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**The `active´ citizen in activation policy- dilemmas from a Swedish
“integration policy as activation policy” perspective**

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Introduction

The paper takes its departure in the conception of the citizen as ‘active’ that has emerged in the postmodern welfare state. It sets out to discuss the dilemmas that are uncovered when combining old contexts – as the Swedish ‘universal’ welfare model – and new trends – as the conception of the ‘active’ citizen. The discussion and analyse is based on the empirical example of Swedish integration policy spelled out as activation policy.

One of the new challenges that the postmodern welfare state has to deal with is the migration and immigration that are changing the contour in the national welfare states. This means that new members should be integrated in the society. In Sweden this is done foremost by integration policy where activation policy is the prime way. Activation policy aims to include individuals into the labour market.¹

Integration policy as activation policy

Swedish integration policy has a history that stretches some decades back. The activation policy in its present form is a somewhat newer phenomenon. Below I describe how these two forms of social policy are intertwined.

The change of integration policy during the last decades and its present essence: Borevi² divides the integration policy into three phases, the establishment phase, the evaluation phase and the revaluation phase. The establishment phase that took place during the 1970-ties could be seen as an extension of Swedish welfare policy, where the concepts social equality and

¹I Lödemel & H Trickey *An offer you can't refuse* 2001

² K Borevi *Välfärdsstaten i det mångkulturella samhället* 2002

integration were intertwined. The immigrants were seen as a minority group and as such they should be the object of specific compensatory measures.

This "multicultural" attempt was changed during the evaluation phase in the 1980-ties to a policy where the ambitions of preserving the immigrants culture was fading and immigrants were no longer seen as minorities. At the same time as a special immigrant policy was left intact the assimilation of immigrants was seen as standing in conflict with the "multicultural" ideology.

The reevaluation phase of the 1990-ties came to stand for a setback to the "multicultural", though earlier decades of special immigration policy was seen as stigmatising for the immigrants because they were pointed out as a special (problem) group. This is still at the core of Swedish integration policy. One disassociate from the old particularist immigration policy and focus is more on for example structural discrimination.³ The goal of the policy is an integrated society where all are seen as equals irrespective of origin. After a short introduction period the immigrant should be included in the general policy.⁴ This inclusion should come true via the activation policy. This is where a paradox arrives.

Activation policy: The welfare policy has during the recent decades gone from a passive to an active orientation. In the European states several models for activation policy have been created. They have all in common that they are forcing, "an offer you can't refuse",⁵ that the activation policy is a part of the social assistance system and that they are primarily directed to work or activation for individuals depending on social assistance.⁶

According to Esping-Andersen⁷ it is possible to discern a Nordic welfare model that is characterized by generous income transfers for unemployed, a heavy emphasis on activation, a low degree of unemployment and a limited number of individuals depending on social

³ M Poopola *Integration – en samtidsspeglning* 2002

⁴ SOU 1996:55

⁵ I Lödemel 1997 established the expression "An offer you can't refuse"

⁶ Lödemel & Trickey 2001

⁷ Esping Andersen *The three worlds of welfare capitalism* 1990

assistance. The Nordic model has also been described as a "dual-welfare" model.⁸ The paradoxical relation between a generous income transfer for them on the labour market and reduced, needs tested and stigmatising social assistance for them that are outside, cause a system that in the first meaning is universal and in the second selective. The Nordic welfare states are therefore based on two parallel systems.

The Nordic model that encloses the "work line" has existed in the Nordic countries during a lot of years. One has partly continued on the old "work line" in the "new" activation policy, but some changes are worth noting. The activation demand has been strengthened, which means that the applicants for social assistance unconditionally must accept the occupation offered, or else he or she is sanctioned. This changes the relation between rights and responsibilities for the individual with more stress on the later.⁹ Other common characteristics are that the Nordic activation policy is regulated by framing laws and is locally based.¹⁰

The Swedish "work line" was carried on until the 1990-ties, when the economical crisis that the country experienced with growing figures of unemployment as a consequence gave rise to a change. Two different versions in the labour market policy was established, one for "insiders" and one for "outsiders". The traditional labour market policy is still there for them that actually are in the labour market. While the "new" activation policy is directed towards specific target groups (mostly immigrants) that already are excluded from the labour market. While the first is stately and based on rights, the later is locally administrated and based on the clients responsibilities and obligations.¹¹

The use of activation policy as integration policy: In the integration policy it is of tremendous weight that immigrants get included into society via an employment. Getting a footing into the labour market is meant to automatically frame integration. Activation policy

