racists and label something as being racist, as everything that has to do with race is almost always connected to essentialism, biologism and National Socialism.

Outside of Sweden, and perhaps symptomatically in the English speaking world, research on white antiracism and on state and elite antiracism has been conducted as part of the emergence of critical race and whiteness studies ever since the 1990s (Doane & Bonilla-Silva 2003; Hartigan 2000; Frankenberg 1993; Fuji Johnson & Enomoto 2007; Hage 1998; Lentin 2011; O'Brien 2009). Inspired by the masculinity studies theorist Raewyn Connell's concept hegemonic masculinity and borrowing from Amanda Lewis' (2004) idea of hegemonic whiteness, the American Sociologist Matthew Hughey (2010, 2012) has developed an analysis of a white racial identity in the US context based on his study on activists in a white nationalist organisation and in a white antiracist organisation. He argues that beyond the obvious antagonistic ideological positions, they both share the same white narratives, white perspectives and white privileges, and which taken together ultimately

reproduce white supremacy in the USA regardless if it takes place within a racist or an antiracist political framework.

This argument engages with concept of hegemonic whiteness, and borrows from critical studies on white antiracism in the English-speaking world. I regard the idea of antiracism to be the core value of hegemonic whiteness in Sweden. It is therefore valid to discuss white hegemonic antiracism within the Swedish context. By this I mean that antiracism and whiteness usually proceed together, and that white Swedes regard themselves as being automatically antiracists and non-racist simply by being Swedes. Further, Swedes also expect to be regarded as antiracists by non-Swedes. This self-perception is something which several scholars have studied and written about previously, and which can also be found in the other Nordic countries in the form of what is known as a specific Nordic exceptionalism (Habel 2008, 2012; Loftsdóttir & Jensen 2012; Palmberg 2009; Pred 2000; Pripp & Öhlander 2008).

Multicultural Sweden and the crisis of multiculturalism

Sweden is a country, which sees itself as inherently antiracist, and this is in accord with its global image since its governments supported anticolonial and democratic struggles, movements, leaders and dissidents in the post-war period and throughout the Cold War. It is self-perception which Sweden also shares with the other Nordic countries, as is evident in Ebbe Volquardsen's contribution to this book. This antiracist Sweden, perhaps best epitomized by the legendary Social Democratic Prime Minister, Olof Palme, whose life ended in 1986 when he was shot by an unknown assailant. Palme had taken a firm, radical and active stand against racial segregation in the US, against the apartheid regime in Southern Africa and against Western interference and military interventions in the Third World regardless of whether the perpetrators were British, French, Portuguese, American or Russian, and whether the *coup d'états* and the atrocities happened in Chile or Argentina, South Korea or Vietnam, Angola or the Congo (Bjereld 1992).

Anti-fascist, anticolonial, and antiracist policies were placed on the national and international agenda by the Social Democrats who governed between the years 1932-76, 1982-91 and 1994-2006, and with renowned Foreign Ministers like Östen Undén, Torsten Nilsson and Anna Lindh, whose ethos became synonymous with the Swedish model, and with the Swedish welfare state, Swedish neutrality and Swedish peacekeeping. For example,

Sweden became and still is the largest donor country per head to the postcolonial world since the 1960s (Eriksson Baaz 2002; Öhman 2007). Swedish researchers like Gunnar Myrdal and Gunnar Dahlberg have played a crucial and active part in UNESCO's work on the reconceptualization of race, and in countering racism after the Holocaust and at the beginning of the decolonisation process. This necessary work helped instigate the newly founded organisation's first statement on race in 1950 and resulted in the UN International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) (Andersson 2011).

Sweden is also proportionally, without competition, the largest receiver of Third World children for adoption, as well as, of refugees, migrants and spouses from the postcolonial world. Remarkably this still is the case at the time of writing, and this policy has resulted in a non-white population of around 12-14% of the total population – a proportion which is almost doubled in the bigger cities as well as among the birth cohorts below 18 years old (Hübinette 2012). Furthermore, it is also probable that Swedes have interracial relationships to a far greater extent than is the case in any other Nordic country. In 2011 as many as 131,048 individuals had been born in Sweden with one parent born in Sweden and one parent born in either Africa, Asia or South America, while the equivalent number of individuals who had been born in Sweden with two parents from one of these three continents stood at 167,264 (Hübinette 2012). This means that Sweden is outstanding among the Nordic countries in terms of having invested in the creation of a society marked by diversity and by interracial relationships already at an early stage. These diversity statistics also make it difficult to compare Sweden to the other Nordic countries and their urban spaces, where the proportions of migrants and minorities are much lower than in Sweden.

