

A NATIONALISM OF GOOD INTENTIONS

Dilemmas of Inclusion and Exclusion



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Nationalist fantasies among Swedish Kurds

When analysing the focus group with Swedish Kurds discussing nationhood and ethnicity, the concept of fantasy helps us to see the role of *affect* in national and ethnic identification. A good example here is Hassan, who often comes back to the importance of subjective feelings, saying “it’s all about emotions”. He says if there is someone or something that makes you feel bad – for instance as a Kurd in Iran he does not feel that he is treated well – then one will react to that. But there are some Kurds in Turkey who identify with Turkey and a sense of ‘Turkishness’¹⁶, who really hate Kurdish activists, he says. Hassan’s example clearly shows that we need to take into account emotions such as love and hatred, and the following section will show how the fantasy approach is helpful to shed light on these affective dimensions.

When asked how they relate to the Swedish-Kurd identity that I had ascribed them, they took this ascription to be unproblematic. Özlem responded that this was the identity that she used the most when describing herself. Hassan said that he did not see being Kurdish and Swedish as conflicting identities, but for him the issue was between the identities of either being Kurdish or Iranian. For Hassan, he enjoys watching the Swedish team playing football, but he never feels happy when Iran is playing. Hiwa agrees. He says he never felt Iraqi; he feels more Swedish than he ever felt Iraqi. This indicates that in the cases of the Iranian and Iraqi nation-states, there is a *theft of enjoyment* (Žižek 1993), something that prevents them from enjoying their identities as Kurds. When it comes to the Swedish nation-state, there is not a Swedish identity blocking the enjoyment of their Kurdishness – though, as Özlem points out, this might differ between first and second generation Kurds. While Hassan and Hiwa immigrated to Sweden as young adults, Özlem was born in Sweden. As a second generation Swede, it bothers her when people question her Swedishness. Such a tendency is also found by Alinia and Eliassi in their comparison between the experiences of two generations of the Kurdish diaspora in Sweden, where young people, who were born or brought up in Sweden, felt a stronger attachment to the country as well as claims to social power and space compared to the older generation (Alinia and Eliassi 2014: 75). While they note that it is common for the younger generation to say that “I am a Swede” there is also an awareness of not always being regarded as a Swede by mainstream society. As ‘immigrants’, they all have negative experiences of discrimination and exclusion (p.76). While the Kurdish identity in Sweden cannot be fully separated from the identity as an immigrant group, the present study is more interested in the Kurds in their position as Kurds, i.e. not primarily as an instance of an immigrant community but as a particular ethnic

¹⁶ The Turkish word *Türkiyelilik* which is referred to here could also be translated as ‘Turkey-ness’ or a person from Turkey, which is an attempt to create a more inclusive term for citizens in Turkey who may not identify as ‘Turks’.

community. The context for this study is also one in which I have already ascribed to them the label, 'Swedish Kurds'. Moreover, compared to the mainstream Swedish-Kurdish population, my participants are not only part of the Kurdish elite, but also in comparison to the Swedish population at large, part of a social strata with high education and a position within society from which they can speak their mind and expect to be heard.

The participants were also asked how they relate to the other identity that I had ascribed them, that is as Kurdish activists in the diaspora, as well as how they think about Kurdish activists with other ethnic origins. The following conversation took place between the two participants with origins in Kurdistan-Turkey, when they were asked if somebody who is an ethnic Swede or an ethnic Turk could be a part of the Kurdish diaspora:

Serdar: Yes, if they want to be part of the Kurdish struggle, then of course... And there are many Turks in different organisations... So it is a rather simple question, if they are humanist then they can join.

Özlem: We wish that they are allowed to join, the ideal is that everybody can join, anyone who is committed to the Kurdish question. But in reality we are more appreciative of an ethnic Swede than an ethnic Turk or an Iraqi. Because we are a little suspicious of them bearing in mind that they have been the regimes of oppression.

Here we can understand how the notion of theft is relevant in explaining how the Kurdish identity relates to the two different 'host- and homeland' contexts. While Swedishness as an identity is not seen a threat, the Turkish and Iraqi identities are regarded with suspicion, or as potential thieves of their enjoyment.

A decisive moment in the focus group took place when Dilan, the participant from Kurdistan-Syria, known as *Rojava*, related to her Assyrian friends here in Sweden, who come from the same city in northern Syria. The Assyrians are a Christian community whose homeland coincides with that of Kurdistan, with the significant difference being that they are numerically much fewer.

When it comes to my non-ethnic Kurdish friends, "friends of Kurds", the question becomes: what you think about an independent Kurdistan? (...) I think about my Assyrian friends who I have been friends with here in Sweden for many years. We are from the same city. Where do you think that I should live if you want a Kurdistan, I do not want a Kurdistan, she says.

What Dilan implies is that a Kurdistan would not be desired among its own ethnic minorities. Here something happened in the room, for a second or so it was as though nobody knew how to 'go on'. However, this was a quick moment, then the conversation continued:

Özlem: Did you end your friendship then?

Dilan: No! We are still friends. And I can tolerate it. [...] But the discussion stops there. I want a Kurdistan for Kurds, but in that country there are of course other minorities too.

For Glynos and Howarth, the moment of dislocation is a moment when it is registered, either by the researcher or the subject, that something is not right (2007: 143). I interpret the moment when Dilan relates to her Assyrian friends as a quick moment of dislocation, immediately followed by a moment of closure - what Glynos and Howarth call the ideological dimension of social relations (2007: 120). The ethical dilemma that Dilan describes is precisely the paradox that I had in mind when setting up a focus group with Swedish Kurds: on the one hand, it seems perfectly legitimate to claim that the Kurdish population should have access to the full replete of cultural rights, with which only a nation-state of their own could provide them, but on the other hand the nation-state logic poses a dilemma for how to deal with the demands by ethnic minorities, which is something that – as Kurds – they are very well aware of.

When asked how they feel about the Kurds as an ethnic majority in KRG, which is a *de facto* state, the respondents did not seem to understand my question. Their answers regarded the four parts of a united grand Kurdistan, and their problem was how the Kurds can (or cannot) unite in order to become an ethnic majority. Hassan points to the fact that not even KRG is united but is effectively ruled by the two major political parties. However, he says the more KRG looks like a nation-state, the more his Kurdish identity is recognised, which is a good feeling. After specifying my question about the Kurdish ethnic majority in KRG specifically, Dilan, who has spent a lot of time there, says that one can feel that KRG behaves like a nation-state. She feels particularly proud of how well the Kurds treat the Arab refugees from Syria and southern Iraq and feels that the Kurds have shown that they are 'better' than their former oppressors. Serdar says that he feels a sense of responsibility when thinking about the Kurds as the ones in charge. Now we mustn't do anything wrong, he says. Before the only thing we thought about was the struggle, but now we have responsibility, and those Kurds in charge must behave. Dilan points out that due to the war against ISIS - a common enemy - the nationalist feeling has become stronger in Kurdistan. She talks about this in a positive way. However, 'nationalism' does not always have this positive connotation for them, not even when talking about Kurdish nationalism. Hassan frequently makes a divide between traditional Kurdish nationalists (KRG) and more leftist-minded Kurds (Rojava). He claims that the reason Rojava does not use the name Kurdistan is because it wants to distance itself from KRG and become another sort of nation-state, something better.

Hiwa, from Iraqi Kurdistan, says that he is trying to contribute to a more democratic KRG. He emphasises the importance of the constitution, cultural diversity, the rights of women and children, etc. He says that Kurdistan should not become another Iran, Iraq or Turkey, but a proper democracy. In this way, his vision for Kurdistan equates to the vision of a democracy where human rights, including women's rights and the rights of LGBTQ-persons, are respected. Hassan adds that Kurdistan gives him a sense of pride and identity, especially when he thinks about for instance female *peshmerga* fighters who are fighting ISIS. However, he contends, the content of Kurdistan is more important than the symbol: the most important thing for him is democracy, women's rights, social justice and equality. The quote below captures well this fantasy of Kurdistan as the image of 'something different':

If we Kurds are oppressed, and we are, if we create a Kurdistan... The closest we have come is northern Iraq, that is the closest we have come to an independent Kurdistan. Because of that I put a lot of value in that it must work, it should be the role model. But if we are going to continue a mechanism of oppression that the other countries have done to us, against the other minorities that live in different parts of Kurdistan, such as Turkomans, Christians or Assyrians. Then we are not better than Saddam or Erdogan. Then I do not want to have such a Kurdistan. We are obliged to seek something entirely different than what we have been through.

Özlem

The others agree with Özlem, but Serdar adds that the second territory controlled by Kurds, Rojava, is more popular than KRG among Kurdish youths in his experience. Because there is pluralism there, he says, both in terms of issues such as LGBTQ but also when it comes to the Assyrians. Serdar says that Rojava is the closest to utopia we have come; no ethnic oppression exists there. Serdar's usage of the word *utopia* here is noteworthy in relation to the image of 'something different'; an order that would be 'good for everyone'. Ruth Levitas writes that "the core of utopia is the desire for being otherwise, individually and collectively, subjectively and objectively. Its expressions explore and bring to debate the potential content and context of human flourishing." (Levitas 2013: xi) While utopias are often dismissed as dangerous fantasies leading to totalitarianism, Levitas argues that utopias are the expression of a desire for a better way of living and as such are interwoven in human culture (ibid xii-xiii). This is also in line with the beatific dimension of fantasy: the promise of a fullness-to-come, present in social movements such as the Kurdish struggle for independence.

An inclusionary Sweden and the Sami minority

So far our conversation had been focused mainly on Kurdistan, and this last part has dealt particularly with their vision for Kurdistan. After this passage, I interrupted them and shifted their focus, asking them about their vision of Sweden. Özlem mentions her engagement in the local community in a suburb of Stockholm, where they prefer to talk about 'interculturality' rather than multiculturalism.

My vision for Sweden is not the multiculturalism of the 70s and 80s, because for me multiculturalism means that the Iranians can have their culture undisturbed, the Kurds have their culture, and the Pakistanis have theirs. But when are they cooperating, when are they together? What we have in common is that we all live in Sweden.

