

# On music and the rhetoric of multiculturalism?

by Owe Ronström, 1992

Multicultural Sweden - does it really exist? In newspapers, books, TV and radio, all the information channels which together constitute “the public debate,” Sweden is today often represented as a country where diversity is growing. The equation is simply presented: immigrants and refugees become more numerous, thus increasing the variety of people, languages, styles, genre, and entire cultures.

But is it really that simple? The questions concerning this new cultural diversity are many and difficult. Of what does it consist? How can it be described? How and under what circumstances does it become visible? In what contexts, in what arenas does “the multicultural Sweden“ take shape?

These are questions central to the on-going research project “Blandsverige - cultural and social organisation of diversity in Sweden“<sup>1</sup> at The Institute for Folklife Research in Stockholm. The primary object of investigation is Sweden as a multicultural society. The goal is to study:

- 1) how concepts of and the program for multicultural Sweden are created,
- 2) how and through which channels ideas are spread,
- 3) how the ideas are implemented and used in various contexts. (Cf. Ehn 1989).

## Forms of diversity in Sweden

My part of the research project has as its aim the investigation of expressive forms of cultural complexity, how and in what contexts cultural diversity is dramatized in concrete situations. Thus far much of the investigation has been directed towards the third question in the problem complex presented above; how ideas concerning multicultural Sweden

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<sup>1</sup> The participants in the research project “Blandsverige - Social and cultural organisation of diversity in Sweden,” include Billy Ehn, Barbro Klein, Oscar Pripp, Annick Sjögren and Owe Ronström. See Ehn, Klein, Ronström, Sjögren 1990, Ehn 1989, 1990.

have been implemented and used.<sup>2</sup> In this article I shall discuss some aspects of point two above: how and along what paths ideas are spread. My point of departure is a study of an encounter between cultural administrators and teachers

It is thus the expressive forms of diversity which are the focal point of my study. However, a study of the organization of diversity necessarily also implies a study of how social categories arise and are maintained, because social organisation requires and is based upon social categorisation. My thinking here is based on the view that social categories are a result of complex and continual negotiation processes /between/ among various parties. These different parties try to interpret impressions of one another, at the same time that they try to control the impressions that they themselves give. It is not certain that any actual accord arises. The interaction can continue as if all the parties were in agreement about how one should understand one another, even if that is not actually the case. This line of thinking implies not only that one *is* someone (as in the widely accepted "roots" model, which presents identity as something inherited). Equally, one *becomes* as a result of the interaction which takes place within given interpretive contexts or *frames* (Goffman 1974). There is always the possibility of interpreting people in a number of different ways at the same time, but by being placed in a specific frame, certain categorisations become more relevant than others. The frames are a type of guidelines for how social interaction is to be interpreted. Thus the same fundamental categorisation process can have entirely different results, even when involving the same people. This means that cultural, social, ethnic and other identities have to be displayed, enacted, or expressed in some way to become relevant in everyday social life. Deeply rooted feelings of group belonging may exist, but if these feelings are not expressed publicly in an appropriate form, they may have little importance for the way in which one is regarded and treated. *Relevance* is thus a key word.

From this line of thinking follows that a study of the social and cultural organisation of diversity must derive from observations of interaction in specific situations, where attention is paid both to what is actually done and said and to how the interaction is framed and assigned meaning. Especially important to study are those situations where the agents themselves consciously present and dramatize social and cultural diversity, in word and deed. Here the key word is *visibility*. By means of a process which Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has called "cultural foregrounding", social groups and categories stress their internal differences (Kirshenblatt-

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<sup>2</sup> See Ronström 1990a, Ronström 1990b, Ronström 1992a, Ronström 1992b, 1992d.

