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Restrictions on RC Extraction

Heinat, Fredrik; Wiklund, Anna-Lena

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LUND UNIVERSITY

PO Box 117
221 00 Lund
+46 46-222 00 00

KNOWING MEN WHO SELL FLOWERS AND ESCAPING THEM

FREDRIK HEINAT & ANNA-LENA WIKLUND

Since Ross's discovery of syntactic islands (Ross 1967), extraction from islands has been the topic of intense research in both theoretical linguistics, e.g. Starke (2001); Boeckx (2012), and psycholinguistics, e.g. Hofmeister & Sag (2010); Sprouse & Hornstein (2013). It was early recognized that the Mainland Scandinavian languages (Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish) are peculiar from a cross-linguistic perspective in allowing extraction from relative clauses, exemplified by Swedish in (1). Early references include Erteschik-Shir (1973), Allwood (1975), Engdahl & Ejerhed (1982); Taraldsen (1981), and Maling & Zaenen, (1982). Complex DPs with a relative clause are otherwise considered *strong islands* (cf. The Complex NP Constraint of Ross 1967); syntactic configurations from which movement is never possible. In this sense, Mainland Scandinavian is peculiar whereas English and other languages are well-behaved, cf. (2).

- (1) [Såna blommor]_i känner jag [en man [som säljer t_i]]. (Swe.)
such flowers know I a man that sells
- (2) *[Those flowers]_i I know [a man [who sells t_i]].

In this talk, we will leave theoretical interpretations of Scandinavian island violations aside and instead scrutinize the restrictions that have been claimed to hold for these extractions, some of which have been used to formulate arguments in analyses of these. We will show that none of these restrictions are specific to relative clause extractions. In fact some of them vanish under closer scrutiny. Given this, any theoretical interpretation of these alleged island violations assuming the existence of such restrictions cannot be on the right track.