In Özlem's vision of Sweden, she refers to the territory of Sweden as a place where everybody should have the right to belong. Having discussed their vision of Sweden, I once again changed the focus asking the following: What is the difference between being a Swede and Kurd (Swedish Kurd/Kurdish Swede) and a Swede and Sami (Swedish Sami/Sami Swede)? The reason for raising the Sami question at this juncture in the group discussion was to provoke a sudden awareness of a discrepancy between the ideals of integration in Sweden vis-a-vis the insistence on a separate Kurdish identity within the dominant states in the Kurdish regions. While there was some form of puzzlement among the participants when the Sami question was brought into the discussion, this was rather a moment of surprise - since I had not told them we would discuss this issue beforehand - than a moment of dislocation that I had expected. In other words, there was no awkwardness felt in the room. The following discussion took place after the short moment of surprise:

The difference is that we have recently come to Sweden, but they are the original population here. They deserve having more rights and attention from the state, the media, and so on. We are new here, but they have been here already before the Swedes.

Hiwa

Serdar agrees with Hiwa and adds:

They have their original territory here but we do not. In a way, it feels like we can integrate more easily, or we have to choose to become integrated. But since they are still in their country, and since Sweden has chosen not to separate from Samiland, then all of Sweden is their country. So then they need to preserve their culture, or they should be able to preserve their culture, and there should be more acceptance of this compared to the Kurdish culture, in Sweden.

The discussion between Hiwa and Serdar characteristically reflects Will Kymlicka's influential theory of 'liberal multiculturalism'. Kymlicka distinguishes between 'national minorities' and 'ethnic groups'. National minorities are defined as previously self-governing, territorially concentrated cultural groups that have been incorporated into a larger state. Ethnic groups are defined as cultural groups that have immigrated to a state. He argues that national minorities generally want to preserve their own and distinct society alongside the majority culture, while ethnic groups typically want to integrate into the majority culture (1995: 10). In Kymlicka's terminology then, whereas the Sami in Sweden constitute a national minority, Swedish Kurds constitute an ethnic group with less right than the Sami, so the argument goes, to preserve their particular culture in Sweden. However, Dilan points out that the Kurdish culture and language has been able to flourish thanks to the Swedish state:

But I have to say, Sweden has really helped preserving the Kurdish culture and develop the Kurdish language. I think that Sweden is one of the countries in Europe where the Kurds have been able to thrive, it will go into the history textbooks (...) The mother tongue education, all the Kurdish writers (...) Kurmanji has developed in exile, I find it fascinating (...) And Sweden has provided this opportunity.

Dilan

Hiwa then again contends that the Sami deserve more than the Kurds, in Sweden. Is he implying Swedish Kurds are almost enjoying themselves at the expense of the Sami? On the one hand, there is a clear feeling of gratitude towards Sweden embracing the cultural development among Kurds in exile, as expressed above. But at same time there was a feeling among the participants that Sweden should perhaps do more for its indigenous Sami population, and there was almost a sense of guilt among the Swedish-Kurdish activists. When the Sami question was brought up, Dilan stated the following:

In fact, it is the only occasion when I feel ashamed of being a Swede, of being someone from Sweden.

Further on in our conversation, I told the participants about a statement made by the Sami singer Sofia Jannok, where she said "I do not want the right to be Swedish, I want the right to be Sami". What do you make of that statement, I asked them?

Hassan: Well, it depends on how one defines Swede, if one means ethnic Swede, well I can never be an ethnic Swede. But when I think of Iran, and being a Persian or a Kurd, then I want to have the right to be a Kurd, and then I understand her. [...]

Özlem: [...] If she defines herself as a Sami then one has to respect that.

Serdar: But she might not get the opportunity to be Sami. Perhaps, if she has children, do they get schooling in the Sami language? [...] Perhaps Sweden does not allow her to be as much Sami as she wants.

Özlem: Then it is like Kurds in those countries, we are not allowed to be Kurds.

Serdar: Exactly, one is not provided the right conditions.

The shift away from talking about their visions of Kurdistan and Sweden to exploring the differences between Kurds and Sami in the Swedish context, and then finally reflecting on the similarities between Sami in Sweden and Kurds in Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey, is an interesting discussion to follow. I have argued that the notion of enjoyment and its theft are useful to understand the construction of this narrative. A free Kurdistan (or a number of free Kurdistans) is imagined as a means to enjoy their Kurdishness, something which is currently stolen by the dominant states of Turkey and Iran, and still to a certain extent by Iraq and Syria. Sweden, on the other hand, is not seen as stealing enjoyment; instead the Swedish and Kurdish multiple identities are seen as additive. Which is to say, the Swedish national identity is not understood as a threat to enjoying ethnic Kurdishness, but rather the opposite; the Swedish state has helped to develop the Kurdish language and thereby to preserve the culture. At the same time, the participants can easily identify and sympathise with the Swedish Sami, feeling that the Swedish nation-state have detrimentally impacted on the possibility of the Sami community enjoying their identity; the Swedish state has 'stolen enjoyment' from the Sami population.

A fantasy of inclusion

This chapter has asked how Swedish Kurds negotiate the ideals of integration and inclusion in Sweden with the Kurdish struggle for independence, and moreover it has explored how they think about their position as 'victim minority' in the wider context of them wanting to become a dominant ethnic majority in Kurdistan. While it is relatively straightforward to defend the cultural rights of the Kurds in their position as an oppressed ethnic group in Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey, in situations where the Kurds constitute a dominant ethnic group, new questions are posed. The potential conflict between the abovementioned ideals did not arise since the Kurdish activists invest in what I call *a fantasy of inclusion*, where Kurdistan would be 'good for everybody'. In this way, they can align their ambitions for an inclusionary Sweden with the Kurdish struggle for independence. While other examples of nationalist fantasies are often pictured as malign nationalism, or racism (cf Žižek 1989), what I have tried to characterise here is a nationalist discourse, a nation-state logic, that we are all part of. The underlying argument is that the grip of the nation-state logic, which can be explained by the notion of fantasy, is valid also for emancipatory movements such as the Kurdish struggle for recognition in a world of nations. In order to stitch up the inconsistencies of their own ideological

system, to use Žižek's words (e.g. how we deal with members of the Assyrian minority who do not want to be part of a Kurdistan), the Kurdish activists invest in the idea of creating 'something different'. I have suggested that this utopic fantasy, promising an order that would be 'good for everybody', could be called a *fantasy of inclusion*. Instead of the ordinary exclusionary nationalism, it is an inclusionary – but nevertheless it remains a – nationalism.

In sum, I have argued that the concept of fantasy is helpful for our understanding of constructions of national and ethnic identity, particularly the affective bond underlying national identification. The position of Swedish Kurds – simultaneously part of an integrationist Swedish project and a Kurdish struggle that inevitably revolves around ethnic separation – helps to shed light on the normative implications of various claims to national and ethnic identity. The fantasy approach shows us how the affective grip of the nation-state works also in an emancipatory project, such as the Kurdish struggle for an independent state, and how creating a fantasy of inclusion helps to rationalise any inconsistencies in this project.

This chapter shows how it is difficult to make the imaginary move from a position as underdog to that of a group in a position of dominance, without it also impacting on how the very stakes of ethnicity are perceived. A minority/underdog ethnicity is not controversial. But, a majority/dominant ethnicity is viewed in a different light. The next chapter deals with a different dynamic – that of a former dominant minority and individuals who do not see themselves as underdogs because of the legacy of dominance, despite the fact that they now struggle to survive as a distinct group.

Chapter 4. Speaking the language of one's heart

This chapter works with the idea that we as humans want to express our identity, whether or not we belong to a majority or minority, and whether or not that identity is linked to privilege or under-privilege. Speaking the language of one's heart does not take outer structures into consideration, because it is personal and emotional. However, in relation to the paradigm of the nation-state, the will to self-expression is positioned in relation to the history of that nation-state, and as a shrinking linguistic minority it is ultimately about the very right to exist in the future. This chapter is about a movement from privilege to underprivilege and the justifications for a bilingual nation-state that are possible to make within a given structure. 'Speaking the language of my heart' is an expression taken from one of the participants from the focus group I held. As I shall argue in this chapter, because claiming the right to speak the language of one's heart appeared politically impossible to make on one's own, the Swedish-speaking Finns to whom I spoke tended to articulate the struggle to keep Swedish as an official language on the same level as Finnish as an altruistic case for the common good.

Swedish-speaking Finns

As a formerly dominant elite, the Swedish-speaking community in Helsinki might be conceptualised as a dominant minority (Kaufmann and Haklai 2008). While being a numerical minority, the Finnish constitution grants the Swedish-speaking Finns linguistic rights equal to that of the Finnish-speaking majority. However, these rights are increasingly questioned in Finland, and Swedish-speaking actors are therefore also increasingly pushed to defend their position. This chapter explores how Swedish-speaking actors, working for the formally bilingual Finland, make sense of the tension between the Swedish-speakers' dominant position as well as their perceived victimhood. Based on a focus group with members working for a Helsinki-based organisation, the chapter discusses how a normative defense of Finnish bilingualism is constructed and enquires into the sort of fantasies that function as 'legitimizers' of certain ideals. It also discusses the value of cultural survival of an ethno-linguistic group in relation to power – where the simultaneous dominant/victim position of the Swedish-speaking Finns offers an intriguing case.

When Finland became independent in 1917, it was after hundreds of years of Swedish as the administrative language. It was only in 1863, that Finnish and Swedish became equal and still in 1870 Swedish was the lingua franca in Finland. In 1920 the Swedish speakers made up 11 percent of the

population (Meinander 2016:9); today it is only 5-6 percent.¹⁷ Eric Kaufmann (2004) refers to the concept of *dominant ethnicity* as a particular ethnic group exercising dominance within a nation and/or state (p.3). A dominant ethnicity can be either an ethnic majority or it can also be a *dominant minority*. Kaufmann and Haklai define politically dominant minorities as “communally differentiated ruling groups who are able to govern majorities despite being demographically outnumbered.” Examples of these are for example Sunni Arabs in Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, who were a politically dominant minority, while the Arab Shi’ites, constituting the demographic majority, were the socially disadvantaged groups (2008: 746)¹⁸. Another example of a (formerly) dominant minority, then, are the Swedish-speakers in Finland. The paradox here is that, on the one hand, the Swedish speaking Finns enjoy one of the highest constitutional language rights in the world, especially considering the small number of this minority group. In fact, some would argue that the Swedish speakers in Finland are not strictly a minority at all, since according to the constitution, Swedish and Finnish are equal.¹⁹ On the other hand, the group is diminishing and in practice, many of their rights have been taken away from them. Indeed, the scenario that Swedish will be gone from the official sphere within a few generations is real, and as a consequence, it is a matter of the very survival of this cultural group.