⁸ B Hvinden et al *Towards activation? The changing relationship between social protection and employment in western Europe* 2001

⁹ Hvinden et al 2001

¹⁰ H Johansson *Activation in the Nordic countries* 2000

¹¹ T Salonen *Outsiders and insiders in the Swedish activation policy* 2000

is the way chosen to make this vision come true. You could say that Swedish integration policy actually *is* activation policy. The state has invested several millions SEK into different kinds of projects directed towards immigrants where activation is central.¹²

The local character of the activation policy and the possibilities of interpretation that a frame law allows, means that the policy in practice is spelled through its administration. Several studies of "Work-fare" in US and UK¹³ and one Swedish study¹⁴ show that what is happening in the administration of the activation policy is important. The bureaucrats redraft the official policy in their meetings with the clients. Policy is not just implemented in this arena, but is subjected to redrafts and transformation. So the concept 'active citizen' in the frame of Swedish integration policy as activation policy could both be seen in the shade of the dual-welfare state context and the local administration of the policy. However we could not understand the concept 'active citizen' in this context without describe rights and responsibilities for 'active (immigrant) citizens'.

Rights and responsibilities for the 'active' (immigrant) citizen

The concept "the active citizen" could principally be understood as a new active relationship the citizen is expected to have towards the welfare state. Lewis¹⁵ defines the active citizen "as the figure who has come to stand for the organisation of social welfare less around a notion of universalism and need and more around worthiness, responsibility and residualisation". You could also phrase it as Jorgen Goul Andersen does and rather specify the relation between the state and the sole citizen. Active Citizenship could then be understood as "a new ideal of citizenship or a new set of rights and duties based on a conception of a

¹² for example "The big city investment" Proposition 1997/98: 165

¹³ E Brodtkin *Inside the welfare contract: Discretion and accountability in state welfare administration* 1997, M Meyers et al *On the front lines of welfare delivery: Are workers implementing policy reforms?* 1998, S Wright *Activating the unemployed: The street level implementation of UK policy* 2001

¹⁴ A Hedblom *Aktiveringspolitikens Janusansikte* 2004

¹⁵ G Lewis *Citizenship, Personal lives and social policy* 2005

claimant as an active citizen. The active citizen is granted more autonomy and choice but in return is assumed to be self-responsible, flexible and mobile”¹⁶

Hvinden and Johansson¹⁷ understand the concept in the context of socio-liberal, libertarian, and republican citizenship. They are outlining the understanding of the ‘active citizen’ in each form of citizenship. Though the demands on the active citizen in the socio-liberal model involves all adults, stronger emphasis on enforcement and use of sanctions tends to be especially directed to exposed groups, how are subjected to more paternalistic policies which reduce their autonomy and freedom of choice. The libertarian dimension of active citizenship focus more on the individual self-responsibility and exercise of choice in the free market and thereby place a stronger weight on individual responsibility and freedom of choice. The republican understanding of the concept differs from the others though it is directed towards citizen – activation, participation and self-governed activity. To an increasing extent social services has seen the involvement of individuals and groups as important although it has been linked to the narrower status of user rather than to ‘citizen’.¹⁸

In the Swedish activation policy the concept is intertwined with the discourse of conditionality that has been mentioned above and thereby connected to the socio-liberal understanding of the active citizen. But here are also fragments of user involvement in form of contracts between the user and the social service organisation, user participation in focus-groups and quality investigations of the organisations social service. It is in this context the activation policy should be understood. In order to understand the immigrant’s special position as an ‘active citizen’ it is necessary to describe formal and substantial rights for immigrants.

¹⁶ J Goul-Andersen et al *The changing face of welfare. Consequences and outcomes from a citizenship perspective* 2005

¹⁷B Hvinden and H Johansson *Welfare governance and the remaking of citizenship* 2005

¹⁸ Hvinden and Johansson 2005 s 106-113

Formal and substantial rights: In Sweden the citizenship is built on "ethnos", which means that citizenship is inherited through kinship.¹⁹ As an immigrant in Sweden you are not formally a citizen until you have stayed in the country for several years and you have to apply for it. On the other hand one has access to a battery of welfare services. You are for example entitled to services like school, medic care and assistance, like social assistance without having a formal citizenship. But in order to make citizenship more substantial you have to be included into the social security schemes which mainly are depending on that you are a part of the labour force. The activation policy that is meant to make inclusion into the labour market come true is as mentioned above conditioned and the partakers have obligations and are subjected to sanctions. What decides the conditions, obligations, sanctions and rights for the active citizen immigrant is the local administration of the policy. This is taking place in the concrete citizen relation.