Gimblett 1983, 1992). Not all differences are equally useful in the struggle for social space, and it is not possible to make all of them visible. There appear to be certain types of behaviour, certain situations and arenas, which may be utilized better than others to present social and cultural differences. They function as an upstage against which the differences may be made visible. By using a limited number of forms and modes of expression within certain given frames, various categories and groups in a society, immigrants as well as retirees, youths, the deaf, the blind, and many others, will come to stand side-by-side on pre-determined social scenes and arenas. They thereby become visible for one another and thus also comparable, their internal differences being temporarily reduced. In these foregrounding processes forms derived from culture's expressive domains have received special importance, forms which emphasize body, ears, eyes, smell taste, rather than the mind and intellect. (To use Merleau Ponty's well-known distinction, displaying diversity is not so much concerned with "I know" or "I can", but rather with "I do".) Studies in western Europe and USA have shown that it is often by arranging events with "typical" food, dance, music, in "typical" clothing and with certain "typical" symbols strongly foregrounded, that various groups in society publicly present their ethnic/social/cultural identity. The groups thus acquire or are ascribed their own stereotyped "trademarks", which comprehensively and concretely symbolize what it means to belong to a certain group (Klein 1988, Ronström 1988, 1990a, Ronström 1992d, Slobin and Ronström 1989).

In this nexus of strongly typified forms of public dramatization dance and music play a special role, especially when people for some reason want to make ethnic and social differences concrete and visible. There are many reasons for this. One concerns the rapidly increasing extent and importance of dance, and even more of music, in society as a whole. That, in turn, is coupled to a steadily growing access to music in all forms, styles, and genres, both live and mediated, which have made it possible to express all kinds of aesthetic and affective values, social position and status, and identities in a very nuanced way. Recent ethnomusicological research from many parts of the world has shown that music and dance have the potential of functioning as group symbols and as a means of sustaining and strengthening feelings of group solidarity and communality. One reason is that music and dance are multivalent systems that can be charged with multiple meanings, emotions, and values on many different levels simultaneously. This makes music and dance especially apt to express complex and even contradictory "messages". The power of music and dancing lies in the fact that a group of people can experience strong feelings of group solidarity and communality without having to discover

whether they have anything at all in common beyond these feelings and the music and dance which were their source.

Music and dance thus seem to possess the special capability of simultaneously giving rise to and becoming the expression for social solidarity and conveying feelings of group identity. That perhaps explains why so many groups spend so much time, energy, and money on music-making and dancing.<sup>3</sup> It is easy to find groups in Sweden and other European countries, especially among the young that not only use music and dance as their most important, or even their only, symbol, but that are built solely on the fact that members enjoy the same kind of music and dance.

To summarize: What I am concentrating on are those expressive forms of behaviour that make categorisation in terms of ethnic and other social groupings relevant, expressive forms that in one way or another serve as symbols for such groups, and types of situations where such behaviour is possible and appropriate. After this general outline of the research project, I would like to discuss some aspects of the production and distribution of models and ideas about “multiculturalism” in connection with music and dance. Several questions will be addressed. Who are the agents? What kinds of values are they launching? How are the specific ideals and models disseminated, through which channels, and by which genres and forms?

## **Svartskallar and Swedes**

In November 1990 *Rikskonsserter* (Swedish National Institute for Concerts) arranged a meeting, or as it was labelled in the formal invitation leaflet, an “inspiration day”, entitled Blackheads and Swedes.<sup>4</sup> The intention was to assemble primary and secondary school teachers already working with or about to start working with children of different nationalities.

The meeting is interesting from several points of view. First, one reason for the meeting was the screening of a video film called *Turkisk musik och dans i skolan* (Turkish music and dance in the school), a documentation of a project in a school south of Stockholm. The film was presented as a concrete model of how “multiculturalism” could be realized in an ordinary Swedish primary school. Another aim was to initiate an exchange of ideas about how to work with children with different cultures, as it was

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<sup>3</sup> One aspect which is developed in my study of dance and music among Yugoslavs in Stockholm (Ronström 1992c).

<sup>4</sup> (The expression *svartskallar* [blackheads] refers to immigrants, especially dark-haired immigrants)

expressed. Thus, it was clearly stressed from the outset that at this meeting ideas and models about how to organize social and especially ethnic diversity in Swedish schools were to be presented and discussed.