Due to Sweden's unique relationship to the former colonies, to people of colour during the post-war period, as being the leading Western voice for decolonisation and third world liberation, and its still unthreatened top position as the proportionally most significant haven for refugees and migrants in the West, the idea of antiracism has become a crucial part of national identity. As a result, Sweden always heads international lists and comparisons as having the most progressive migration and integration policies, and as having the most radical anti-discrimination legislation in the world, and also as having the most solidly antiracist population in the world who self-identify as tolerant and as being against racism and discrimination. There are several recent rankings and reports that show that the proportion of Swedes who are categorized as being intolerant and as having a negative attitude towards

diversity and migration is said to be world record low 4.9% or even lower than that (for such comparisons and statistics, see Huddleston, Niessen, Ni Chaoimh & White 2011 and Mella, Palm & Bromark 2011).

This is also something which the Swedish government, official Sweden and many ordinary Swedes proudly reiterate, and the idea of antiracist Sweden also transcends the left and right division, resulting in the somewhat curious declaration from Sweden's far right party, the Sweden Democrats (SD), that they are antiracist. Antiracism has become a cherished part of the nation's self-image. Antiracist Sweden is also marketed and branded abroad, for example, through diplomacy and development aid, and has become the international image of the country, not the least in the non-Western world.

Recently, however, the earlier positive rhetoric on diversity has also changed in Sweden just like in most other Western countries due to a combination of a shrinking welfare system at a time of rapid neo-liberalization of the economy and a general feeling of being under siege of globalisation (see the articles of Kristín Loftsdóttir, Minttu Tikka and Johanna Sumiala, James G. Rice and Satu Ranta-Tyrkkö for how this siege of globalisation affects other Nordic countries). The 'crisis of multiculturalism' has on the other hand not been as pronounced for example in the UK, Germany, France, the Netherlands and the other Nordic countries, where anti-immigration and particularly anti-Moslem rhetoric nowadays is being voiced not just by the far right but by liberal elites (Lentin & Titley 2011). The current Liberal Swedish Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt has for instance never spoken out against a multiculturalist society, and he has continuously defended Swedish antiracism and Sweden's current migration policy, and severely and repeatedly criticized the Sweden Democrats for being intolerant and xenophobic to the extent that its leader Jimmie Åkesson has accused the Prime Minister of espousing "pure hate" against his party (Åkesson 2013). In other words, Sweden still stands out as a country which still explicitly wants to see itself as being multicultural.

Racial stereotypes under attack

Public debates concerning racial words, expressions and representations have also taken place and do erupt occasionally also in the other Nordic countries (see for example Rastas 2012 and Rossi 2009). Sometimes, such debates spill over to another Nordic country. An example of this which highlights how Sweden is seen as being almost ridiculously antiracist by a

neighbouring country was the discussion that followed the removal of some film clips in Walt Disney's film *Santa's Workshop* from 1932, and which also came to affect Denmark. In December 2012 the public service company Swedish Television announced that the American mother company had decided to remove some stereotypical film clips in *Santa's Workshop* – among them an African American girl portrayed as a so-called picaninny figure (Lindh 2012). *Santa's Workshop* has been screened on the main Swedish television channel during Christmas Eve ever since 1960 as part of Disney's program *Donald Duck's Christmas Eve*, and a similar program titled *Disney's Christmas Show* has also for many years been screened in Denmark. The announcement created an uproar in Sweden among the general public, mainly concerning the removal of the picaninny girl, and a poll showed that 96% of the population was against Disney's decision to remove the Picaninny girl (Nelson 2012). In Denmark, however, the event was reported as a typical expression of Swedish “politically correct censorship” even if it was an American decision from the beginning which Swedish Television only complied with, and as the Danish screening was not effected by the removal of the film clips, a spokesperson for the public service company Danish Broadcasting Corporation, Jakob Stegelmann, could proudly tell the Danish media that “we are screening the politically incorrect version from 1932 – no censored versions here” (Harder 2012).

