UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO


Ethnicized Ontologies: From Foreign *Worker* to *Muslim* Immigrant. How Danish Public Discourse moved to the Right through the Question of Immigration


A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirement for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

in

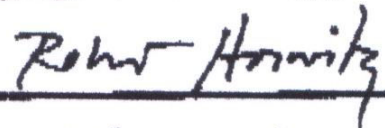Communication

by


Ferruh Yılmaz
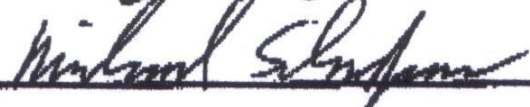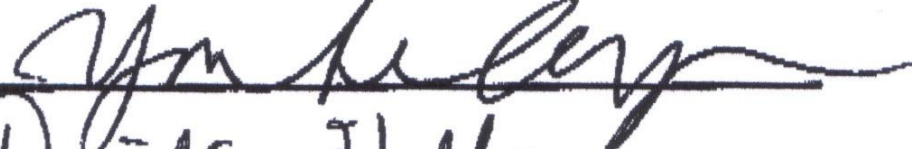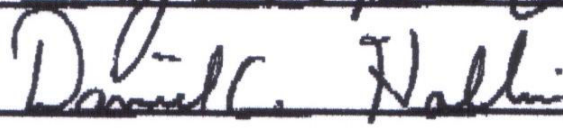

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PUBLICATIONS

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

Ethnicized Ontologies: From Foreign *Worker* to *Muslim* Immigrant

How Danish Public Discourse Moved to the Right through the Question of Immigration

by

Ferruh Yılmaz

Doctor of Philosophy in Communication

University of California, San Diego, 2006

Professor Daniel Hallin, Chair

My thesis, in one sentence, is that the entire political discourse in Denmark (and in many parts of Europe) has moved to the right through the debate on immigration in the last two decades. The left/right distinction is pushed to the background and a cultural one - the "Danish people"/the Muslim immigrant - has come to the forefront as the main dividing line. This means that the redistribution of resources is discussed as a matter of ethnicity and culture rather than other types of social identifications (e.g. class or gender). In short, a new basis for identification has become hegemonic through the articulation of a new internal division based on culture.

The hegemonic change was the result of the nationalist/racist Right's populist intervention in the mid 1980s. Large sections of society did not feel that their concerns

and demands were represented by the political system. In an environment of such profound displacement, it was relatively easy for the populist right to point to immigration as the main threat to society (associated with the welfare system) and to articulate an antagonism between the people (silent majority) and the political and cultural elite that let immigration happen.

The new hegemony is based on a culturalized ontology of the social. The (re)production of immigrants as a threatening force is maintained through a constant focus on cultural issues that are considered as anti-society. In many parts of Europe, cycles of moral panics are created around issues such as honor killings, gang rapes, animal slaughter, violence, female genital mutilation, forced marriages and headscarves. These issues produce repeatedly an unbridgeable divide between Muslim (immigrant) and Danish culture. The orientation towards these issues disperses various social and political actors along the antagonistic divide, often creating insolvable tensions and fractions within social movements.

Reproducing a left/right opposition – regardless of its particular content – is what is at stake. The answer to the populist vision of society is the construction of a new type of hegemony: the strategy or ideal for a future world should be the re-ontologization of the social.

# INTRODUCTION

When the Danish Public Broadcasting Corporation (DR) decided to air special radio programs -- called Rainbow -- for young immigrants in Danish, I was asked to be the producer but I declined the offer even though it was an important opportunity for my personal career development. I did not agree with the mission of the programs although at first glance, there was nothing to disagree about: the written purpose of the program was to provide young immigrants with a channel of communication through which they could discuss their problems. Who can disagree with such a mission? However, it was the second half of the 1980s and there was one more but less pronounced purpose of the broadcasts: to open a window into immigrants' culture for Danish listeners. Whether or not the latter was explicitly articulated did not matter; the end result would be the same: the programs were to be broadcast in a national channel and they consequently function as a window into "immigrants' culture." This is what I did not like about the programs. It was the wrong context (medium) for the right idea.[1]

What is wrong with opening a window into immigrants' culture? Put this way, my objections seem a bit suspicious: why would I try to hide immigrants' culture from the "general" view? Was there anything that could not tolerate in the daylight?