The concrete citizen relation connected to social rights: There are two types of relations between the state and the citizens that define social rights. The abstract or ideological defines the principal and universal rights, the concrete is taking place in the contact between the sole citizen and a special organisation in the stately or local government²⁰

If we focus on the concrete citizen relation and connect the administration of activation policy with social rights we could discern some components that define the concept. Social rights could be related to three elements of citizenship rights: Who has a legitimate claim to welfare rights, on what conditions, and which institutions should provide welfare services and benefits.²¹

If we connect these elements to Swedish activation policy we can conclude that it is local government organisations that administrates the policy, and the conditions for the immigrants are that they must take part in the activities that these organisations arrange, or else they

¹⁹ Borevi 2002

²⁰ R Johansson *Vid byråkratins gränser* 1997

²¹ P Dwyer *Welfare rights and responsibilities- contesting social citizenship* 2000

would not get social assistance. The fact that the activation claim has been more accentuated and thereby makes the social assistance conditional is making the concept "conditional citizenship" according to immigrants accurate.

Integration policy as activation policy dilemma I, II and III:

The summary above should lead the reader to suspect that some problems or dilemmas characterize the Swedish model of integration policy as activation policy. The first dilemma is the dual welfare problem, the activation policy is connected to the selective social assistance system, which means a negative and individually based selection of immigrants that are stigmatising. The second problem is the fact that the policy is locally administrated and regulated by a frame law and thereby subjected to local variations and administrators discretion. The third problem in this model is the redistribution – recognition dilemma.²² How can you at the same time recognize the needs of different groups and redistribute the welfare equally? Fraser identifies two different types of justice, the social justice and the symbolic justice, where the first is related to redistribution and the later to recognition. She means that the ultimate model to create justice in both cases is to use a social policy that is both universal and transformative - a social policy that in a wide meaning has a universal distribution and is transformed in relation to the needs of different groups. The local, selective and conditional character of the activation policy that at the same time could offer resources for inclusion into the labour market makes it into a kind of quagmire when it comes to the relation to social rights. It could offer a way into the welfare society, connected to certain recognition of individuals and groups needs. On the other hand the contrary is possible and it all depends on the administration of the policy– it is in the immigrants meeting with the local organisations that everything is decided.

²² N Fraser *Justice interruptus: Critical reflections on the 'postsocialist' condition* 1997

So the uncertainty that the local administration creates according to rights, possibilities but also obligations for the `active (immigrant) citizen´ are of tremendous weight. What is happening in the local administration could be understood using the concepts differentiation and governmentality.

Governance, Governmentality and differentiation

In the turn towards the active welfare state the governing of the same has become changed – the direction is now governance rather than government. Governance is more directed to influencing and enabling strategies rather than direct authority. Governing takes place through multiple agencies, relations and practices.²³ In the Swedish activation policy this is visible through the local character of the administration, through the use of market solutions for the activated (for example education for the activated produced of knowledge companies), and through the direction on participation mentioned before.

Though the direction on governance and participation should be able to open up a space for some of the dilemmas the European welfare states has met during the last decades and also invite to solutions for the redistribution – recognition dilemma there is still reason for a more skeptical attitude. As Newman²⁴ points out new forms of governance –or governmentalities – draw `empowered´ subjects into new fields of power based on autonomy coupled with responsibility where governance takes place through a range of strategies and technologies that constitutes self-disciplining subjects. Then the idea of new governance might rather be understood as new strategies of regulation and control.

Newman also draws attention to that in new governance models we should rather view power as associated with professional disciplines than as inscribed in the state and its

²³ Newman *Remaking governance introduction* 2005a

²⁴ Newman 2005a

institutions.²⁵ The Swedish activation policy is as mentioned before locally administrated and the professionals are directed in their decisions only by a frame law. In all public administration there is also a differentiation of clients or users into different categories.²⁶ Also in the new governing approach this is necessary to deal with the different needs of service users.

As Newman sees it the categorization of citizens or service users has three implications. It assumes that people can neatly be divided in exclusive groups based on gender, class, race and age, the troubling question of representation arises, and it tends to assume a community of interest and identity among a particular group.²⁷ Drawing on this understanding of governance it is reasonable to expect that the differentiation that takes place in the local administration of activation policy could be problematic. How then can the differentiation been understood.

Differentiation: Differentiation always comes before inclusion, though inclusion should not be necessary without a preceding differentiation. Differentiation could be structural, in terms of a functional, hierarchical or segmentary differentiation,²⁸ but also exists on other levels.