A focus group with a Swedish-Speaking organisation in Finland

In the following sections, parts of the conversation that took place between myself and four women working for the continuous presence of the Swedish language in Finland will be presented, with the purpose of raising some bigger questions on the survival of separate cultural identities in today’s world of nations. These four women work for the same organisation, so in contrast to the Swedish Kurds in the previous focus group, who I described as ethno-political activists, what these four women have in common is their place of work. Both the organisation itself and the women remain anonymous. I have thus used the following pseudonyms: Christina, Maria, Anna and Hanna. As discussed in chapter 2, I treat my focus group as a conversation in which I participate. This fact needs to be reflected upon in reflexive research where the researcher strives to increase the awareness of the position of the researcher and how it affects the object of study (Gustavsson and Johannesson 2016: 20). That I am an ethnic Swede living in Sweden will inevitably affect the way

¹⁷ Statistikcentralen, “Finland i siffror 2020”, https://www.stat.fi/static/media/uploads/tup_sv/suoluk/yyti_fis_202000_2020_23213_net.pdf [last accessed 2021-09-21]

¹⁸ Along with the Kurds in northern Iraq.

¹⁹ Paragraph 17 of Finland’s constitution. Finlex, Finlands grundlag 11.6.1999/731, <https://www.finlex.fi/sv/laki/ajantasa/1999/1999073> [last accessed 2021-09-21].

we talk about nationhood, ethnicity and the Swedish language in Finland. The focus group took place in Helsinki on 2017-04-11. It lasted for two hours and was filmed.

“We are not working for the Swedish speaking Finns, but for the idea of a bilingual Finland”

It became obvious very quickly in the focus group discussion that the participants neither see themselves as ethno-political activists nor were they entirely comfortable with the idea of the Swedish-speaking identity as ethnic in character. Indeed, in the context of Swedish-speakers in Finland, language as an identity marker is looked upon as questionable as an ethnic marker. Being closely associated with phenotype and ancestry, ethnicity is viewed with suspicion. The organisation is working for the idea of a bilingual Finland, rather than ‘for’ the Swedish speaking Finns, which enables its members to detach from the idea of Swedish speaking Finns as an ethnic group. In this way, a bilingual Finland is promoted as a ‘common good’.

We work for a bilingual Finland, we don’t work *for* the Swedish-speaking Finns and their rights to keep their crayfish-parties.
Christina

One of the participants, Anna, contended that the Swedish speaking Finns should not be described as an ethnic group but a purely linguistic group since it is not necessarily connected with genetic ancestry. In contrast, for example, to the Sami minority.²⁰ Anna also points out that there is no Swedish speaking ethno-separatist movement in Finland:

We don’t have an ethno-political movement, we have a linguistic one.
Anna

However, another participant, Christina, who unlike Anna is not strictly from a (Finland)Swedish-speaking background, with a Finnish speaking father and a Sweden-Swedish mother, said she would describe the group as ethno-linguistic. She could perceive this in school. On the one hand, she says, the Swedish schools are the main site of socialisation for the Swedish speaking identity, but it was also there that she realised she was not related to the other Swedish speaking Finns. A third participant, Hanna, agrees:

²⁰ The Sami are an indigenous people who are spread over four nation-states: Norway, Sweden, Finland and a small area of Russia.

This becomes visible when one cannot take part in discussions about who is cousin to whom.

Hanna

The discussion reflects very well an unease with the idea of descent among theorists of liberal multiculturalism. In *Liberal Ethnicity*, Eric Kaufmann illustrates this, referring to the work of Will Kymlicka:

If ethnicity is not about shared ancestry, why the need to specify that 'ethnocultural' groups and 'polyethnicity' do not involve 'ethnic descent.' The problem is that Kymlicka is trying to square a circle. He knows that the empirical record shows an extremely close relationship between (putative) descent and what we understand as ethnicity, yet his liberal convictions will not allow him to endorse this definition of the term. In practice, however, he, along with other liberal culturalists, defends actual descent-based ethnic movements against the universalism of societies where descent is a less significant principle of social organisation. In this manner he is endorsing the practical advancement of the very principle (descent) that he abhors. (Kaufmann 2000: 20)

This illustrates how ethnicity is avoided by theorists as well as focus-group participants whenever it feels uncomfortable; when, for example, an ethnic group is a majority, in a dominant position or when it comes close to the notion of descent or exclusivity.

Horrific and beatific fantasies

Among the participants, the overall horrific fantasy foretells a situation where the Swedish language has vanished entirely from the public sphere in Finland. The beatific fantasy promises a bilingual Finland where the Swedish language can persist as a public language or even expand through the socialisation of new Swedish speakers through the school system. In this dream scenario, Swedish will be an inclusive identity marker possible to adapt by newcomers to Finland as well as Finnish-speakers. Anna says her real fear is that the "evil" nationalism will take over in Finland, that people of migrant background will be thrown out of the country, and that the Swedish speakers will be pushed to move to Sweden. Hannah says that attitudes towards Swedish is connected to being able to speak freely – of encouraging openness in general – and a Finland for everybody. One can therefore view the language question as an expression of a fantasy with two sides that goes beyond the question of language itself. On the horrific side, we have an evil nationalism that could

potentially throw out of the country people who do not belong to the Finnish majority population. On the beatific side, there is the idea of freedom, openness and inclusivity. An underlying assumption of the beatific fantasy is the idea of an inherent value in cultural and linguistic pluralism. The Swedish language is also seen as an inclusive identity marker that newcomers to Finland can take on, since the school system – with entirely Swedish schools - functions as a strong socialising institution. Immigrants and children with migrant backgrounds tend, if they go to Swedish-speaking schools, to adopt this identity.

Christina says there is no problem with inclusion with regard to immigrants learning Swedish, since they do not pose a threat to the position of the Swedish language in Finland, but rather the opposite. The problem arises when deciding on how to include Finnish-speakers, to what extent they can be included if Swedish in Finland is to remain a separate culture, alongside the majority Finnish. She says she would like a Swedish Finland that is inclusive, also towards Finnish-speakers. But nonetheless there must be some form of separation for Swedish to survive.

There is no problem with immigrants, but how much can one give up in relation to the Finnish-speakers? How much separation must there be in order to preserve Swedish?

Here is a situation in which the ‘theft of enjoyment’ (Žižek 1993) becomes relevant. Whereas those immigrants who adopt the Swedish language and the identity of a Swedish-speaking Finn pose no threat to the native Swedish speakers in Finland, the presence and inclusion of a person from the Finnish-speaking majority in a Swedish-speaking space has the potential of eradicating the Swedish altogether, should they have to switch to a language that everybody speaks. At this point I ask them why it would be important for the Swedish language to survive in Finland in 100 years, and for whom is this issue important? Maria, who comes from *Österbotten* in the northwest of Finland – a Swedish majority region – says that for her the answer is emotional. She would like to pass on the Finland-Swedish culture because she likes it more, because it is part of her and makes her feel at home. I asked if they would like to preserve Swedish for their own sake, or if it is for the sake of their future descendants.

It’s for my own sake of course, because I like to be a Swedish-speaking Finn and I prefer the Swedish-speaking culture to the Finnish simply because it is my own and because it is there that I feel at home. So it is natural for me to want my children, grandchildren and their children to belong to this culture.

Anna mentions the value of linguistic pluralism and pluralism in general. Different languages generate different modes of thinking, she argues, and in turn, gives other perspectives. Christina

adds that the existence of two national languages gives – at least those who are bilingual – an awareness of there being more than one perspective. She says she wishes for everyone to have this experience, as it encourages tolerance and open-mindedness.

Power – domination and victimhood

I asked the participants how they felt about the idea of coming from a privileged position into a position of victimhood. They responded in unison: even though there is fear connected to losing language rights, Swedish speaking Finns are by no means victims. The Swedish speaking Finns have many resources and can therefore should not be described as “real” victims, such as the Kurds or the Sami populations. However, there is simultaneously a growing resentment shown towards Swedish speakers among the majority population in Finland. For the Swedish speaking youth going home with public transportation at night it is not always safe to speak Swedish without risking to hear “hurri” – a derogatory term for Swedish speakers. “The colonial ghost” is internalised among participants. They are well aware of the existence of a group of Swedish speakers in the Helsinki region that still act with a sense of entitlement, always demanding service in Swedish even in places like a coffee shop, and acting as if they own the world. Anna says this small group of upper-class Swedish speakers detrimentally affect all other, “normal” Swedish speakers. The other participants agree that there is a form of defense involved in being a Swedish speaker, a need to express that “I am not like them”. The resentment towards Swedish is often connected to the mandatory Swedish in schools, known as *pakkoruotsi* – “forced Swedish” – among its critics. There is a growing belief in Finland that Swedish should be made optional as a school subject. Anna says that for many of these critics, having a separate Swedish school system is fine, as long as they themselves are not forced to learn Swedish in their own schools. I ask the participants what would be worse; if they lose general school Swedish or if they lose their own, separate Swedish schools. Hannah responds that she would prefer a situation where a few learn Swedish voluntarily and well, rather than many learning it badly and by force. However, if the separate Swedish schools disappear, so will probably Swedish as a public language in Finland. Christina says:

It is a fact that the percentage of Swedish-speakers in Finland is decreasing so we have grown up with the idea that there is a risk that we will be fewer and that we will be displaced (...) the feeling is that there is a threat, and that we must protect the Swedish language for it to continue to live.²¹

²¹ My own translations from Swedish to English.