The issue of multiculturalism in Swedish schools presents problems for several reasons. One factor often not recognized is that it is not at all clear whether the promotion of ethnic and cultural differences is in accord with Swedish school law. The Swedish school system has long been based on “justice and equality“, that is that all children shall have the same rights and opportunities to education in the school, regardless of race, religion, class, or other social or cultural differences. Thus according to Swedish law, ethnicity should not be a relevant factor in Swedish schools.<sup>5</sup>

The meeting organized by *Rikskonserter* dealt not only with recognizing the various ethnic backgrounds of children, but also with finding ways to make deliberate use of their foreignness as a resource. It is clear that the legally sanctioned ideas about “equality“ in the school system are not readily compatible with ideas about multiculturalism and ethnic diversity. I had thus hoped to stumble into a potential conflict between value systems about education, upbringing, and raising children. Moreover, since the education of children often raises normative questions about ethical, moral, and cultural values, I had hoped to find at least some **program /programmatic?/** statements about Sweden in the process of becoming a multicultural society. However, there were few open conflicts at the meeting, but instead the programmatic statements about the virtues of ethnic and cultural diversity were all the more abundant.

## Preaching multiculturalism

Let me first dwell on the type of people who were attracted to the meeting, how it was framed, its underlying tone and atmosphere. Over 90 people had signed up in advance, far more than expected, and nearly all showed up. The majority were young and middle-aged female teachers from various parts of Sweden, most of whom worked in one way or another with music or dance. Many of them has a special status in their schools, as “driving spirits“, idealistic, hard-working and with a burning interest in a morally and ethically good cause. These “driving spirits“ belong to a category of people usually described in anthropology as “entrepreneurs“, people with a special ability to capture ideas and trends and transmit them

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<sup>5</sup> After a heated debate an exception was made in the early 1970s, when pupils speaking languages other than Swedish were given the right to receive education also in their native languages.

in various directions. They comprise an important intermediary level between the production of ideas and the realities of everyday life.

The meeting took place in Gamla Stan, the Old Town of Stockholm, in an old and beautiful hall owned by the city parish and normally reserved for the activities of the church council. Although there were no religious symbols openly displayed, there were many things about the meeting which made it easy to regard it as a kind of religious meeting.

The arrangers had called it an “inspiration day“. When the meeting started, the electric lights were dimmed. On a low table at the head of the room a small candle was lighted. There a representative from *Rikskonserten* welcomed the participants, followed by another who explained the purpose of the meeting in a language full of rhetorical phrases:

Everyone who works in schools knows what a job it is to start something new, when one goes outside the accepted framework, when one goes beyond the bounds of the ordinary. It means extra work beyond all comparison. Still there are those who take these jobs and do them. That’s unbelievable, I think. And often I hear that without him or her, it never would have been possible; she is a real burning spirit. There are burning spirits all around, and I think that many of them are sitting here; ... what collected experience sitting under one roof. It’s unbelievable! That we must use! There are nearly 90 of us, but we still intend to give to one another, to exchange experiences, to give support. Perhaps I can’t do anything in my school, perhaps it will be next year. You know what the climate is like. Perhaps we’ll receive acknowledgement, that I’ll be acknowledged, that my work will be acknowledged.

After this introduction, some teachers rose and ‘testified’ about their experiences from working with multiculturalism in the schools. Two teachers from a school in a suburb southwest of Stockholm described and showed a video film from a dance and music performance in their school where pupils with “immigrant backgrounds“ performed with repertoires from “their own cultures“, as it was expressed. In conclusion one of the teachers gave the following summary:

This is something very exceptional, this performance. One works and works with the chorus groups; it’s very stressful and chaotic. One has to nearly carry people to the rehearsals sometimes. You know how it is. But when the performance is over, one suddenly feels the holism, a totality, a sense of unity which cannot be described, and that is the strength of the performance, this fabric. Suddenly one feels a sense of unity with the whole world. Try this diversity some time. I promise that it will give you rich rewards!