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[1] The radio programs were broadcasted on one of the three national channels. The power and scope of local and commercial radios were very limited. Even if a program were targeted to a specific audience on a national radio, it would potentially reach many more than just the targeted audience given the scarcity of other options.

I declined the offer because I did not think Danish listeners would be able to understand the problems that young immigrants would be discussing. I had a sense that these broadcasts would contribute to the general trend of focusing on immigrants culture–a trend that I already then thought was highly problematic – but I did not have the necessary language and theoretical framework to express my dissatisfactions (not that anybody would listen). This dissertation is an attempt to recapture my objections in a more theoretically informed manner and through a more systematic study of what was happening then and how the 1980s focus on immigrants' culture slowly produced the contemporary racist hegemony in Denmark.

I had, already then, some of the ideas that inform this dissertation. I did, for example, know that the meaning of a phenomenon depended on the context in which it was discussed: I knew that when young immigrants talked about the problems they had with their parents, it would be understood in relation to "immigrants' oppressive cultures" rather than, say, generational problems, or problems specific to Danish contexts. Growing up in Denmark, the youth, too, knew intuitively that broadcasts would primarily be aimed at Danes and their stories were often narrated to fit the culturalized environment that surrounded them. Even if they did not account for their difficulties in cultural terms, the Danish listeners did: if a young immigrant woman explained her difficulties with her parents without referring to culture or religion, Danish listeners would call in to express their support to her struggle against her archaic culture and religion. Given the journalistic preoccupation with conflict stories, the programs were loaded with stories of young immigrant women portrayed as being squeezed between two cultures.

I was disturbed by the pervasive "in-between-cultures" descriptions and I did continuously object to cultural explanations of anything that had to do with immigrants; I was aware that these explanations did not so much reflect immigrant's cultural background per se as Danes' newfound preoccupation with "immigrant culture," which was basically about re-defining Danishness. However, I did not have the theoretical awareness or the language to express that these descriptions and cultural explanations; additionally, programs such as Rainbow were not only "distorted representations" of immigrants' culture, but produced "immigrants' culture" as a meaningful object of discourse and contributed to the formation of a racist hegemony. Rainbow did not open a window into immigrants' culture; it created a world it called "immigrants' culture" through the gaze of the White Danish majority.

"What is wrong with trying to understand other cultures?" one may object, as I often hear people ask. But what other cultures? How do we define other cultures? Through traditions? Belief systems? Meaning-producing practices? Food? Music? All of it?

I once attended a Turkish cultural event for American and international students at University of California, San Diego. I was served samples of Turkish food, sweets, and Turkish coffee. They played some kind of Turkish music in the background and a young Turkish student spoke about Turkish culture: wedding ceremonies, dances, music and food. The language was typical of national culture: we do this and we do that. There was no way that she could know how traditional wedding ceremonies are conducted in Turkish villages for two reasons: first, I was sure that she had not attended a single "traditional" wedding ceremony in a village, which turned out to be a correct assumption.

Second, there is no single wedding ceremony common all over Turkey; traditions often change from village to village. After the presentation, I somewhat sarcastically commented that I did not know Turkish culture existed. "Yes," she said very sincerely, "it does. I found it on the Internet."

Turkish culture exists, of course – on the Internet. Or in the tourist guides, textbooks or anthropological works; wherever it is to be found, it will have to be represented first. But culture as a whole cannot be apprehended through language unless represented through parts of it. A wedding ceremony, a piece of cloth, or a food item stands for culture. Or other concepts such as "hospitality," "friendliness," or "solidarity" are culled to describe that which otherwise cannot be conceptualized, except through naming: Turkish culture which signifies nothing but the presence of it.

What I am saying is simply that culture, Turkish or Danish or something else, does not exist, at least not as something whose essence be captured, defined and represented. Neither does immigrant or immigrant culture exist. Immigrant as a unified category of culture does not make sense.