Another example of a debate that involved another Nordic country was the discussion following the Finnish video diary titled *Tervetuloa Suomeen* (Welcome to Finland), which was co-financed by the Finnish and Swedish film institutes, and which was a part of a Nordic Culture Fund film project called Doxwise Nordic with participating youngsters in all the Nordic countries filming their own lives. One of the Finnish contributions was this film, in which a group of white Finnish male youngsters mock and harass a hunger striking Afghan refugee outside the Finnish parliament by drinking beer and eating pork and by making use of racializing words and expressions. When the film was released on the Internet in October 2012, particularly Swedish antiracists pointed out that it endorsed a racist mentality and language, while the Finnish film editor of the Doxwise project, Liisa Juntunen, however did not agree with the criticism and defended the publication of the film by saying that “one cannot edit the reality” (Tiberg & Starbrink 2012). In other words, both the debate on *Santa's Workshop* and the *Tervetuloa Suomeen* discussion, are good examples of when other Nordic countries' image of Sweden as a radical antiracist and “politically correct country” is highlighted.

I will now summarise three public discussions on racial stereotypes that have taken place in Sweden recently. There are well over a dozen race scandals and subsequent debates on racialized images and expressions to choose among only since the spring of 2011's Lund University slave auction. The three debates I discuss below have in common that they are related to visual culture and to the spheres of art and culture, and that they, just like the slave auction event, received media attention outside of Sweden. In the age of transnationalism when particularly visual culture knows no national borders, and when the mass phenomenon of viral memes is an everyday Internet practice, race scandals are often caused by visual stereotypes, and they are usually connected to the cultural industry in a broader sense.

The first debate that I have chosen to look upon concerned the Finnish candy company Fazer and its chocolate bar *Kina* (China) which until the summer of 2012 made use of a stereotypical head of an Asian wearing a "coolie hat" as its logo, and similar logos of so-called "Chinamen" exist also in other Nordic countries. The chocolate bar is popular in Sweden and has existed since 1961, and is usually known as *kinapuffar* (China pops) in colloquial speech, and as a brand name sometimes also as *Kina Gul* (China Yellow). In September 2011 Patrik Lundberg (2011), an adopted Korean man who is a journalist, published a newspaper column about the everyday racism that he is exposed to as an Asian man in Sweden with mostly white Swedes mocking and making fun of his appearance by pointing, shouting and laughing at him intermittently in the public space. In the article, he also pointed out that this logo and similar visual images and representations of Asians in contemporary Sweden might play a part in and explain this treatment by making it socially acceptable.

Lundberg's column immediately became viral in social media and on the Internet as it probably was interpreted as an attack on a beloved Swedish candy, which generations of Swedes have eaten and therefore are very fond of. The article was met with an explosion of mainly white voices in newspapers, on television and radio, and above all in digital media protesting against his claim that Asians are exposed to everyday racism (Hübinette & Tigervall 2011; Lundberg 2012). His critics argued that he exaggerated or even lied about his experiences of being exposed to racism, and that on the contrary majority Swedes like and even embrace Asians perhaps more than any other minority in the country – for example Swedish marry Asian women for marriage and Swedish women adopt Asian children. Above all, people protested against Lundberg's argument that Fazer's *Kina* logo is a racial stereotype

and this became even more pronounced as the company Fazer stated that they would change the logo and only keep the so-called coolie hat without any head. Through this focus on the logo itself the topic that Lundberg wanted to raise, namely the socially accepted everyday racism against Asians in public space, disappeared from the discussion and instead something of a public uprising against the “political correctness” of both Lundberg and Fazer erupted.

While *kinapuffgate* (China pop-gate) continued, (as it has been satirically baptised by the defenders of the logo), the public service company Swedish Television arranged and screened a debate program about the logo and commissioned SIFO, Sweden’s most respected agency within the area of opinion and social research, to conduct an opinion survey which established that 97% of the informants disagreed that the logo could be offensive to anyone in Sweden when asked if they agreed that the logo was stereotypical (Sandahl 2011). This is in spite of the fact that undoubtedly the most common socially accepted and culturally institutionalised racialized stereotype in contemporary Sweden is the image of the Asian man, who is usually portrayed as being despicable and ugly or nerdy and ridiculous, and who may be found in a range of media including; on stage, in film, as a character in books or as an illustration in a newspaper or in a magazine (Hübinette & Tigervall 2011). The continuous prevalence of this image of Asian men shows that certain visual stereotypes deriving from the colonial period and its colonial archive are still maintained and are cherished by the vast majority as they have become so naturalised and normalised.