These are but two examples of the kind of language that the speakers used. The live music that was presented at the end of the day was introduced

with similar language. For the meeting as a whole, the music had a function similar to the *introitus*, *laude*, and *jubilae* of a high mass. To complete the picture the gathering was brought to a close by the communal singing of the song by Violeta Parras *Gracias a la vida* (I wish to thank life). The language used, the tone, and the atmosphere of the meeting made it comparable to a sermon among missionaries about to set out among the heathens.

The very room, the decor, the candles, the songs and dances, the missionary spirit, formed the frame for the meeting which made it strikingly similar to a revival meeting. I do not wish to be ironic, but rather to point out that for many people, and certainly for most who attended that meeting, “multiculturalism” or “ethnic diversity” is not simply an idea or an ideology among others. For most of them it is an ideal that has a very strong ethical and moral side. It is regarded as the way to a better future for us all, hence the missionary ambitions. The basic, underlying value or idea is that multiculturalism, ethnic diversity, is something naturally and unquestionably good and to be agreed upon without discussion.

However, in Sweden the idea of a multicultural society is new, and there was an easily recognizable current of uncertainty underlying the whole issue. This uncertainty was the reason for the arrangement of the meeting in the first place, and there were traces of this on all levels, from the texts which were produced directly for the meeting, to the oral presentations and the video films. While it appeared clear for the participants that multiculturalism and ethnic diversity are positive, something by which Sweden as a whole without a doubt will be enriched, it was not at all especially clear what this multiculturalism would really imply or how it should be brought about and practiced. For people who want to work with multiculturalism there is a great need for concrete models, and the arrangers hoped to be able to provide such models through the video films and the exchange of experiences among the teachers.

The basic uncertainty notwithstanding, the meeting still had a very prominent form about which there was no uncertainty. It seemed as if this form had been worked out and used previously in connection with similar issues, that it was modelled on similar meetings to which at least the more experienced participants were accustomed. The generalization that could be derived from this is that specific forms and channels seem to exist for the dissemination of new ideas and concepts, and that this meeting was cast in such a form. That in turn makes it easier to understand the rapid spread of certain types of values and ideas among the type of people involved here.

## The expressive forms of diversity

At the meeting various forms of expressive behaviour were presented. One rather typical project, presented by home-language teachers, Swedish teachers, and teachers of preparatory classes, was an “intercultural week“. In preparation for this week the school was decorated with flags, posters, and information on various countries. Home-language teachers went around in the classes and talked about the language and customs in their countries of origin, and the children also learned a few words and phrases in the various languages. Children with a foreign background wore little flags which revealed “their“ countries. Parents came to the school with “typical“ cakes and in the classroom folk tales were read and songs were sung from the different lands, for example, *Brother John* in a number of different languages. In the lunchroom “a special dish“ was served, “typical“ for a certain country, and various types of bread were baked and displayed. The teacher who presented the project explained: “The countries that the bread came from were named to stress the groups from those countries.“

The forms and the activities which were used to make ethnic diversity visible were largely the same in all of the projects presented: flags, food, bread, cakes, folktales, and, of course, dance and music. These forms and activities were carefully selected to be “typical“, that is culturally or ethnically *representative* in a very straightforward way: a child from China - a Chinese song, a child from Hungary - a Hungarian song. In most of the cases the songs were short and simple traditional folksongs, and many of them were sung in Swedish. To find such a repertoire is not always easy. In one school there was a child from Eritrea who, according to the model, should be represented by an Eritrean song. Since the teachers could not find any such a song in the available songbooks or from any other source, they decided to include an Israeli song in the program instead. As one of the teachers explained, “Israel was as near to Eritrea as we could come“. Although there were no American children in the school, *Oh, Susanna* was included “because it is so captivating“.

The ambition was thus to find a representative repertoire on a simple “one-to one“ basis, but in practice it was also necessary to take into consideration *what was practically possible and aesthetically acceptable for the teachers*. Everywhere it was the teachers and other adults who initiated and carried out the various projects. The goal was to bring the immigrant children to the forefront, to make visible the ethnic diversity in the schools, but it was carried out according to the conditions of the adults and not those of the immigrant children.