The categorisation of individuals and groups is a phenomenon that is closely tied to the differentiation in the welfare state.²⁹ Tilly³⁰ states that there is a durable inequality, which is based on systematic differences between groups and individuals, and that this is maintained through separate historical epochs. Those categories are based on dichotomised pairs like man/woman or black/white.

The categorical and dichotomised pairs that Tilly identifies could be interpreted in an intersectional perspective. An intersectional perspective addresses questions about how power

²⁵ J Newman *Participative governance and the remaking of the public sphere* 2005b

²⁶ M Lipsky *The paradox of managing discretionary workers in social welfare policy* 1991

²⁷ Newman 2005b

²⁸ N Mortensen *Differentieringer og integrationer – eksklusioner og inklusioner?* 2000

²⁹ Mortensen 2000

³⁰ C Tilly *Durable inequality* 2000

and inequality are intertwined in presumptions about whiteness, gender etc constantly reproduce new markers that make the difference between "us" and "them" to social codes.³¹ Processes for defining the other is according to Dominelli an essential dimension in placing the parameters for social policy.³² The power relations between the dominating groups and other groups are characterised by the formers possibility to force its definition of reality on the later ones. These processes are also embedded in and reproduced in the social welfare system. Lewis means that there is a discursive production of "racialized" knowledge that places individuals into categories in the organisations that administrates social policy. The construction is both material and discursive and central for the categorisation and for the right to benefits and assistance.³³ Several Swedish studies have also showed that "rasified" discourses contribute to a differentiation of clients and users of welfare that are unfavourable to immigrants.³⁴

So we can conclude that there are processes of differentiation based on power relations shaped in different contexts that does matter – in the text laid out below I should try to sketch out how lingering discourses has been shaped during decades in the Swedish welfare state and how it affect the 'active (immigrant) citizen' in the activation policy.

Intersections of power relations shape lingering discourses

I would like to make explicit that the Swedish integration policy as activation policy not only is problematic because of the dual-welfare dilemma. But also and foremost because the local variations in the administration often are based on what could be called lingering discourses.

Three of the most fundamental discourses are described below.

³¹ D Mulinari och P de los Reyes *Intersektionalitet* 2005

³² L Dominelli *Multiculturalism, anti-racism and social work in Europe* 1998

³³ G Lewis *Race, gender, social welfare, encounters in a postcolonial society* 2000

³⁴ I Molina och P de los Reyes *Kalla mörkret natt! Kön, klass och ras/etnicitet i det postkoloniala Sverige* 2002; F Herzberg *Gräsrotsbyråkrati och normativ svenskhet* 2003; E Franzen *Socialbidrag bland invandrare* 1997; Hedblom 2004

The genderized social policy discourse: Is an old discourse connected with the constructing of the Swedish "Peoples home" (or the Swedish model) that with Hirdmans words "was built on the iron- hard law of separation"³⁵ In the social engineers Sweden men and women had explicit roles where the women took care of the children and the old in the home, were housewives, and the men were doing the paid work and supported the family, were family supporters. This model which still is common in many European countries,³⁶ was predominant in Sweden until the late 1970-ties when the Swedish women entered the labour market. Still there is a very stringent diversity between women's labour market (they are often employed in public stately or community based organisations and they are over represented in care professions) and men's (they are often employed in the private market), and when it comes to the division of the non-paid work where the women do the most.³⁷

The black and white discourse: The racialized discourse is, as I have mentioned not uncommon in the administration of welfare. It is produced in a national context and is reproduced in the local majority society and in the administration of the social policy. This discourse has also a base in the construction of the "peoples home" that besides being connected to diversity between man and woman also were connected to a strong belief in the superiority of the Swedish race. The origin is to seek in one, for the time being, typical race biology with a strong connection to the social planning that one thought should make the Social democratic dream society come true during the 1930-ties³⁸ One could say that there was from the beginning a racified discourse embedded in the social policy. When the race biology lost its importance after the second world war it was replaced by what one may call ethnic absolutism, which means that ethnicity is seen as stable and fixed categories rather than

³⁵ Y Hirdman *Genussystemet – reflektioner kring kvinnors sociala underordning* 1988, Y Hirdman *Att lägga livet tillrätta* 2000

³⁶ B Pfau-Effinger *New forms of citizenship and social integration* 2005

³⁷ SOU 1998:6

³⁸ L Holgersson *Socialpolitik och socialt arbete, Histori och ideer* 2000

changeable positions established in relations.³⁹ In practice this ideological figure is not so different from the one race biology created, and that is why one might say that the social policy even in this case is characterized by a lingering discourse.

