

Hur mycket mångfald tål demokratin?

Demokratiska dilemman i ett mångkulturellt Sverige

Andreas Johansson Heinö

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UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG
DEPT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

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Abstract

How diverse, in terms of values, lifestyles and identities, can a society be without negative effects on democracy? To what extent does cultural diversity challenge democracy, and how should we respond to this challenge? These are theoretical and normative questions which are analyzed on a meta-level integrating several academic discourses. The arguments are developed with the help of numerous empirical examples, which are generated mostly, but not solely, from Sweden.

The thesis conceptualizes the multicultural challenge towards democracy in terms of three democratic dilemmas: (i) the dilemma of exclusion, (ii) the dilemma of adaptation, and (iii) the dilemma of legitimacy. These dilemmas are theoretical, and they are constants in the democratic system, i.e. a logical and unavoidable function of democracy. The main argument is that these dilemmas are more difficult to address in a multicultural society. This is the multicultural challenge to democracy. The more diverse a society is, the harder it is to handle the trade-offs in a democratically acceptable way.

Possible responses to these challenges are identified through a critical discussion of three meta-narratives: (i) the narrative of the nation-state, (ii) the narrative of the multicultural society, and (iii) the narrative of conditional tolerance. It is argued that none of these narratives offer any coherent and normatively acceptable responses to the dilemmas. The normative model that is advocated in the thesis combines universal democratic procedures, based on norms of impartiality and tolerance, with an epistemic relativism regarding the substance of democracy. It is also argued that the dilemmas of exclusion and adaptation should be disentangled. This has practical implications, e.g. separating questions of democratic exclusion from the adaptation of democratic values.

Keywords: democracy, cultural diversity, nationalism, liberalism, multiculturalism, multicultural society, Swedish identity, national identity, tolerance.