Yet, paradoxically, here I am writing about the very things which I claim do not exist. Why? Because I am not only tempted to speak about it; I am forced to do so. Let me explain it with an anecdote again: in early 1990s, I was called by a journalist colleague from the Danish Broadcasting Corporation to comment on a murder case in a live radio broadcast. An older Turkish immigrant had killed his grandchild and injured his daughter-in-law with a cooking pan. One of the correspondents had already compiled a report and through narrative techniques described the murder as if it were surrounded by mystique: the Turks in the town acted suspiciously and were not willing to talk about

the murder and the murderer. I was invited to explain what in Turkish culture might have made him commit the murder as if culture was the most natural explanation. "He must be out of his mind," I cried out, "what is there to explain?" I was invited to the studio to say just that but despite my objections to cultural explanations, the report that painted a mystical picture of the murder case was broadcasted just after the interview with me. Later, it turned out, there was no story, no explanation newsworthy to be broadcast: the older Turkish man was mentally ill and had previously been in mental institutions. This is probably why the Turks in the town did not want to talk about: there was nothing to talk about.

The question is: would there have been a story if the man had not been mentally ill? Let me answer the question by turning it around. Would there be a story worthy to be discussed in a news/actuality program if the murderer had not been an immigrant? Certainly not: murder stories do not normally find their way into "serious" media such as radio or TV news (normally these are stories for tabloids); except if the murder case has a larger impact on society (i.e., the victim or the murderer is a public figure). What makes that specific murder an important story is, then, not event itself (the act of murder) but who commits it. This is the point that often escapes journalistic claims that they merely report on the world as it happens and the selection criteria are objective and neutral. Objectivity and neutrality make sense only when journalists report on controversies with clearly defined parties with differing views. Murder, unless it has political implications, are not one of these controversies and are not usually reported by the serious media. If they are reported, they belong to the "sphere of consensus" which is the realm of human-

interest stories.[2] Murder, in short, is not seen as a socially or politically divisive issue; it is treated as a consensual issue where everybody is assumed to condemn the murder.

What is the implication of reporting on a murder case when an immigrant commits it? The media certainly do not report on the events as they happen; they ascribe the events with significance. Murder committed by an immigrant, when reported by the serious media, becomes a way of distinguishing immigrants from Danes. The implication is that a condemned act in "our" society may be an acceptable practice among immigrants; it (murder used in conjunction with immigrants) becomes, thus, a socially and politically divisive issue. It draws the lines around "society" or more precisely: it constitutes the limits of "society."

Is murder, then, a culturally accepted act for immigrants? I am aware of the fact that there are murderers who refer to "shame," "traditions," "moral values," etc. to explain why they acted as they did. Do these concepts explain murder as a cultural phenomenon? What happens when a Dane (or a "Westerner") kills his wife, his brother or his parents? He may not have these concepts as readily available resources to explain the murder, but does it mean that "Westerners" kill less and there are more murders in "traditional" societies? Is murder a morally accepted practice in more "traditional" societies? Don't all societies principally condemn murder as a deviant act? Don't all societies have discursive resources that can justify killing as well as condemn it? Ambiguity and dilemmas, not this or that "value," are the inherent features of cultures.

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[2] Daniel Hallin (1989) divides journalists' understandings of news into three spheres: sphere of consensus, sphere of legitimate controversy, and sphere of deviance. Sphere of consensus generally concerns human interest stories; however even controversial issues such as wars can be reported in the format of human interest stories, masking the ideological character of wars. See chapter 3 for an extended discussion.

The radio program on which I was interviewed was one of the endless series of media stories that constructed "immigrant culture" as a meaningful category through single acts that came to stand for the entire cultural category. In this sense, the anecdote illustrates the way immigration and immigrants are discussed in Denmark (and the rest of Europe). It also highlights the main questions and arguments in this dissertation. I have already posed the question whether culture can explain an act such as murder. Another question that the anecdote provokes is how to understand racism: as a systematic ideology that excludes people on the basis of skin color, religion or ethnicity, or as a discriminatory practice that does not require ideological commitment but that is implicated by the way social divisions are envisioned?