The right to speak the language of one's heart

Before the order of nation states was established, different languages were spoken by the elites and the masses without any thought of the need for a single language shared by everybody and a public sphere in which 'the people' could participate as equals. The Swedish language in Finland rests from those times. In Swedish Finland today, the language question can be narrowed down to one single question: will Swedish survive as an official language or will it eventually disappear? In order to construct a legitimate defense of the survival of the Swedish language as an official language in Finland, one must invoke ideals such as equality, a common good, the value of pluralism and inclusion. In the focus group conversation with Swedish speakers working for a bilingual Finland, a beatific fantasy of open-mindedness, freedom of speech and inclusion of immigrants is inflected by focusing on the language question.

In our liberal democratic societies, provided that we adhere to the principles of equality, there is a desire for a fair and equal distribution of power. Ethnic politics is usually about power asymmetries between groups, and typically ethnic minorities are fighting to gain equal powers with that of the majority. In the case of Swedish speakers in Finland, a minority group once privileged to the extent that their power was one of domination, they now face a situation where they experience a gradual loss of that power. The horrific fantasy among Swedish speakers portrays a future scenario where Swedish as a language, and their Swedish identity, will be lost in Finland. Or even worse, that Finland will become a country of "evil" nationalism pushing away all forms of plurality. Simplified, then, the fantasy legitimising the struggle for Swedish and a bilingual Finland, goes beyond the language question. The beatific fantasy foretells a future of openness, whereas the horrific version speaks of destruction of pluralism in all its forms. This fantasy of openness thus obscures the emotional preference underneath – the desire to speak the language of one's heart.

This chapter shows that, because the idea of Swedish-speaking Finns as an ethnic group is somewhat uncomfortable for the participants in the focus group, as well as the former power inequality between the Swedish-speaking dominant minority and the Finnish speaking majority, their work for the Swedish language in Finland is framed as a higher good for everyone in Finland. The next chapter works with a different kind of empirical material than the former two chapters. In chapter 5, we will see how ethnicity disrupts taken for granted 'common truths' that are embedded in the discourse of nations in a number of different ways.

Chapter 5. Public debates on national identity and minorities

This chapter uses selected media debates to illustrate ideas of inclusion as a taken-for-granted virtue, and exclusion based on national boundaries that are taken-for-granted as inevitable. The purpose in this chapter is to deconstruct the logic of the nationalism of good intentions I have already discussed. Here the aim is not to paint a picture that claims to be representative of the debate at this time, nor is it to claim to be representative of the groups that are mentioned – as they are internally heterogeneous – but to use the example of positions such as ‘indigenous and territorially attached’ and ‘nomadic and territorially detached’ to discuss dilemmas of the nation-state. This chapter also touches on the awkwardness of ethnic majority identity, which the fantasy of the nationalism of good intentions ends up obscuring.

This chapter shows examples of how ethnicity and nation are articulated together with the different positions ‘Sami’, ‘ethnic Swede’, ‘Roma’ and ‘EU-migrant’. I have chosen these particular positions here because they help us to glimpse the problems of inclusion within a national community that is supposedly ethnically neutral. Kymlicka’s distinction between indigenous national minorities and ethnic groups that have immigrated is not unproblematic, but it does pinpoint some of the flaws which arise when questions around integration are solely framed in terms of immigration. The examples of how ethnicity and nation are articulated together with the Sami as an indigenous people, ethnic Swedes as the majority, Roma as a national minority, and EU-migrants as a particular type of immigrants, are taken from a number of selected media debates among Swedish politicians and social commentators from the years between 2012 and 2015. The political landscape in Sweden has changed considerably since this time; after the refugee crisis of 2015 the discourse has been significantly altered. However, the examples from this chapter are still valid as illustrations of thinking where national inclusion hits rocky ground.

Nationhood and new and old minorities: The context of Sweden

In studies of nationalism and ethnicity, Sweden is often depicted as a homogenous nation that was nationalised early and unproblematically (Shall 2012: 1467). Therefore, questions surrounding the ambiguous nature of Swedish national identity are largely framed in terms of more recent migration flows. To make sense of Swedish multiculturalism and inclusion, the work of Karin Borevi (2002) is helpful. She traces the current Swedish “integration policy” from the present day back through to the 1960s. Bengtsson and Borevi argue that in the 1975 “immigrant policy” two contradictory logics can

be discerned: a “logic of inclusion”, which posits that immigrants must be provided with a standard of living equal to that of the majority population, and a “logic of minorities” which states that immigrants must be compensated culturally in the sense that they can retain their cultural identity on an equal standing with the majority (Bengtsson & Borevi 2016: 28-30). Both of these logics break with earlier nation-building policies of ethnic assimilation and segregation, which had been directed to the Sami population, an indigenous people whose homeland Sápmi stretches over the borders of Norway, Sweden, Finland and an area of Russia. In the late 1990s a new Swedish “integration policy” replaced the previous “immigrant policy,” which contended that the latter not only essentialised ethnic groups but that it also had a stigmatising effect. Borevi shows that, already from the 1980s, Sweden pioneered the current retreat – witnessed throughout Europe – from ‘multiculturalist’ policies towards one of ‘integration’, according to which the logic of inclusion became the dominant position (Borevi 2010: 23-24). Other scholars such as Schierup and Ålund (1991), Magnus Dahlstedt (2005), Masoud Kamali (2006) among others have also written critically about integration policy and structural discrimination of immigrants in Sweden. However, these are mainly focused on issues dealing with a multicultural population due to migration. Old minorities – or ‘homeland ethnicity’ is discussed by scholars such as Will Kymlicka (1995) and Eric Kaufmann (2000) and in relation to the Swedish case there are for example Mörkenstam (1999) and Carlsson (2021) who discuss the Sami minority in relation to the Swedish state and majority culture, which is also the example that will be mentioned in the section below.

The Problem of Inclusion: Swedishness, the Sami and ethnic Swedes

In December 2015, there was a Swedish Public Television (SVT) report detailing new guidelines for a more inclusive language policy. In these guidelines one can read: “SVT News uses the term Swede to refer to everyone that holds Swedish citizenship. We prefer to use Swede to Swedish citizen in order not to differentiate between Swedes”.²² This statement is also exemplary of the discourse among established political parties in the Swedish parliament during this time, that is, all parties except the populist radical right party the Sweden Democrats (SD). This discourse is exemplified by the public debate that took place just months after the 2014 election when the SD had become the third largest party in parliament. SD member of parliament Björn Söder was appointed to the position of speaker

²² All translations are my own.

Anne Lagercrantz, “Nya språkråd för att bättre spegla hela Sverige”, Sveriges television (Svt) December 2015, <http://www.svt.se/svt-bloggen/bloggare/anne-lagercrantz/nya-sprakrad-for-att-battre-spegla-hela-sverige>, [last accessed 2016-05-12], the link no longer exists.

of parliament. In an interview with the Swedish daily *Dagens Nyheter* (DN), referencing an earlier statement that Söder had made, he was asked the following:

Journalist: What about those Swedes with multiple identities? You talk about the fact that we have people from 'other nations' living in Sweden.

Söder: Yes. There are for example people belonging to the Sami or Jewish nation in Sweden.²³

Following this statement, a heated debate ensued, and representatives from the other parties demanded that Söder should resign from his post as parliamentary speaker. Below is a transcription from a news report with Maria Ferm from the Green Party:

This is not about the fact that SD is against immigration, but the fact that they want to change Swedish society and that they believe that many Swedish citizens are not Swedes and do not belong to Swedish society. When you translate these beliefs into political ideas and policy, then it becomes very severe and unpleasant.

[...] it feels totally unreasonable that a person who does not even know who the Swedish population are, are to represent the entirety of the Swedish population.²⁴

This debate shows how it is taken for granted that the Sami should be understood as Swedish, or belonging to the Swedish nation, in the discourse of one of the established political parties. When Söder referred to the Jews and the Sami as belonging to other nations, the response made clear that the statement was deemed unacceptable. However, the SD is *already* looked upon as an illegitimate, xenophobic party, and certainly not a respectable partner for dialogue. One might expect a different response from someone from another subject position. Following this debate, a comment was made by Mattias Åhrén, a Sami lawyer specialising in international law:

I personally get even more concerned when everybody from all the other parties, from right to left, enter the debate from the position that the Sami are Swedes - because we are not. That is why we have a Sami Parliament, the right to education in the Sami language and special rights to land and natural resources.

He argues that it is basically a more dangerous argument to say that the Sami are Swedish.

Because it leads to assimilation and eventually it will lead to the disappearance of Sami culture.²⁵

²³ Niklas Orrenius, "Den leende nationalismen", *Dagens Nyheter* (DN) 14/12 2014, <http://www.dn.se/val/nyval-2015/den-leende-nationalismen> [last accessed 2021-09-20]

²⁴ Iva Horvatovic, "Söder: Jag är ledsen att jag har tillskrivits åsiker", *Dagens Nyheter* (DN) 15/12 2014, <http://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/soder> [last accessed 2021-09-20]

²⁵ Anna-Karin Niia, "Mattias Åhrén: Samer är inte svenskar", *Sveriges Television* (Svt) 16/12-2014, <http://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/mattias-ahren-samer-ar-inte-svenskar> [last accessed 2021-09-20]

This contribution to the debate was followed by a dislocatory moment for which the existing discourse could not account: Åhrén's statement seemed too confusing and in the absence of an explanation, there was silence. The main point here is not to offer any explanation though, but to illustrate my argument, embedded in the Swedish context. I have described the concept of nationalism of good intentions as the view that an inclusive national identity is benign, essentially because of its inclusivity. This view is largely shared by the established political parties in Sweden and there seems to be a tendency to therefore adopt a language whereby ethnic minorities are simply described as 'Swedes'. What Åhrén adds to the debate, and what can be described as a dislocatory moment in the dominant discourse, suggests that this inclusive language, despite its good intentions, prevents him from fully expressing his ethnic identity. In other words, the *common truth* that inclusion is good is being challenged by a person who represents the position that is intended to be included. A similar position was expressed in an article with the Sami singer and ethno-political activist Sofia Jannok.

Reporter: Finally, just so that we are just as clear as you are in your album. What is it that you want, what is it that you fight for?