The second debate took place in 2012 and concerned the artist Makode Linde and his art, and who for a moment became world famous overnight. This happened when his blackface cake was eaten by the Swedish Minister of Culture, Lena Adelsohn Liljeroth, at the Swedish Museum of Modern Art in April 2012, when the Swedish Artists’ National Organisation celebrated its 75th anniversary. The minister had been invited and was asked to cut the first piece of a cake designed for the occasion by Linde who is an artist of mixed origin, and who is known for his blackface or golliwog art, which he himself calls “Afromantics”. The cake depicted a nude African woman and attached to the cake was the artist’s own head in blackface. As the minister cut into the cake the artist screamed, and the Minister smiled, giggled and laughed and so did the almost wholly white audience consisting of artists, many of them famous in Sweden. The event was widely circulated as a race scandal on the Internet and through YouTube as a film clip.

Some days later, the National Association of African Swedes called the event a racist spectacle and asked for the minister's resignation, and thereafter the debate erupted (Karlsson 2012). In the ensuing debate the Swedish Artists' National Organisation and a more or less completely unanimous Swedish media defended the artist and his blackface cake as being radically antiracist. The overarching argument coming from almost solely white voices was that Linde is using a racialized stereotype and manipulates it so that it can be used in an antiracist way (Momodou 2012). However, the National Association of African Swedes was alone as an organisation criticizing the event, Linde and his art, with the sole exception of the Antiracist Academy, an association of antiracist researchers in Sweden. Some weeks after the event, Linde invited the public to a performance at a gallery in downtown Stockholm where he painted anyone who wanted in blackface. The performance was co-organised by Linde's friend, Alexander Bard, a gay icon and pop artist in Sweden, and famous for openly defending his right to use the Swedish N-word as long as his "brother", most probably meaning Linde, refers to himself that way (Eriksson Henrik 2011).

The cake event and the subsequent performance became Linde's breakthrough on the art scene, both in Sweden and globally, and the prices of his blackface art works increased dramatically. After the event, although he is only a little over 30 years old, he held a retrospective exhibition at the an art gallery in Stockholm where literally thousands of his blackface art pieces were for sale. Linde became the beloved favourite of the white cultural and academic establishment and was praised as one of the most radical antiracists in the country. The largest circulating Swedish newspaper liberal *Dagens Nyheter* published several long articles and interviews with Linde and about his blackface art and nominated him for *Dagens Nyheter's* cultural prize, while describing the cake and the artist as being "deeply antiracist", and so did the magazine *Expo* which is without any competition Sweden's leading and most established antiracist voice (Hübinette & Räterlinck 2012). When Swedes of colour, most of them of African origin, criticized Linde, and his art, for spreading and reproducing stereotypes of Africans, and for lacking any social and political connection to other black Swedes, as well as, for endorsing white racist humour, they were called "extremists" and "censorship supporters" or simply accused of not understanding art at all, and the debate became known as *tårtgate* (cakegate).

A third debate which raged in Sweden in 2012, and which possibly was the most aggravated and also aggressive one as children were in the focus, concerned the illustrator and

artist Stina Wirsen and one of her characters from her children's books. Wirsen's children's books have for many years been respected and popular, particularly among educated leftist and liberal-minded Swedes who see themselves as militant antiracists – this also may explain why she received so much support from this demographic group in the debate. In September 2012, Wirsen's animated film for small children, *Liten Skär och alla små Brokiga* (Little Pink and the Motley Crew), premiered at several Folkets bio cinemas (People's cinema – a network of leftist cinemas) around the country, with the world-famous actor Stellan Skarsgård as one of its voices – it included some of her children's book characters.

The film contained four characters depicting one white girl, Little Pink, and three children of colour of whom one represents a black girl, Lilla Hjärtat (Little Heart), and who closely resembles the US American racial stereotype of a black child known as a picaninny. Lilla Hjärtat is wild and uncontrollable in the film, she even tries to eat one of the other children, a character which seemingly is supposed to be an adopted Asian boy named Bosse, and who is portrayed as being weak, sensitive and feminine. Already before the premier, as the picaninny-like character Lilla Hjärtat was depicted on the film poster, mainly Swedes with an African origin began to criticize Wirsen and her film on Facebook and on the Internet by pointing out how hurtful such a stereotype is to black people (see, for example, Touray 2012).