I would like to discuss this question through the anecdote. The program did produce immigrants' culture as an explanatory framework for a criminal act by associating culture with the ontological category of immigrants. But inviting me to the studio had itself racist implications, too: that I should be able explain what is going on in the mind of another Turkish immigrant, not because I have any expertise on crime or immigration but basically because I share ethnicity with him, is an extremely racist suggestion. It would be unimaginable to ask a "Westerner" to explain a criminal act by another "Westerner."

It should be added that this was a radio program with background information about local and international events and was broadcast on DR's Channel 1 which was considered a "progressive" channel with tolerant attitudes towards immigrants. I personally knew the journalists which is probably why I was invited. That is, the intention was in no way racist. They just wanted to provide better information to their

listeners about "immigrants' culture."  After all, one of the basic arguments in the "anti-racist" camp (in Europe) is that racism is the result of ignorance or lack of knowledge and the knowledge about "them" is the cure against racism.

If the racist implication of an action does not depend on intentions, then, we need to think of racism not as the reflection of the cognitive structures in the mind of actors (e.g. racist attitudes or ideological leanings) but rather as the result of specific interactions in social contexts in which only a limited number of discursive (interpretative) repertoires are available as explanatory frameworks. If an issue is repeatedly articulated in terms of a social antagonism (immigrant vs. Danish culture), then "good" intentions also operate on the basis of this basic premise and locate the subjects and objects of discourse along the dividing line of these social divisions. In other words, the journalists were not producing a racist ideology from a single-minded, prejudiced conception of the world; they were constrained by the antagonistic articulation of social relations so that only a limited number of explanatory frameworks made sense while others were deemed irrelevant.

The anecdote says also something about the way the media function in relation to public controversies. The basic idea that journalists merely communicate an external reality readily available for balanced and neutral transmission does in effect have racist implications when the external reality is overdetermined by the unrecognized racist logic of cultural antagonism. Their choice of sources is contingent upon the explanatory frameworks determined by that logic. If you establish the topic as one of "there must be a cultural explanation behind the criminal act," you will unwittingly go to sources that will provide cultural explanations.

So, I was never invited again for this type of interview: I was simply deemed to be irrelevant for the discussion. The media needed experts on immigrant (Muslim) culture, and soon there were many of these experts, mostly with immigrant background, who are widely used to explain every single phenomenon that could be associated with immigrants: criminality, murder, rape, or even unemployment (they don't have the same work ethic as Danes). "Immigrant" has become a cultural/ethnic/Muslim object that is examined, debated, and policed.

The category of immigrant has, thus, become the master signifier for Danish society.  The immigrant draws the external boundaries of Danish society.  All debates around the access to and distribution of wealth are articulated around this basic antagonistic divide between Danish nation and its foreign intruders.

But it has not always been so. A quick overview of the debate in the 70s shows that the debate on immigration has changed character in fundamental ways. In the 60s and 70s, it was not unusual to hear racist utterances about immigrants, but the issue of immigration was subordinated to the basic antagonistic divide between capitalists and workers. The "foreign worker" was one of the signifiers of the struggle between these classes. Only later with the foundation of racist parties and hegemonic struggles since the mid-80s has immigration become the main signifier for social divisions based on ethnicity rather than class.

## Ethnic homogeneity

One of the indications of the racist hegemony that articulates society in terms of ethnicity and culture is the extreme preoccupation with the ethnically homogenous past of

Danish society. Pia Kjærsgaard, the leader of the racist Danish People's Party, once said at the popularity of old Danish TV series was an indication of people's longing for the peaceful, idyllic, good, old days when Denmark was ethnically homogenous. At first glance, her argument makes perfect sense: the movies and TV series do reflect a more homogenous Danish society. Any criticism against her would probably contest her interpretation that the popularity of these old movies indicates people's longing after the good, old, ethnically homogeneous days. I have a different take on this issue: I agree with the leader of the racist party that the popularity of the old movies may in fact indicate a longing after the good, old days. This is the old discussion in new clothes about social change. Longing after the good old days is a generic feeling that has probably always been expressed in reaction to change, for example in reaction to modernization and industrialization in the beginning of the last century; the work of intellectuals, writers and artists from the beginning of the 20th century often reflect the same kind of longing after the good, old, idyllic days in which society is imagined to be a cohesive unity lost because of industrialization. In this sense, "good old days" signify the "purity" or absent fullness of society caused by the antagonisms in society. Since ethnicity and culture today are in focus as divisive issues in Denmark (and Europe in general), the longing is articulated in terms of an ethnic homogeneity.