Jannok: I do not want the right to be Swedish, I want the right to be Sami. I have never felt Swedish and this is no political statement, but we are a separate people. We want the right to land and water. We want self-determination.²⁶

What these statements talk about is not the problem of 'othering', as it is often framed in the discussions of inclusion of minorities that have immigrated. It is instead about the *right* to be 'other'. The possibility to have one's ethnic identity recognised, while living in a nation-state framework, is not the same for indigenous groups as many immigrant groups, since the very existence of the former depends on being particular. Therefore, this problem could not be solved through constructing an 'ethnically neutral' or maximally 'thin' Swedish national identity. Neither is such a solution helpful for those belonging to the ethnic majority who wish to express their *particular* identity. This argument will be elaborated below.

Ethnic Swedes

Unlike countries such as Britain and the United States, public registering of ethnic identity is prohibited in Sweden. The fact that the epithet 'ethnic' is a sensitive one in public usage is

²⁶ Linn Mauritzon, "Nu finns det en chans att ge oss lite upprättelse", Dagens Nyheter (DN) 21/3 2016, <http://www.dn.se/kultur-noje/musik/nu-finns-det-en-chans-att-ge-oss-lite-upprattelse/> [last accessed 2021-09-20]

demonstrated by another debate that took place in 2012, which occurred following a statement made by the then prime minister Fredrik Reinfeldt:

It is not correct to describe Sweden to be in a state of mass unemployment. If you look at middle-aged ethnic Swedes the unemployment rate is very low.²⁷

The same news article then gives an account of the comments made by representatives from other political parties. They talk about the problem of unemployment and question why it is relevant to talk about which specific groups are affected, but also the very usage of the phrase 'ethnic Swede' itself. Former spokesperson of the Green party Maria Wetterstrand states:

Or actually, the term 'ethnic Swede' is in fact very stupid in all contexts that I can think of.

A subsequent analysis of the notion of 'ethnic Swedes', written in the Swedish daily *Svenska Dagbladet* (Svd), claims that there is no such thing:

In the original statement regarding 'ethnic Swedes' made by Reinfeldt there is nothing that explains what he really means. 'Ethnic Swedes' is not the same thing as the category born in Sweden. The category 'ethnic Swedes' is not something that is used in statistics or official contexts, therefore it is an uncertain term to use, according to experts with whom Svd have spoken. The unemployment that the Prime Minister talked about is nowhere to be found in statistics since the group 'ethnic Swedes' does not exist formally. And yet Reinfeldt made this statement. The check-up of facts therefore gives Fredrik Reinfeldt a red light for his statement.²⁸

In an open letter to Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt, the member of the liberal party Mikael Trolin (Swedish-born with an African father) writes:

My mother is Swedish, my grandmother, grandfather, aunt as well as my cousins. I was born here and I have lived my almost 50 year old life in this beautiful and wonderful country. I have always seen the people mentioned above as my family, a family that I have been a part of with an unconditional belonging. But after your statement regarding unemployment yesterday, a statement that separates 'ethnic Swedes' from the rest of us, this unconditional belonging disappeared.²⁹

These statements suggest that it is viewed as unacceptable to speak of 'ethnic Swedes'. According to the logic of this discourse, there can be no such thing. I have argued that the idea of a nationalism of good intentions is grounded in the claim that a national identity thin enough (civic) so as to include (ethnic) minorities is benign. The idea of ethnic Swedes, a 'thick' Swedish identity, is intolerable according to this worldview. At the same time, I have argued that ethnicity is part of the constitutive

²⁷ TT, "Reinfeldt kritiserar för uttalande", Svenska Dagbladet (Svd) 15/5 2012, http://www.svd.se/reinfeldt-kritiserar-for-uttalande_7201642 [last accessed 2021-09-20]

²⁸ Jenny Stiernstedt & Erik Paulsson Rönnbäck, "Faktakoll: Rött ljus för Reinfeldt", Svenska Dagbladet (Svd) 15/5 2012, http://www.svd.se/faktakoll-rott-ljus-for-reinfeldt_7203940 [last accessed 2021-09-20]

²⁹ Mikael Trolin, "Plötsligt känner jag mig mindre svensk", Svenska Dagbladet (Svd) 15/5 2012, http://www.svd.se/plotsligt-kanner-jag-mig-mindre-svensk_7203664 [last accessed 2021-09-20]

outside of this discourse, which means that this idea of a nationalism of good intentions will always be haunted by it. Put another way, an inclusive Swedish identity is by one definition a non-ethnic one, but at the same time 'the ethnic' is what defines it. This means that we can never reduce ethnicity to something irrelevant. Since it may be important for vulnerable minorities, and thus is something that needs to - in fact always - be taken into account. Following this insight, the normative question to be posed is whether people who identify primarily as ethnic Swedes should be allowed to do so, despite their current position as the norm, and to what extent this identity can be expressed without oppressing other identities.

Anthony Smith points out that majorities have often not been described as ethnic but instead are treated as synonymous with 'the nation' (2004: 17). Smith describes the dominant group in a nation-state as an 'ethnic core' around which most Western states were historically formed (2001: 101). But one might ask why it is relevant to talk about ethnic majorities today? How is one to define ethnic Swedes, a 'national ethnicity' in Kaufmann terminology? And, moreover, why would it be important to do so? As long as the majority continue to treat the nation as 'theirs', seeing themselves as synonymous with it, highlighting a Swedish national ethnicity makes little sense. However, if we imagine an order in which national ethnic groups have abandoned this dominant position, then it becomes reasonable to argue that there is room for expressing a majority ethnic identity. If there is a human need to have one's identity recognised, then majority groups should have equal access to expressing their identity. Naturally, this identity should not be seen as an essentialist category and we cannot define it by any objective criteria. Identities are fluid and many individuals have multiple ethnic identities. Consequently, there is no good reason why a black person, such as Mikael Trolin in the example above, could not identify as an ethnic Swede. The failure to realise this is probably due to the common conflation of ethnicity and race, especially in the Swedish context, where ethnicity is often used as a euphemism of race.³⁰

The next example has less to do with 'the fear of the ethnic' and more to do with our inability to think beyond the discourse of the nation. The Roma example shows how inclusion will always be a force that strengthens the nation and that, in this way, any inclusion will not only entail another exclusion, but will impact on how the national unit is articulated as the only legitimate one.

³⁰ For a discussion of the Swedish usage of race and ethnicity, see the report: Open Society Foundations, "Europe's White Working Class Communities Stockholm", 2014, ISBN: 9781940983141, [white-working-class-stockholm-20140828.pdf](https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/publications/europe-s-white-working-class-communities-stockholm-20140828), [last accessed 2021-09-21]

The following discussion shows how the labels 'Roma' and 'EU-migrant' are constructed and how these different labels are charged with very different meanings. This example takes as its starting point a policy that the then government issued in 2012 to combat the social exclusion of the Romani national minority. On the webpage *Romani inclusion*, the reader meets the following words: "Welcome! The life of Roma in Sweden has been characterised by discrimination and exclusion for centuries. The Government has adopted a long term strategy for Romani inclusion in force until 2032".³¹ In this short introduction, but also in other official documents regarding the 20-year strategy for Roma inclusion 2012-2032, which was adopted by the former government, no definition is given about which Roma group it is (not) referring to.³² For a visitor to the capital Stockholm as well as other places in Sweden during this time, it is hard not to notice the presence of Roma people begging in the streets, which might lead one to picture these Roma. However, it is taken for granted that the Roma concerned are those who are Swedish citizens and that have been defined as one of Sweden's five officially recognised national minorities.

In 2013, about a year and a half after the government adopted the strategy on Roma inclusion, the Swedish daily DN revealed that the regional Skåne police in southern Sweden had illegally compiled a register of Roma people. Given the fact that ethnic registering is prohibited in Sweden and that the Roma constitute a vulnerable minority, this created a huge scandal. Upon this disclosure, the then Minister of Justice Beatrice Ask apologised to the Roma on behalf of the Swedish police:

I apologise for what has happened. It is extremely regrettable and very serious, because we have clear rules for what is allowed.

[...]When the police carry out investigations on crimes they do surveys. But then there are very clear rules on what is relevant. Here they have mapped entire families of a certain ethnicity in a way that seems to be far from what is normal in police investigations - it's outrageous.³³

In a later statement the then Minister of Integration Erik Ullenhag states:

Already from day one when we have been discussing this register in Skåne, I have been worried that a group of Swedes will lose their trust in Swedish authorities. And

³¹ Minoritet.se. Sveriges nationella minoriteter och minoritetsspråk, Romsk inkludering, <http://www.romskinkludering.se/En/Pages/default.aspx> [last accessed 2021-09-21].

³² Ministry of Culture, A Strategy for Roma Inclusion, Fact sheet November 2016, <https://www.government.se/4ac87e/contentassets/ac46c34c5ee94d1b8cd1ea26f7c04e52/a-strategy-for-roma-inclusion> [last accessed 2021-09-21]

³³ Mats J Larsson, "Ministern: Det kan handla om rasism", Dagens Nyheter (DN) 26/9 2013, <http://www.dn.se/arkiv/nyheter/ministern-det-kan-handla-om-rasism> [last accessed 2021-09-20]

added to this a minority that already, for good reasons unfortunately, have had a limited trust in the authorities.³⁴

In 2014 the former government presented a white paper on the historical treatment of the Roma people. Ullenhag stated that the discrimination of Roma is a dark chapter in the history of Sweden:

In many ways, this book is a painful reading. It's about a part of Swedish history that was previously relatively unknown. There is much in this book that there is every reason to be ashamed of. (...) Throughout the 1900s, Roma and travellers have consistently been treated as second-class people. As a red thread through both public organisations, local counties and citizens' attitude towards Roma and travellers, we see prejudice, discrimination, and during much of the 1900s pure racial prejudice.³⁵

As shown above, the former government made efforts to deal with Sweden's discriminatory past and exclusion towards the Roma minority during its last three years in office (2012-2014). In the same period, the presence of Roma beggars in Sweden, coming mainly from Romania and Bulgaria, increased dramatically. In 2013 this led to a national debate on begging - whether it should be allowed or not - as well as their presence in the country in itself. In 2014, the then Minister of EU affairs Birgitta Ohlsson revealed that the Swedish government had been negotiating with the Romanian government for months, with the aim of helping Roma from Romania within their home country, but that recently the discussions with Romania had collapsed. The negotiations revolved around Sweden's demand to ask the EU Commission for help to set up an expert group in Bucharest to make sure that the money from EU structural funds are used properly and that they reach the targeted group, a demand that Romania rejected. Below is an interview with Ohlsson:

Journalist: For some this could be interpreted as a way to get rid of the beggars that we see on the streets in Sweden and as a way of accommodating those voters who do not want these beggars to remain in Sweden. Comment?