On an abstract and general plane, that relationship between the preachers of multiculturalism and its practitioners can be applied to the entire Swedish social arena. “Ethnic diversity“ and “multiculturalism“ are largely something that Swedish society arranges for immigrants from various countries, by defining the conditions to which the immigrants must adhere. By means of *altercasting*, a process which implies that those in power in society create the forms within which strangers are allowed to perform, a specific Swedish “immigrant culture“ has arisen. To use a common metaphor, the various refugee and immigrant groups in Sweden are seen as a multifarious mosaic, made up by stones of different forms and colours, while Sweden and Swedes are commonly viewed as the cement which holds the stones together.<sup>6</sup> It is important that the stones in the mosaic are different from one another, but it is even more important that they share a basic similarity which makes them comparable to one another. The differences must be made visible, must be dramatized with the same means in order to make them comparable. Thus all groups must have access to specific repertoires of music, dance, clothes, and food that fulfil two basic and sometimes incompatible criteria: they must be typical for the group and different from other groups. Not all expressive forms meet these criteria.

The mosaic metaphor is based on the widespread concept that each immigrant group has a distinctively limited culture which can be properly represented by a limited repertoire of symbols and symbolic activities, and that these differences in behaviour and thought among individuals result from their having “different cultures“. This is a popular version of the old Tylorian “community and culture“ scheme, which under the title “the anthropological culture concept“ has taken root in everyday language during recent decades, transmitted by ethnologists and anthropologists. That, in turn, has resulted in the reduction of multiculturalism to “immigrants from many cultures displaying their foreignness“, an euphemism for the more or less unfamiliar behaviour of immigrants. In such a light the tributes paid to multiculturalism and ethnic multiplicity appear rather as a special, but effective type of strategy for achieving the earlier evident but now officially abandoned goal of immigrant policy *assimilation and integration*.

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<sup>6</sup> Another way to describe the multiculturalism of Sweden is as the metaphor of a shimmering pearl necklace. Each pearl represents a specific culture and Sweden is seen as the thread on which the pearls are strung. Another metaphor suggesting greater opportunities for change is to see the different cultures as glass pieces in a kaleidoscope, forming new patterns when turned in the hands of the cultural majority.

## The underlying goals

What are then the goals of the teachers and cultural administrators gathered to inspire one another through music and dance to facilitate the growth of a multicultural Sweden? Two clearly expressed goals appear, as especially:

1) helping children to develop as individuals. Immigrant children develop stronger and better identities, if they can be helped to “know their own culture“.

2) one who knows his own culture can more easily understand and respect the cultures of others.

Behind these goals are hidden two different but easily unified lines of thought. The first, based on varied individual psychological images, presents culture as something which one has, as a commodity that is somehow inscribed in individuals. The other presents culture as a kind of language with an identifiable and discreet repertoire that can be lost if not practiced. Together both of these lines of thought comprise a powerful combination with great efficiency in social interaction between authorities of various types and immigrants.

Both of these goals are very clearly expressed in the film which was shown at the meeting. The film, produced by *Rikskonsserter*, deals with a group of school youths who dance Turkish folk-dances a couple of times a week under the direction of an experienced dancer and choreographer from Istanbul, who has lived in Sweden since 1979. In the film we see the youths at rehearsals and performances, and we hear the dance instructor, the regular music teachers, and also some of the girls themselves explain what dance means to them. The dance instructor says:

I am convinced that it is good for them [to dance]. It is their culture. When they have learned this, through dance and music, it is easier for them to gain their identity. Then they can adapt here without being assimilated themselves.

Shortly after we see close-ups of a number of laughing girls, dark-eyed and dark-haired. Some are dressed in the colourful “Turkish trousers“ and thin muslin shawls, others in jeans and sweaters. At the same time the speaker’s voice says: “A multicultural perspective on instruction means that all students must have the opportunity to develop a positive self-image and thus also a pride in their cultural origins.“ In the next sequence the school’s music teacher explains: “I understood that this was a need that they had - to demonstrate their Turkishness“. In conclusion the same music teacher summarized the goals of the project, as well as the central message of the film:

It can be said that the work with the Turkish song and dance group has made the Turkish culture visible in the school and other cultures as well, for example, Yugoslavian culture ... In the long run I hope that this can also contribute to a change in attitude: that we are not alike, but that we are equally important.