Although I agree that the popularity of old movies may reflect a longing after the good, old days, the question is whether these old movies actually reflect an ethnically homogeneous, frictionless society. We have become so used to think society in terms of ethnicity and culture that we do not see ethnic differences in the past, we are automatically cued into thinking that what we had in the past was an ethnically and

culturally homogeneous society. It is through the contemporary preoccupation with ethnic homogeneity that the movies are interpreted as reflections of an ethnically homogenous, frictionless, innocent past.

What if ethnicity was not a primary concern in defining social conflicts in past times? Was Denmark really a frictionless, complete and unified society despite ethnic sameness? On the contrary, these movies reflected the social upheavals and conflicts of their own times; they dealt with the problems of the post-war economic boom, and 1960s and 1970s struggles that brought feminism, gays, and environmentalists to the forefront. Some of them were themselves concerned with the erasure of old, "authentic" Danish culture, and of social cohesion that belonged to the idyllic past (prior to their time). The old movies which are ironically interpreted today to represent the ideal past (by today's standards) represent a fantasy; not about the past but about the future of Denmark which, according to racist/nationalist forces, can be reinstated into its original state by eliminating the thing (immigrant) which subverts the authenticity and unity of Denmark.

Zizek in *The Sublime Object of Desire* offers the view that the basic function of fantasies is to structure our actual social relations. "Instead of offering an escape from reality, they 'offer us the social reality itself as an escape from some traumatic, real kernel" (quoted in Smith 1994: 136). The real kernel is the feeling of absent fullness, which can be fulfilled through fantasies of national-cultural unity. The unity of people has been one of the main targets of racist/nationalist hegemonic projects throughout Europe. But fantasies are not the expressions of an already constituted subject's wishes. "On the contrary, the fantasy 'constructs the frame enabling us to desire something'. It is through the fantasy that the objects of desire are given: 'through fantasy, we learn how to

desire'. The fantasy's frame is structured so that we experience our world as a wholly consistent and transparently meaningful order" (ibid. 136). And we learn that the consistency and meaningful order is the result of a cultural unity whose disruption is at the root of our problems. Thus, we learn to see ourselves no longer as primarily workers, women, or environmentalists but as Danes. By its very structure, Pia Kjærsgaard's (and before her, Søren Krarup's[3]) phantasmatic construction of an ethnically and culturally homogeneous Danish nation displaces the cause of disorder onto external sources: culturally alien immigrants disrupt the order and prevent Danish nation from being a cohesive nation. In this way, the discussion is indicative of racist/nationalist hegemony.

## Data

The data for this project come from two major sources: newspaper clips from 5 major Danish daily newspapers from a chosen period of three months (August-October 1984, August-October 1986, August-October 1987 and May-August 2001) and qualitative interviews with 38 "ordinary" Danes (July-August 2001)

In summer 2001, I spent over three weeks in the Danish Refugee Council's media archive photocopying almost 11,000 pages of news and feature stories, background articles, editorials, and letters to the editor from five major daily newspapers (*Politiken, Berlingske Tidende, Jyllands-Posten*, and the two tabloids (*Ekstra Bladet* and *BT*) between 1984 and 2001. As far as I know, this is the only media archive in Denmark that

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[3] Søren Krarup, a priest from Seem in Jutland, has been the principal figure behind the right-wing extremism's hegemonic intervention with an ad-campaign against Danish Refugee Policy in September 1986. His move was similar to Enoch Powell's infamous "Rivers of Blood" speech in April 1968 in the UK. I will be conducting an extensive analysis of his ad-campaign in chapter 4.

has an entire collection of newspaper clips on immigrants and refugees dating back to the beginning of 1980s.[4]

The newspaper clips are from the same three-month periods September-November in 1984, 1986, 1987, and June-August in 2001. Since many researchers point to the mid-eighties as a turning point in media coverage and public opinion (Togeby and Gaasholt 1994, Aggergaard-Larsen 1997, Engelbreth Larsen 2001), I have chosen to focus on the media coverage of immigration in this period, particularly before and after what I call "the hegemonic intervention" by the populist and extremist right-wing in the fall of 1986. I had two major objectives for the analysis of the newspaper data: the first was to quantitatively map out the themes, topics, categories, metaphors, and frames (cultural or humanitarian) that are commonly deployed in public debate for each period. Using the statistical program SPSS, I did a content analysis to paint a broad picture of shifting trends over time. Since this methodology can only measure manifest content and not capture the rhetorical nature of discourse, the analysis was supported by textual analysis of selected newspaper stories.