Ohlsson: No, this has nothing to do with restricting the freedom of movement or introducing a ban on begging. It has to do with improving the lives of these people. There is money and every country has the responsibility to look after its own citizens.

Journalist: What is the government's view on the comment made by the EU Commissioner Laszlo Andors that Sweden should integrate the beggars and give them jobs?

Ohlsson: The Romanian Roma who are begging on the streets in Sweden have, just as any other EU citizen, the right to reside in Sweden for three months. Any person who has a job to support his or herself is welcome to settle here.³⁶

³⁴ Niklas Orrenius, Ossi Karp & Katarina Lagerwall, "Tjänstemän åtalas inte för olagligt register", Dagens Nyheter (DN) 21/12 2013, <https://www.dn.se/arkiv/nyheter/tjansteman-atalas-inte-for-olagligt-register-2/> [last accessed 2021-09-20]

³⁵ TT, "Plågam läsning om romövergrepp", Svenska Dagbladet (Svd) 25/3 2014, <http://www.svd.se/plagsam-lasning-om-romovergrepp> [last accessed 2021-09-20]

³⁶ Josefine Hökerberg, "Hemliga förhandlingar om tiggarna i Sverige", Dagens Nyheter (DN) 8/4 2014, <https://www.dn.se/nyheter/sverige/hemliga-forhandlingar-om-tiggarna-i-sverige> [last accessed 2021-09-20]

It is clear that these Roma, in contrast to 'our' Roma, are not covered by Swedish inclusion. It is taken for granted that Romania, or the EU, are responsible for solving this 'problem'. A year later the new government succeeds in initiating cooperation between Sweden and Romania, with the aim of improving the situation for Roma in Romania.³⁷ In September 2015, the Swedish Minister Åsa Regnér and Martin Valfridsson, appointed national coordinator for "vulnerable EU-citizens", urge the Swedish population not to give money to beggars but instead to donate money to charities in the original countries. In their article the phrases "in their home countries", "in the original country", "in Romania and Bulgaria", "in the relevant countries", "on the ground" as well as "in Europe" are used.³⁸ These Roma are articulated as a group that go beyond the specific responsibility of Sweden, and therefore as a 'problem' to be 'solved' by 'the EU' so that they can return to 'the original countries', Romania and Bulgaria.

The construction of the subject positions 'our' Roma and EU-migrants is also visible in a news item from August 2015, reporting that "Roma days" are arranged at the open-air museum *Skansen*. Erland Kaldaras, a Roma representative and co-organiser, says that the Roma have been in Sweden for at least 500 years, but that few people know of their history and tend to group them together with the EU-migrants who are begging in the streets. Kaldaras says:

"Most visitors ask some questions about history and culture, then they wonder what we intend to do about the beggars. As if we have to defend the fact that beggars come here. But that is of course something that the state should manage. It is a matter for Bulgaria, Romania, Sweden, and not least the EU. So obviously this is something that affects us".

He emphasises that the solidarity with the community is a core ingredient of Roma culture.

"We feel empathy with those sitting in the street. Swedish Roma are fine today. But 50 years ago, we experienced the same hell".³⁹

The view that 'our' Roma are covered by inclusion in the Swedish national project, whereas the Roma who have become known as 'EU-migrants' belong to Romania and Bulgaria, appears as natural. Moreover, the fact that these Roma are EU citizens, both means that they have the right to move freely within the union, but cannot seek asylum in another EU member state. The EU is often invoked as the institution responsible for 'solving the Roma problem'. In an article, three liberal MEPs write

³⁷ Josefin Sköld, "Sverige ska hjälpa fattiga i Rumänien", Dagens Nyheter (DN) 3/6 2015, <http://www.dn.se/nyheter/sverige/sverige-ska-hjalpa-fattiga-i-rumanien> [last accessed 2021-09-20]

³⁸ Åsa Regnér & Martin Valfridsson, "Skänk till organisationer på plats i hemländerna", Dagens Nyheter (DN) 11/9 2015, <http://www.dn.se/debatt/skank-till-organisationer-pa-plats-i-hemlanderna> [last accessed 2021-09-20]

³⁹ Andreas Nordström, "Romska kultur i fokus på Skansen", Dagens Nyheter (DN) 12/8 2015, <http://www.dn.se/kultur-noje/romsk-kultur-i-fokus-pa-skansen> [last accessed 2021-09-20]

that the issue must be solved at the EU level, and that we need a common action plan to stop the historic violations against Roma. The article describes the Roma as “the largest ethnic minority in Europe [...] subjected to large-scale discrimination and violence, with higher unemployment rates, health problems and lower education than the average European”. They see it as “painful to observe that there is still systematic discrimination on ethnic grounds within the EU. The Roma is a group that has been vulnerable throughout history. Not a single member state is free from guilt.”⁴⁰

Discrimination on ethnic grounds within the EU is articulated as something unacceptable, and ‘the EU’ is responsible for solving this situation. The liberal MEPs contend that not a single member state is free from guilt, yet ‘the EU’ always seems to be imagined as something else, not us. In Sweden, efforts are made to include ‘our’ Roma, those who have been defined as a Swedish national minority and those who are Swedish citizens. However, according to this discourse, it cannot be said that all Roma, based on their very ethnicity, and as the largest and most vulnerable ethnic minority in Europe, are each and every EU member state’s responsibility, wherever they decide to settle. Living within the discourse of nations, any inclusion will necessarily be something that strengthens the legitimacy of the nation, since it refers to inclusion within a national community.

A dislocatory event can lead to a variety of possible responses. One is in the form of a demand that challenges the norms of an institution. Glynos and Howarth write that a radical political demand is one that publicly contests a fundamental norm of a practice or regime (2007: 115). The Roma community historically and presently, by their very existence, pose a challenge to the national order. If one tries to imagine a world order beyond the national hegemony and the logic of inclusion, the Roma could instead be imagined as an ethnic community and, as such, as bearers of cultural and social rights, irrespective of country of residence. However, what Glynos and Howarth call the ideological response to a dislocatory experience is where “the subject becomes complicit in covering over the radical contingency of social relations by identifying with a particular discourse.” (p. 117) The ‘Roma problem’ poses questions that we cannot properly deal with from within the current paradigm, and therefore the ideological response to the problem remains a strong one.

In this chapter I have analysed extracts from media debates dealing with Swedish national identity in relation to two of Sweden’s national minorities – the Sami and the Roma – as well as the position of ‘ethnic Swedes’. The Sami, as an indigenous people with a territorial attachment to the homeland of Sápmi, disrupts the taken-for-grantedness of inclusion with claims to a separate identity. The Roma, a heterogeneous minority without attachments to a homeland, instead make visible the arbitrariness

⁴⁰ Cecilia Wikström, “Romska tiggare är en europeisk angelägenhet”, Dagens Nyheter (DN) 3/4 2013, <https://www.ceciliawikstrom.eu/artikel-1> [last accessed 2021-09-20]

of national boundaries by their existence as the largest ethnic community in Europe, thereby challenging the logic of inclusion/exclusion into the national community from the opposite direction. Both of these create dislocations with strong ideological responses that cover over the cracks in the system, almost as if they were not there.

This chapter shows how the 'nationalism of good intentions', and the fantasy of inclusion, is based on the necessary exclusion of ethnicity to uphold inclusivity as the enjoyment of doing good. While the fantasy can account for minority ethnicity – as it is to be included – the notion of a majority ethnicity messes with the inner logic of this fantasy and must therefore be ignored and covered over.

Chapter 6. Conclusion: Dilemmas of Inclusion and Exclusion

This dissertation has been an attempt to engage critically with the discourse of nations. It has asked how ‘benign’ versions of nationalism are constructed to accommodate ethnic minorities to remain ethical, and has explored the fantasies that sustains this narrative. The answer to this question is that the fantasy of inclusion – what I understand as the overarching fantasy— is constructed by avoiding the presence of ethnicity when it falls outside of what the discourse of nations can encompass. I have argued in this dissertation that the discourse of nations permeates both the scholarly literature on nationalism and the ideas found among the ethnopolitical activists with whom I have engaged. More specifically, it spreads into ideas of *inclusionary* nationhood, which we are taught to desire in order to be good. This fantasy of inclusion is therefore present in both the theoretical literature on the ethics of nationalism as well as in the empirical material I have analysed. The question that I ask, namely ‘how are national identities constructed as ethically justifiable in order to accommodate ethnic minorities?’, has been explored by analysing a number of contexts where dilemmas of inclusion and exclusion arise, and by exploring how these dilemmas play out depending on their positioning within the space that the world of nation-states creates. I have argued that in the scholarly debate on the ethics of nationalism, the topic of ethnicity is often avoided, since it highlights what the idea of the nationalism of good intentions has sought to conceal; that inclusion cannot make up for pre-existing inequalities between different cultural groups. The fantasy of inclusion has been explored empirically in focus groups and media debates. In this material the fantasy is sustained by the repetition of common truths that impart that inclusion is for us to enjoy as a means of doing good – something that is good for everyone. Or to put it differently, the desire to include is transmitted to us so that we can do and be good. This is expressed slightly differently depending on the context, but can be known through the dislocatory moments that are then covered over by the ideological responses that serve to keep the discourse of the idea of a ‘nationalism of good intentions’ intact. Below is a recapturing of the dilemmas of inclusion and exclusion that are covered over by fantasies in four different scenarios.