The Christian (western) morality discourse: Though Sweden today is a secularised country with a small share of the population who are active Christians and with a church separated from the state, one could interpret it as if a remnant from a dominant Lutheran belief has been imprinted into the local society. And that this is of vital importance for them who can be a part of it and for them who cannot. The Lutheran belief in Sweden was connected to the profane world in that way that the royal and religious power was strongly related and also a part of everyday life. This could be illustrated with what Luther called "the worldly regiment" which was represented by the king and the Swedish church, hierarchy and discipline, obedience and respect.⁴⁰ So maybe one should not be surprised when it is possible to identify a differentiation in Christian versus Muslim, but see the Christian/Lutheran heritage as a lingering discourse which strongly has affected the society and also penetrates the social policy, and excludes the "other" e.g. the "Muslim"? Can one today say that there is a discourse based on the contradictional pair Christian/Muslim in the Swedish local administration of policy that affects the inclusion of "Muslim" immigrants. At least some studies of the administration of activation policy suggest that.⁴¹

Basically maybe one could state that the discourses described above and the differentiation that comes with it are built on the idea of the "other". The "other" is a European invention that serves as an abstract reflection.⁴² The problem with the thought of the "other" is that you cannot identify degrees of exclusion, but also that you agree to an image of "ethnic absolutism" when the "other" is defined. Maybe it should be possible to talk about the "other"

³⁹ Lewis 2000

⁴⁰ R Ambjörnsson *Den skötsamme arbetaren* 1998

⁴¹ Hedblom 2004, A Hedblom *Social rights through integration policy as activation policy* 2006

⁴² E Said *Orientalism* 1997

”other” instead, e.g. the ”other” is always defined by several dichotomical pairs that in a certain combination fall out as positive or negative for an immigrant depending on in which context it takes place. With reference to the context that the integration policy played out as activation policy in Sweden constitutes, the combination that seems to be most exclusionary, is that one of being a ” Muslim” “black” ”woman”.⁴³

Conclusion

In conclusion I would like to highlight the “Integration policy as activation policy” dilemma III, which consists of the discourses that are built into the Swedish local majority society, but also transformed into the social policy. I would like to suggest that these discourses could affect the policy deeply, considering that the construction, as in this case, is spelled out as activation policy, built on a dual-welfare model, locally administrated and individually conditioned. I also suggest that the discourses presented above are part of the construction of the Swedish integration policy that deeply affects the outcome for the sole individual or citizen, and as said above the citizen that is defined as “Muslim” “black” “woman” seems to be the most excluded.

Another interesting problem that deserves to be pointed out is the Personal active citizenship versus the Public conditional citizenship dilemma. Though the immigrants that are taking part of the activation policy are at risk of being differentiated into categories as described above they also are positioned and disciplined into governable subject. The categorization is problematic though it is based on lingering discourses but also because the users in one category are seen as having the same needs based on that they have similar identities. This stands in direct conflict with the basic ideas of participative citizenship, which

⁴³ See Hedblom 2004 and Hedblom 2006

is related to the idea of individuals autonomy to formulate their needs in a participative process.

As said above they also are conditional citizens. The categorization is at risk of, if positioning individuals into a passive citizenship, to stand in direct conflict with the ideology of the 'active citizen'. If for example categorized as a home-wife that many 'muslim' women are they are at risk of never entering the labor market and thereby became a passive citizen rather than an active. Finally - the two kinds of 'active citizenship' that are mixed in the context of Swedish activation policy with its obligations and conditions but also the turn to the participative citizenship in terms of user participation in the organizations that administrates the policy seems to stand in conflict with each other and emanates from totally different contexts. When the conditional citizenship with its effort on obligations and sanctions, easily could be seen as coming from the socio liberal context where emphases lies on enforcement and use of sanctions directed to exposed groups, subjected to paternalistic policies, the emphases in the republican understanding lies on the citizens (users) autonomy, possibilities and capacities. So when the socio liberal understanding of the 'active citizen' goes well with the (old) "dual- welfare" context, the republican understanding of the concept don't seem to mix so well with it. The old context and the discourses set within it also seem to been able to create passive citizens rather than active ones. Maybe there is also where the paradox arrives – the old context and the new understanding of the 'active citizen' could not mix and are thereby at risk of being contra productive.

You might say that there is in several aspects a *clash of politics* when integration policy is spelled out as activation policy. The universal and multicultural ideology that characterizes the integration policy is in sharp contrast to the activation policy one has chosen in order to make the integration come true. Not only because it is selective but also because it makes a

categorization of individuals possible based on genderized and racialized discourses that are at risk of positioning them into passive citizens.

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