The second objective was to map out the rhetorical strategies of Søren Krarup, a key figure in the extreme Right's hegemonic intervention in 1986. It required a different type of analysis that focuses on how the campaigners managed to intervene and shape the premises for debate. In my view, the racist-nationalist right led by Søren Krarup was successful in forcing its own premises onto the popular discourse because it was

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[4] The Royal Library has microfilms of all newspapers but they are categorized chronologically so one would have to look for all newspapers to find the relevant articles. Photocopying from micro films is also a big practical problem.

extremely effective in gaining access to discourse. Krarup targeted a humanitarian aid

collection campaign that had apparently nothing to do with Danish refugee policy – a

seemingly mistaken strategy that created an enormous controversy and that mobilized the

entire political and intellectual establishment against him making him as one of the

principal parts of the greatest public controversy of that decade. This mobilization

supported the claim that there was a deep gap between the elite and the "people" and that

the elite did not listen to people's concerns. Nevertheless, there has been conspicuously

little research on this intervention (with the exception of Engelbreth Larsen 2001, and

Yılmaz 2000).

## Qualitative Interviews

The second set of data is qualitative interviews with 39 "ordinary" Danes

conducted in the summer of 2001. They were "ordinary" in the sense that they were not

in positions of power or members of particular organizations such as the Danish

Association (one of the few racist and populist organizations) or immigrant organizations.

In selecting interviewees, interviewers (sociology students from the University of

Copenhagen) were told to include people from various backgrounds in terms of age and

occupation: teachers, students, retired, nurses, academics, workers and so on. Immigrants

were not included in the sample because I wanted to analyze how "Danes" spoke about

immigrants.

The interviews were done in private homes and took the form of relaxed, loosely

structured conversations. Participants were encouraged to speak narratively on

Danishness, Danish culture, Denmark's place in the world, immigrants, immigration and related issues. Each interview lasted about an hour and was analyzed qualitatively.

Social scientists who adhere to quantitative methods sometimes criticize qualitative methods for relying on a relatively small size of the sample that is not representative. The criticism is often based on a great misunderstanding of the kind of questions asked to the qualitative sample. At risk of being simplistic, I would argue that quantitative methods are concerned with "what" of the sample, while qualitative methods examine "how" something is accomplished in discourse. However both methods are prone to criticism if they are used to answer questions that transcend their scope of investigation. Clearly, a quantitative method such as content analysis is often concerned with patterns in terms of generalizable repetitions, which a qualitative method cannot detect. Content analysis can, for example, be effectively used to see what themes have been dominant in the media in a certain period; which sources have been most frequently drawn on most in connection with the themes; and which designations have been prominent in descriptions of events and groups. However, once the dominant theme, sources or designations are identified through statistics, the numbers have to be interpreted by the researcher based on theoretical assumptions: there is as much interpretative work involved in content analysis both in the initial phase of determining what to count and after the numbers are available. Often, the numbers are used in place of analysis as if they already indicate this or that phenomena. This is the power of numbers that give qualitative methods their "scientific" look.

Secondly, content analysis is often also used to analyze "how" a particular issue has been discussed or covered by counting words deemed to be indicative of a particular view or frame. As will become clear in chapter 1, words, concepts, categories gain meaning in their immediate context and cannot easily be counted into patterns of meaning across contexts as if meaning is embedded in the word, concept or category rather than in the context.

On the other end, qualitative methods are also used to generalize about the "what" with a hidden, semi-quantitative approach to the sample, e.g. to detect "dominant ideologies" in a given society. It is often done by sifting through the sample, sorting statements into categories according to their similarities and presenting the categories as representations of certain views, frames or ideologies. This kind of analysis implies "counting" of statements into similar categories.