Dilemmas of Inclusion and Exclusion

I want to refer back to Karin Borevi’s model on integration strategies and the tension between demos and ethnos (2016). To manage cultural and ethnic plurality, a nation-state can adopt various integration strategies, ranging from multiculturalism to civic integration, but there is always a risk that such policies effectively lead to either ethnic segregation or assimilation. Borevi says that if one

agrees with the view that a national community is political and not ethnic, then one has to always relate to these tensions, to which there are no simple solutions (Borevi 2002:320). My ambition has been not merely to accept but to 'test' these tensions that lead to a number of dilemmas and to explore how they are altered depending on the positions adopted by particular groups. I will go through these dilemmas by revisiting each of the positions. The dilemmas are problematic on several levels, both for the groups themselves but also, theoretically, for general arguments about justice and equality between different groups. The positions are not the same as, but informed by, real empirical cases. They are constructed by me as positions seen from the perspective of wanting to live up to a scenario where inequality between cultural groups is erased. In other words, the ethical dilemmas that concern a particular group are automatically assumed to have validity for other groups facing the same situation. I am assuming that the level of fairness sought for one group is applied equally to all groups – as a template to strive for. Therefore, for instance in the case of the Kurds, when I ask 'what if you were the ethnic majority in an autonomous Kurdistan?', I assume that the ethical dilemma facing them in this hypothetical scenario when confronted with other ethnic minorities within the same territory would be as troubling as if it affected their own group. The shift from one position to another by the same group would thus hopefully disclose whether or not this is true, and if any discrepancies do exist then it will be possible to show cracks in the nation-state discursive system. This was visible in the focus group discussions, given that I could ask them about other groups explicitly. When it comes to the media material, it worked a little differently. Here I have instead discovered three cases where what falls outside of a civic understanding of an inclusive Swedishness cannot be made sense of. However, in all of these cases, it is by denying the ethnic characteristics of a group whenever it feels uncomfortable that the fantasy of inclusivity can continue to thrive.

The Kurds: Oppressed ethnic majority seeking autonomy. As an ethnic majority in a particular territory, deprived from the same thing that its neighbours possess – namely a nation-state 'of its own' – the injustice felt by the unrecognised ethnic majority is hard to deny. My neighbour's identity is officially sanctioned, while mine is denied. The longing for autonomy is therefore understandable within a system of nation-states, but the ripple effects are harder to justify. If I am opposing the current nation-state's ethnic bias, how can I propose the same design without contradicting my own criticism? The dilemma is impossible to solve within a nation-state logic, unless one chooses to conveniently bypass the reality of ethnicity as a barrier to fairness for all cultural groups whenever it makes itself felt. This ethical dilemma is exemplified by the Kurdish case, which is a prime example of the fact that liberal thinkers are comfortable with ethnicity – and thereby exclusivity – as long as we are talking about minorities or groups that are not in a position of power. Looking at the nation as a

self-aware ethnic group may feel justifiable in cases such as the Kurds, often referred to as the largest stateless nation in the world, but it starts to feel less comfortable – for scholars as well as the ethno-political activists in my focus groups – to talk about a nation in ethnic terms when we are no longer dealing with underdogs. When we are entering the territory of ethnic majorities as nations, nations as ethnic and not just ‘civic’, we are inescapably confronted with the idea of other minorities having to relate to the ethnic character of the dominant ethnic majority/nation in their own homeland – thereby repeating the very dynamic that the Kurds are fighting against in the first place. In the focus group with the Swedish Kurds, there is a ‘theft of enjoyment’ (Žižek 1993) involved in the ‘homeland’ context that is not present in their position as Kurds in Sweden. In other words, the Swedish civic-integrationist project does not come at the expense of their identity as ethnic Kurds. However, when they put themselves in the shoes of the Sami minority, who are indigenous to the land, they can perceive the resemblance to their homeland situation. There is a conflict of interest as soon as the ethnic characteristic of the majority culture is acknowledged. Because this is uncomfortable to acknowledge, the Swedish Kurds in my focus group are investing in ‘the fantasy of inclusion’ to cover up this inconsistency.

Swedish-speaking Finns: Dominant ethno-linguistic minority seeking survival. This is the position of a linguistic minority who used to hold a dominant position but are now demographically at risk and need to advocate the preservation of a bilingual nation in order to survive. They must undertake this work while unable to claim the underdog position. The Swedish-speaking Finns are, through their example, highlighting the opposite dilemma from the Kurdish example. As a former dominant minority, the old position of power that they held is now overshadowing their current desire to speak ‘the language of their hearts’, and ultimately – to even exist as a distinct group. This is thought-provoking in the sense that when the right to exist as a separate group is divorced from the question of whether or not they have equal access to power when compared to surrounding groups, it becomes an emotional question of wanting to express oneself in the most authentic way possible. Because this inner ‘feeling’ is hard to defend rationally without the ‘underdog card’, the Swedish-speaking Finns construct a fantasy where a Finland with Swedish as an official language alongside Finnish is the only way to thrive as an ‘open’ nation-state. In the focus group with Swedish-Speaking Finns, the beatific dimension of fantasy (Glynos and Howarth 2007) is constructed as a scenario where a bilingual Finland is open, tolerant, pluralistic and democratic. The horrific dimension of this fantasy (ibid) is a scenario where an ‘evil’ nationalism and racism has crushed all forms of plurality. In this way, the linguistic movement that seeks to preserve Swedish and its bilingual status in Finland – in the case of the individuals in my focus group – can do so while enjoying the idea of an ‘open’ Finland for everyone.

Swedish Sami: Indigenous people seeking self-expression beyond the nation-state. Indigenous peoples are an example of the existence of ethnic identities before the system of nation-states was established, and therefore a continuous challenge to the logic of the nation-state. Indigenous peoples who were colonised and incorporated into different nation-states against their own choosing may therefore also resist having to relate to an identity that is imposed on them without consent, rather than their own identity first. In other words, because they 'came first' and have remained a distinct group, despite attempts to be assimilated into an identity that 'came later'. The Sami example poses a similar but slightly different question to the Kurds in their 'homeland' context. As an indigenous people and territorial minority, Sami activists make claims about their original homeland Sápmi, but without claiming to form a separate and independent nation-state. Like for instance Kurds from Turkey, who react against their forced inclusion into an overarching Turkishness, some Sami activists in Sweden are suspicious of being called Swedish instead of Sami if this leads to assimilation and therefore comes at the expense of their self-expression as Sami. They differ from the Kurdish example, however, in the sense that they do not wish to perpetuate the system of nation-states. In my analysis on national identity and minorities in Swedish media, the 'common truth' that an inclusive Swedish identity will accommodate ethnic minorities, represented by Swedish politicians, is challenged by Sami ethno-political activists who argue that they are a distinct people, which creates a dislocatory moment in the debate, by bringing an end to the public discussion.

The Roma: Ethnic group without a homeland of their own seeking belonging beyond territory. Non-territorially based groups are examples of an existence beyond the logic of nation-states, existing as a collective without a territorial container but nevertheless claiming to exist as an identity. Whenever that identity is claimed when the boundaries of the nation-state are simultaneously crossed, it disrupts the logic of the nation-state by showing there are groups that follow another logic and therefore cannot be subsumed under the former principle. The Roma community brings a different dilemma, but like the Sami they are operating outside of the nation-state logic. With no claims to nationhood or attachment to a 'Romani homeland', but as the largest "homeless" ethnic group in Europe, the Roma disrupt the logic whereby national borders are the only relevant ones. With 'no place to go' of their own, so to speak, they potentially belong everywhere. When the Roma have acquired national minority status which grants them cultural and linguistic rights in several European countries, confusion arises when their 'ethnic kin' knocks on the border of nation-state. In the analysis on national identity and minorities in relation to Swedish Roma and Romani 'EU-migrants' in Swedish media, it is shown that the potential arbitrariness of who should belong to the Roma national minority in Sweden is met with a strong ideological response – one that repairs the dislocatory event before it becomes a source for a new political construction (Glynos and

Howarth 2007: 117) – in favour of nationalist inclusion, according to which ethnic kinship is deemed irrelevant. This is true both from the perspective of Swedish politicians and from that of the Roma minority.

Conclusion: Ethnicity as the Elephant in the Room

I have argued that national identities are constructed as legitimate from an ethical point of view through denying ethnic elements when they seem to disrupt the idea of inclusion as benign. This is a problem on a theoretical level, and it is also apparent among ethno-political activists. It is a problem that is intrinsic to the discourse of nations, and that remains hidden through the perpetuation of a fantasy of inclusion. Ethnic majorities generally see themselves as synonymous with ‘the nation’. If we are serious about the equal ability of different groups to express themselves, ethnic majorities need to give up this position of dominance in order to make space for equality between them and minorities. However, when this is done within the framework of the already existing nation-state context, it generally means that the identity held by the majority must be stripped of any ‘thick’ substance in order for the identity to encompass minorities. The question regarding to what extent the ethnic majority in Sweden – had they not been in a dominant position in a Swedish nation-state – has the right to self-express as a group separate from other groups, begs to be asked. Since this question cannot be asked, so long as their dominance remains and is only hypothetical, then it remains outside a possible line of questioning for as long as the system of nation-states reigns supreme. Ethnic majorities are the elephant in the room. Such discussion is avoided because it is uncomfortable to talk about and relatively easy to slip under the radar. The ‘normal’ is easily concealed as ‘nothing’ – it is hidden - and is therefore able to dominate at the expense of others’ ability to express themselves. Nina Carlsson (2020) illustrates this well in her work on banal colonialism in Swedish Sápmi, shedding light on the conflicting aims of the Swedish policy towards new and old minorities. The Swedish state is engaged in both the process of granting possibilities for Sámi linguistic and cultural revitalisation, on the one hand, and at the same time providing civic orientation courses for immigrants where they learn the national language and “Swedish values”. As Carlsson points out, when these two policies coexist in a colonised locality, they have contradictory logics (p. 269). Carlsson’s work illustrates very well the hegemony of the national model and how the implication of national domination remains hidden. In her own words: “A banal colonialist perspective makes visible not only the taken-for-granted national domination, but also brings attention to the weak presence of ‘the other’. The word banal does not imply that the operations are harmless, nor that they unnoticed for everyone; rather, it directs the attention to what has been

erased for the dominant to be perceived as banal.” (ibid: 272) When we are not talking about the dominance of ethnic majority as problematic, but instead pretend that it is not so through hiding it in an invisible national identity, we cannot have a sound conversation about ethnic majorities either, owing to the fact that it has become “impossible” to talk about it. The fantasy of inclusion can be seen as the enabler of the longevity of this system – i.e. the nationalist paradigm. Ideally, everyone - whether minority or majority – should have equal opportunities to express themselves in their own terms and without doing so at the expense of others. I have argued that there is no theory, within the literature on the ethics of nationalism, that successfully has come to terms with hidden ethnicity precisely because they don’t tackle the problem at its core - the nationalist container itself.