The message could not have been presented more clearly. To demonstrate one's Turkishness is regarded as a need of the girls; it should give them the opportunity to develop a positive self-image and a pride in their cultural origins. What is nearly totally ignored in the film, however, (and in the oral and written presentation) is that in the midst of the Turkish girls are also found two girls of *Finnish* origin. These two girls, as well as their Turkish friends, had taken part in the dancing under similar conditions from the beginning; they had learned the same dances from the same dance instructor. (The language of instruction was primarily Swedish). Here is another example of a rather common conflict between the model and reality. The model prescribes a one-to-one relation between identity and cultural origin, but in practice it is common to adapt to a far more complicated and composite reality. Exactly as in the film on the Turkish school children, such an adaptation can very well be achieved without having to abandon or even modify the model.

On the whole the music and dance presented at the meeting bore a rather peculiar relation to the cultural traditions of the children's home countries. It mainly consisted of traditional songs and dances, or popular music cast in a "folk style" and treated as representative of a folk or a nation in some way or another. However, if this repertoire is examined in relation to the original cultures, we find that most of the songs and dances share a basic "problematic" quality. This may be explained by discussing a few examples. Two teachers showed some sequences of a very successful dance and music performance at their high school. One of these sequences showed two girls dancing the well-known Greek *hasapiko*. This is a dance belonging to a repertoire known as *rebetika*, which was developed in small taverns in Athens and Thessaloniki in the early twentieth century. This repertoire has since long back in history been associated with hashish, criminality, and prostitution and was also forbidden for many years. Although the *rebetika* has lost most of its special connotations during the last decades, due to the film *Zorba* and the exploitation of the tourist industry, for many Greeks it still has such strong "lower class" connotations that the *hasapiko* cannot easily be used to represent Greek cultural heritage. That is particularly the case when it is performed by young girls dressed as men!

Still another sequence at the same screening showed four Turkish teenage boys who played the long-necked lute *saz*, accompanied by the little drum *darbuka*. *Saz*-playing has become popular among boys of

Turkish origin in Sweden, Germany, and other countries. However, in many villages of central Anatolia, where the parents of these young musicians were born, playing the *saz* is regarded as something done by either artists famed from radio and TV or poor Gypsies. As young village boys belong to neither category, starting to play the *saz* is not always easy.<sup>7</sup> In this case the *saz* were electrically amplified, a practice which has become popular all over Turkey in the last decade. However, this practice is also a topic of debate, and in the state sponsored orchestras, such as that of Radio Ankara, electrically amplified folk instruments are not allowed.

Still another sequence presented a girl performing as belly-dancer to taped Arabic music. Belly dancing has recently become a craze among adolescent girls in Stockholm, especially girls of immigrant origin. There are many versions of belly dancing, from the “innocent“ with the emphasis on the dance itself, to the sexually offensive, with the emphasis on the female body. The version that was shown here was clearly of the latter type, and the dancer, an ordinary teenage school girl, without a doubt would not have been allowed to perform this kind of dance among her parents’ generation, either in Sweden or anywhere in the Near East.

Also much of the music which was presented live at the meeting had a content which in one way or another could not readily be accepted in representative contexts of the “culture of origin.“ For example, a number of Indian songs from Bolivia were performed by an immigrated Bolivian Indian and his Swedish wife. According to their own presentation, to sing such songs in the Indian language publicly in Bolivia, could easily have rendered them a stay in the nearest police station.

The point I want to make here is that the great demand for representative behaviour of immigrants in multicultural Sweden seems to create a space between “ours“ and “theirs“, where neither “our“ nor “their“ cultural values are fully valid. This space can then be used, as we have seen, for experiments with forms and styles that for one reason or the other would not have been allowed in other types of situations.

