This is the published version of a paper presented at Linguistic Association of Great Britain Annual Meeting, Monday 1–Friday 5, September 2014, Oxford.

Citation for the original published paper:

Heinat, F., Wiklund, A. (2014)
Unbounded dependencies in Swedish: apparent restrictions.

N.B. When citing this work, cite the original published paper.

Permanent link to this version:
http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:lnu:diva-38454
Unbounded dependencies in Swedish: apparent restrictions
Anna-Lena Wiklund and Fredrik Heinat

Since the important discovery of syntactic islands (Ross 1967), constraints on extraction from islands has been the topic of intense research in both theoretical linguistics, see Boeckx (2012) for an overview, 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), Taraldsen (1981), Engdahl & Ejerhed (1982), and Maling & Zaenen, (1982). Complex DPs with a relative clause are otherwise considered strong islands (the Complex NP Constraint, 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], känner jag [en man [som säljer t]],
    such flowers know I a man that sells

(2) *[Those flowers], I know [a man [who sells t]].

Whereas the English example can be salvaged by a resumption strategy, resumption decreases acceptability in Swedish and the other Mainland Scandinavian languages (cf. Engdahl 1997):

(3) a. Såna blommor känner jag en man som säljer (*dem).
    such flowers know I a man that sells (them)

b. Those flowers I know a man who sells *(them).

In this talk, we will scrutinize the restrictions that have been claimed to hold for Mainland Scandinavian relative clause extractions, some of which are still used to formulate arguments in analyses of these (Rizzi 2010, Kush et al. 2013, Phillips 2013). We will show that all but one of the restrictions that figure in the literature vanish under closer scrutiny. The remaining one can be derived from general constraints on extraction (the Subject Condition). In essence, the data suggest that relative clauses are not extraction islands in Mainland Scandinavian. Given that no restrictions specific to RCE can be observed in the data, RCE is not peripheral in any syntactic sense. Any theoretical interpretation of the alleged island violations assuming the existence of such restrictions therefor cannot be on the right track.