Soon the media picked up the critique on Facebook, and thereafter the debate on Stina Wirsen's character Lilla Hjärtat started in the public sphere, and became particularly heated as it concerned children's culture questioning what the needs and perspectives of children may look like. While Wirsen and her supporters defended the character by saying that children of colour in Sweden need to be more represented in children's culture in general to be able to reflect themselves and feel included, Swedes with an African origin and parents with black children instead pointed out that children of colour will not be able to discover themselves in a stereotype even if the intention is explicitly antiracist (Polite 2012a). Wirsen was heavily supported by the white dominated cultural elite of Sweden, especially within the media and the art world, and her critics were said to be "aggressively violent" by the chief editor of *Dagens Nyheter's* cultural section, Björn Wiman, who also lamented the withdrawal of the character from the film poster which was one consequence of the debate, by using a Swedish proverb which says that something disappears as "if removing all sugar from the soft drink" ("om allt socker tas bort ur saften") (Wiman 2012).

Margareta Rönnerberg, a film scholar within the study of children's culture has published a monograph analysing the whole debate, and arguing that Lilla Hjärtat is not a racial stereotype but signifies an animal, possibly a mole, when children interpret the character Lilla Hjärtat (Rönnerberg 2013). In her book, Rönnerberg even calls this adult-centred attitude "adultonormativity", and condemns Wirsén's critics not just for being exaggerating extremists, but also as adults who do not take into account children's own interpretations. Finally, at the end of the debate, when Wirsén announced that she would stop drawing the character Lilla Hjärtat in new books due to the criticism, it turned out that the Swedish Institute, (which is a part of Sweden's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the equivalent of British Council and Goethe Institute) was cooperating with Wirsén outside Sweden. The institute had used some of her stereotypical characters printed on products targeted for children in Japan and in other countries as part of its design project called "Sweden in style", as a way of branding Sweden as a multicultural and antiracist country (Polite 2012b).

Conclusion: A nation in crisis

Swedish antiracism differs from other forms of antiracism, for example, from antiracism in the US, which Matthew Hughey (2010, 2012), John Hartigan, (2000), Eileen O'Brien (2009) among others have studied. When returning to the notion of antiracism being the core national ethos of Sweden and the perceived essence of Swedishness, and of antiracism constituting Swedish hegemonic whiteness in contemporary Sweden, it is important to note that difference. In the US and in the English speaking world in general, including in countries like Canada and Australia, there is a history of colonialism, genocide and slavery, and of the civil rights and social movements that were led by the minorities themselves, white antiracism emerges within these contexts from a position of guilt and apology and from a conviction of white privilege. Unlike Swedish society, these societies therefore must actively strive for altering the power relations between their majority population and their minorities (see, for example, McGonegal 2009). At the same time, it is true that white antiracists in the US may sometimes also unintentionally strengthen and reproduce racist structures as well as essentialising whiteness itself (Eichstedt 2001; Marty 1999). Furthermore, white antiracism may on the surface seem to fight for the same cause in the English-speaking world as in Sweden. However, there are several fundamental differences that have to be taken into account.

To begin, in a country where upwards to 95% of the population perceive themselves as being antiracist or even non-racist, and where antiracism is as taken for granted and as naturalised within the national psyche as being, for example, for democracy and against dictatorship, and which the vast majority of all Swedes without doubt also are, it is not easy neither to discuss issues related to race nor experiences of everyday racism at all in the public sphere, and it has become more difficult after the 2001 abolishment of the word *race* itself from Swedish language (Huddleston, Niessen, Ni Chaoimh & White 2011; Mella, Palm & Bromark 2011). Contrary to the sense of postcolonial and post-civil rights guilt which is very much the basis for antiracism in the English speaking world, dominant Swedish antiracism does not relate to Sweden as having played a part in colonialism, and racism is mainly connected to other countries such as the US, Germany and South Africa.