“Multiculturalism“ or “ethnic diversity“ may then work as a frame that provides a free zone, an open space to be used in new and unexpected ways and still, for most of the audience, function as a symbol of the group’s cultural traditions. However, this free zone is encircled by the surrounding Swedish society, thus also ultimately defined and controlled by Swedish authorities.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> For example, a well-known *saz* player in the Stockholm area, born in a central Anatolian village, started to play only after his arrival in Sweden. Having visited his old village with his *saz*, another young man there took up the instrument, inspired by the visitor: “If he can play, I can play,“ the man reasoned.

<sup>8</sup> This is symbolically and metaphorically well-expressed in the last minutes of the film, when the dance group performs in a suburban shopping center. Dressed up in “folk costumes“ the young dancers

Before concluding, let me turn briefly to another film produced by *Rikskonserten* to provide a concrete model for others to follow. This time the issue is not how to organize ethnic diversity in ordinary schools, but refugees in refugee camps. The film, *Music in flight*, is a video documentary from a pilot project with musical activities in Swedish refugee camps during 1989 and 1990. The interesting thing about this film, which my own experience as a musician confirms, is that when it comes to refugees, the ambition to find straightforward representations of foreign cultures, as in the “roots“ model presented above, gives way to another and radically different strategy for social organization and categorization. In the refugee context, music and dance are not regarded so much as symbols of specific cultural identities as they are activities of great therapeutic value, a way to help the refugees adapt to a new situation and to integrate them into Swedish society.

Hence there is less need for exclusively representative, typical, and different songs. Rather, broad humanistic values are stressed, music as a common denominator of human beings, irrespective of background. As expressed on the back cover of the film:

People in refugee camps live in a sort of vacuum, a no man's land. They have left their countries, their homes, their loved ones for an uncertain future. In the camp they receive food, shelter and instruction in Swedish. But how does one approach the new culture? Perhaps through music from person to person.

The three Swedish musicians in the film try to realize their goals by selecting a repertoire in which everyone could be expected to take part, which is everyone's and no one's: Swedish children's songs and movement games, songs without words, Elvis Presley's *It's all right*, *Mama*, *Lambada*, and *La Bamba*. Here the important thing is participation, being social and active; thus it is the singing that is stressed, not the songs, and dancing, not the dances. The message is summarized in the last sequences of the film, which show the musicians singing a well-known song by John Lennon for and together with refugees from many different countries:

*You may say that I'm a dreamer,  
But I am not the only one.  
I hope some day you'll join us*

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demonstrate the dances they have learned to live music provided by two Turkish musicians in front of friends from school and a few passersby. There, in the inner courtyard of the shopping center, in front of a Swedish public, they perform a very special and strictly controlled form of Turkishness. **As if in /ska det vara så?/** illustration of my point, all the dancing and playing takes place under a sign on the wall behind, which in large letters reads “The School Board“ (Skolöverstyrelsen).

*And the world will live as one.  
Imagine all the people, sharing life in peace.*

## Conclusion

The issue of multiculturalism and ethnic diversity in Sweden is a complex phenomenon. To some it is a threat, to others, such as the teachers gathered in the meeting I have discussed, it is more of a promise. In this presentation of some of the aspects of music and the rhetoric of multiculturalism I have outlined a few of the problems, paradoxes and contradictions. In a very generalized form my main points may be summarized as follows:

- 1) In Sweden "multiculturalism" means basically the same as ethnic diversity, or "people from many countries".
- 2) This multiculturalism or ethnic diversity is realized through a limited set of expressive forms and genres, including music, dance, food, clothes and various symbols (such as flags).
- 3) The expressive forms used to dramatize and visualize ethnic diversity depend largely on ideologies and strategies produced and disseminated, not by the immigrants themselves, but by specific kinds of agents and entrepreneurs in Swedish society (such as music teachers, officers in the cultural bureaucracy etc).
- 4) There are channels specially designed for the dissemination of new ideas among such agents and entrepreneurs.
- 5) There are several different types of ideologies and strategies for organizing social and cultural diversity in Sweden. One, connected to immigrants and ethnic groups in general, emphasizes *differences between groups of people*. Another, connected to refugees, *stress the similarities of individuals*, that we are all human beings. These different strategies are closely associated with specific arenas and situations and how these are framed and defined.

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