In the last section of this dissertation, I will continue to use the Sami/indigenous example to raise questions for further research and to highlight the possibility of a world where minorities and majorities may coexist without doing so at the expense of other cultures.

The way forward – future fantasies

In this last section of the dissertation I shift over to a politico-philosophical discussion on the possibility of creating a post-nationalist world, using the Sami example as my point of departure. As the descendants of indigenous tribes and the keepers of an endangered way of life, the indigenous’ example places the question of the intrinsic value of a particular culture, and the point of preserving a culture facing extinction, in an extraordinary light. While the centrality of a culture’s meaning to its members has been debated thoroughly (and a point discussed throughout this dissertation), a less common argument is that a culture needs to continue to thrive for the sake of the planet. However, this is precisely the case made by many indigenous activists. An example of this is my meeting with a Sami activist during my field studies in Jokkmokk in 2018.⁴¹ She said that as a young girl, her father gave her the task to keep the old Sami ways of living with nature. He had said to her that she needed to know everything, because one day she would be teaching the majority population and people around the globe about how we can live sustainably. In this way, the Sami struggle for recognition is not only a case for preserving a way of being that they themselves hold dear, but one that is intimately linked with saving the Earth.

When we are talking about the need for our guardianship of the earth as a whole, one might think of this as the cosmopolitan dream of a united world with no borders and a global identity rather than national or ethnic identities. The idea of a world citizen has been theorised by various political

⁴¹ Field notes, Jokkmokk, Sápmi/Sweden, 29 March 2018

philosophers. Martha Nussbaum argues that, as citizen of the world, our primary loyalty should be to humankind. She is concerned about the argument that we need shared values within a nation, but that the shared values do not apply when the arbitrary borders of the nation are crossed (2002). Nussbaum says that none of us can stand outside of global interdependency and the fact that our daily lives put pressure on global environment, meaning that burying our heads in the sand and ignoring the many ways in which we influence the lives of distant people every day is irresponsible. Education, she claims, needs to cultivate students with the ability to see themselves not only as members of a heterogeneous nation, but a heterogeneous world. It is therefore about time we start seeing ourselves as 'citizens of the world'. According to Nussbaum this also entails learning more about the history and character of the diverse groups that inhabit the world. (Nussbaum, 2010: 80) The idea of 'citizen of the world' can however also be interpreted as a shedding of one's cultural identity. In his essay, "Minority cultures and the cosmopolitan alternative", Jeremy Waldron takes issue with the multiculturalist's view on community. He writes:

If I knew what the term meant, I would say it was a 'postmodern' vision of the self. But, as I do not, let me just call it 'cosmopolitan', although this term is not supposed to indicate that the practitioner of the ethos in question is necessarily a migrant (like Rushdie), a perpetual refugee (like, for example, Jean-Jacques Rousseau), or a frequent flyer (like myself). The cosmopolitan may live all his life in one city and maintain the same citizenship throughout. But he refuses to think of himself as *defined* by his location or his ancestry or his citizenship or his language." (Waldron 1995: 95)

Waldron disagrees with the communitarian argument that there is a human need to be immersed in a particular culture. He argues, drawing on Salman Rushdie, that the hybrid lifestyle of the cosmopolitan is the only appropriate way of life in the modern world (Waldron 1995: 100). I have argued that it is not the issue of having a particularistic identity that is problematic, but the power asymmetry that follows when a certain group dominates, and is allowed to 'possess' a territory. Therefore, the problem is not with the myriad of cultural identities that exist among humans. The central problem is rather the fact that a *national* identity gets imposed on them as a form of oppression. Nussbaum (2010) says that:

No society is pure, and the "clash of civilizations" is internal to every society. Every society contains within itself people who are prepared to live with others on terms of mutual respect and reciprocity, and people who seek the comfort of domination. We need to understand how to produce more citizens of the former sort and fewer of the latter. Thinking falsely that our own society is pure within can only breed aggression toward outsiders and blindness about aggression toward insiders (p. 29).

This is precisely the mistake that I have argued is made, when trying to alchemise nationalism into an inclusive, and therefore benign project, since nationalism comes from the era of conquering, owning

and controlling territories as well as the populations that inhabit them. A fantasy of a global population loyal to the Earth is the fantasy of a world where attachment to one's own culture does not come at the expense of another people's right to express themselves, but that this attachment in no way justifies any domination over resources or that one's loyalty would be with the ingroup – instead our loyalty should be with the world at large. This dream includes the idea that we as humans will all start seeing ourselves as guardians and protectors of the earth rather than the entitlement that comes with the current paradigm – “this nation is mine to have”. Glynos and Howarth say that the process of problematisation “involves the identification of an aspect of a practice which is deemed *worthy* of public contestation, thereby imputing to it some normative import.” (2007: 145). In my view, the system of nation-states is worthy of problematisation just as much as for instance the capitalist system, on the grounds that both can become self-serving rather than protecting the value of our planet and all its sentient beings in their many shapes and forms. I see this period of social change on the planet as an opportune moment to problematise these old systems. Others, of course, would argue the opposite. In her recent book *Why Nationalism* (2020), Yael Tamir foretells a revival of nationalism in the wake of the pandemic – a revival that she deems hopeful provided we are talking about a civic nationalism. A united humanity may be an attractive vision, she says, but it is nowhere in sight (p. 102).

Globalism failed to replace nationalism because it couldn't offer a political agenda that meets the most basic needs of modern individuals: the desire to be autonomous and self-governing agents, the will to live a meaningful life that stretches beyond the self, the need to belong, the desire to be part of a creative community, to feel special, find a place in the chain of being, and to enjoy a sense (or the illusion) of stability and cross-generational continuity. (Tamir 2020: 155)

However, none of the above actually require a nation but can be satisfied through community much smaller than a national community. Globalism has become synonymous with the free flow of capital. However, imagining a new paradigm beyond both nationalism and the capitalist system - something that the climate crisis requires us to do – opens up the possibility of starting to envision a 'global' mindset in an entirely new way, where being global looks more like being local. Before the emergence of nations, people generally knew no other life than a local one; sometimes they didn't even know what was beyond their own village. A potential future of being more local again, does not have to mean a 'return' to old ways of knowing, but living a local life that makes us aware of our interconnectedness with the rest of the world. A decentralised political system in which people would gain more freedom to shape their own lives locally need not be at the expense of a 'global mindset', in other words it is not an either/or relationship, but one of both/and. This requires an awareness in line with indigenous wisdom of loyalty to the Earth and with future generations, which breaks with the nationalist paradigm of domination. One could ask the question if protecting ethnic

particularity as a means to keep indigenous wisdom intact from threats of assimilation, masquerading as benign inclusion into the nationalist project, may prove to have been crucial for our survival? It is indeed difficult to imagine anything beyond our current world of nation-states, and perhaps those who say that we as humans are not capable of something as abstract as loyalty to humankind are correct. However, what we think we know about human nature, or what may have been true for humans in one era, is not necessarily applicable in another time. This dissertation takes seriously, the idea that the period in our history that has been characterised by nationalism in its widest meaning, i.e. a world of nation-states, potentially one day will come to an end and be replaced with something else. Whatever an alternative post-nationalist world would look like, however, it cannot resolve the necessary exclusion of 'them' from 'us'. The important question is how this is done. According to discourse theory, which is based on the assumption that every social order is a temporary articulation of contingent practices, things could always be otherwise and any order is always based on the exclusion of other possibilities (Mouffe 2013: 2). Chantal Mouffe writes:

In my view, the fundamental question is not how to arrive at a consensus reached without exclusion, because this would require the construction of an 'us' that would not have a corresponding 'them'. This is impossible because, as I have just noted, the very condition for the constitution of an 'us' is the demarcation of a 'them'. The crucial issue then is how to establish this us/them distinction, which is constitutive of politics, in a way that is compatible with the recognition of pluralism. Conflict in liberal democratic societies cannot and should not be eradicated, since the specificity of pluralist democracy is precisely the recognition and the legitimation of conflict. What liberal democratic politics requires is that the others are not seen as enemies to be destroyed, but as adversaries whose ideas might be fought, even fiercely, but whose right to defend those ideas is not to be questioned. To put it in another way, what is important is that conflict does not take the form of an 'antagonism' (struggle between enemies) but the form of an 'agonism' (struggle between adversaries). (Mouffe 2013: 6-7)

Plurality, as Mouffe describes, needs a demarcation. Therefore there will always be some kind of exclusion and, concomitantly, there will always be Others. The dilemmas of inclusion and exclusion can never be fully resolved. All the same, unjust power hierarchies can be altered. A pluralistic world of peaceful co-existence needs to be accepting of difference, and neither reject nor try to assimilate the Other. Our fear of excluding – which is what the aggressive type of nationalism does – can lead to inclusion in places where inclusion is not desirable. For all groups to be given the freedom to express themselves and celebrate their identities while giving equal importance to the right and freedom of others to do the same, it is likely that the entitlement that comes with the paradigm of nation-states must be scrutinised more thoroughly: What form of power does the one have, who has the power to include?

The flower on the front page, which I painted in 2018, is a visual representation of my vision for a future world – a radical multiculturalism in which the freedom of one group of people to express their identity must never be at the expense of any other group. This requires a deep understanding of the privilege once held by some groups as well as a feeling of solidarity with others – the ability to take the well-being of humanity as equally important as that of any self-interest. The future promises massive waves of migration due to climate change and preparing for this scenario looks like preparing for a world in which the entitlement to a particular territory, for which the construct of nation-states allows, must be given up. The sooner we accept that enormous change is on its way and that the systems that we have come to rely on as solid will not be able to survive forever, the smoother the transition to the future world will be.

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Field work

Focus group with Kurdish activists in Stockholm, September 2016

Focus group with Swedish-speaking Finns in Helsinki, April 2017

Interview with Sami activist in Jokkmokk, March 2018

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