Further, as Swedishness is intertwined with whiteness to the extent that it is almost impossible to distinguish between them, antiracism becomes a part of a chain of equivalence. According to the logics of discourse analysis: Swedishness is whiteness and Swedishness is antiracism, and in the end all white Swedes are antiracists (Hübinette & Lundström 2011). Consequently, as non-whites are not seen as Swedish and are not allowed to become fully Swedes, it also becomes impossible for them to occupy the position of antiracists, at least on the same ‘advanced’ level as white Swedes. Instead, at best they can become minority subjects who fight prejudices within their own group such as sexism and homophobia, and at worst they are seen as intolerant and narrow-minded because they are minorities and limited by their ‘culture’. In the very worst case they are just seen as being inherently aggressive, violent and atavistically fanatical. The outcome is that minority Swedes cannot be antiracists to the same extent as majority Swedes – it is a privileged white position, which mainly and almost only white Swedes can occupy and speak and act from.

This understanding of hegemonic Swedish whiteness makes it possible to read the recent public discussions on racial stereotypes from a perspective which does not just see the defenders as being simply old-fashioned colonial style racists or looks upon the critics as being nothing but aggressive minority extremists. Instead, I find it both more constructive, as well as, more valid to analyse the majority defence of racial stereotypes as a majority defence of Swedish antiracism itself, and in the end as a defence of the ideal of antiracist Sweden and of Sweden itself. I also find it more constructive to understand the critique of the stereotypes coming from Swedes of colour as a claim to be included within a Swedishness which until

now has excluded them due to the hegemonic Swedish whiteness which equalises Swedishness, whiteness and antiracism. This analysis may help to explain both why so many white Swedes desperately cling to some of these stereotypes, as well as, the equally desperate frustration that is expressed by Swedes of colour when they want majority Swedes to understand that the very same stereotypes that they defend and fight to preserve are hurtful and demeaning to them.

In other words, I contend that the recent escalation of debates concerning racial stereotypes in language and visual culture, and the inability of white Swedes to recognise their privileges and entitlements and to give up their claims to authority and their management of the public sphere, can be understood as antiracism in crisis. It represents a people that cannot assimilate and accommodate an increasingly diverse and multiracial Sweden. In this vein, there are similarities to debates on racial stereotypes in other Nordic countries, such as the one that followed the republication of the children's rhyme "The Ten Little Negros" in Iceland in 2007, and which Kristín Loftsdóttir (2013) analyses as an attempt to dehistoricize and disconnect Icelandic whiteness from a racist history.

Furthermore, it can also be maintained that this might be the specific Swedish version of the pan-European so-called crisis of multiculturalism (see the introduction to this book), although it is again important to remind the reader that no leading Swedish politician has spoken out against either diversity, multiculturalism nor immigration, given the specificity of Swedish whiteness and Swedish antiracism. By contrast, these Swedish debates on racial stereotypes and their outcomes return to the same roots as the perceived crises of multiculturalism in other European countries, in the sense that they are not about a crisis involving the minorities themselves but a fundamental crisis on an existential level regarding the self-representation of the white majority society itself. The crisis of multiculturalism is therefore on a deeper level a crisis of whiteness. In the Swedish case it may therefore be possible to say that the Swedish version of a crisis of multiculturalism is about the start of the breaking down of the master narrative of Sweden and of the Swedes as the most antiracist country and people in the world.

In the future, to be able to break up the deadlock situation regarding the contesting views on racial stereotypes in Sweden which produces so many destructive emotions and which risk exacerbating the antagonism between the majority population and the minorities

even more, it is therefore crucial to deconstruct the current hegemonic Swedish whiteness and the self-image of antiracist Sweden. It is also necessary to open up for a new Swedishness which includes Swedes of colour as well, and which also makes it possible for them to be able to speak from a position as antiracists, and which does not render them designations like aggressive extremists and aggravated censorship supporters. However, for this to happen majority Swedes must relinquish their fear of losing control over the discourse on and interpretation of racial stereotypes, which ultimately can be translated as a fear of losing a particular antiracist Swedishness which has bestowed them with the power and the monopoly to decide both what racism is and what it looks like and what antiracism is and means in contemporary Sweden. The 15 or so public debates on racial stereotypes that have raged in Sweden from 2011, and which have divided the country and created a public atmosphere of frustration and distrust, as well as. of rage and hate, are not just symptoms of an antiracism and a nation in crisis. The aftermath of these debates is also the beginning of the dismantling of a hegemonic Swedish whiteness which is out-dated and not fit for the new multiracial Sweden. These are the first steps towards the construction of a new antiracism and a new Swedishness which in both cases are separate from being solely a white business.

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