Generalizability can be problematic for qualitative methods. If one is focused on turn-taking and power relations within a cultural group, one may easily conclude that an identified pattern of turn-taking in conversations reflects power relations in that given culture. However, the relationship between power and turn-taking would be not given in the interaction; it would have to be deduced by the researcher on the basis of some assumptions – prior to the analysis – about what certain turn-taking practices mean. The second presumptuous step would be to claim a correlation between the culture and the identified power.

The distinction is, then, not so much about the methodology itself but how we approach meaning and discourse. The difference lies in how the relationship between

language and reality is understood, rather than the choice of methodologies. If, for instance, the starting point is that ideology is inherently dilemmatic, one would expect to find opposite "views" within the same "ideological" framework. The implication is that the dominant ideology would be difficult to locate for both content and qualitative analyses. If one chooses to conduct qualitative analysis of a number of texts, which words or statements should be taken as representative for the dominant view or ideology? Should a statement such as "immigrants have to learn that we do not kill or rape in Denmark" – an actual statement from my sample – be taken as the reflection of a view that immigrants kill and rape and Danes do not, and consequently as an expression of racism? Does anyone really think that immigrants rape and kill and Danes do not?

As the last example indicates, I am not interested in mapping out views, ideologies or discourses (as patterned ways of talking) through my analysis of the interview sample. I am more concerned with the "how" question: how do people construct their accounts of the world and their place in them? Which discursive resources (ideas, arguments, categories) do they find as useful or powerful and in which contexts? Does the use of certain resources always lead to same kind of conclusions, or are they use more flexibly? Can the purpose of the argument (what the respondent is trying to do) be analyzed out of its immediate context? How does it relate to "larger" contexts that are not manifest in the immediate discourse (for example an event or debate which is not explicitly referenced but which may be the trigger)? How do people talk about social division? Do certain ways of talking about social division constrain their argumentation; if so, how? How do people talk about categories in concrete interaction: is there a

relationship between the concrete descriptions of categories and the more abstract use of the same categories?

These are the kind of questions that are interesting for me. To give an example from chapter 3, a left-wing local politician draws on Orientalist arguments to defend a publicly funded project (for immigrant women) against the mayor because she considers the Orientalist argument to be a powerful resource in its larger discursive environment. However, if confronted, she may reject Orientalism as an approach. Such an analysis can indicate which ideas and arguments are deemed as more appealing and convincing, and which as irrelevant.

Contrary to the general impression that interpretative analysis is loose and arbitrary, discourse analysts, since they lack the rhetorical power provided by numbers, forced to be more rigorous in their analysis than their counterparts who draw upon the scientific authority of numbers. The validity of the analysis comes from the availability of the analyzed material for the reader who can see whether the interpretation makes sense. What the analyst does is to point to the rhetorical strategies of the participants: variations, inconsistencies and contradictions; their rhetorical function; the relationship between different parts of the interaction; and how people orient themselves to discourses that may not be manifest in the context.

The guiding principle in the analysis of the interviews is sensitivity to variations in people's accounts. In the flow of a conversation, it is difficult to notice that we (and other participants in the interaction) shift positions, invoke different arguments, describe events and objects in different ways and sometimes contradict ourselves. Discourse

analysis can reveal these variations, not as a way of "criticizing" the respondents but as a way of analyzing the fluid character of discourse and analyzing how people create a stable world despite the extreme fluidity of discourse. To some researchers, variations may be regarded as a problem to be eliminated. In my perspective, variations are a theoretically interesting feature of discourse because they reveal the flexibility with which people organize their accounts of the social world. Discourse, in this sense, is social action.

A related theoretical principle is, then, that meanings are not inherent qualities of linguistic structures but produced through rhetorical organization of discourse depending on the social context. Discourse is responsive to both the micro-contexts in which it is unfolded and the macro-contexts in which certain ideas are repeated at the abstract political level of discourse (such as in the media). It is the shift between these micro- and macro-levels of discourse that function as the lever of my analysis.

One of the research questions was how participants oriented themselves to controversies of the time; how otherwise unrelated elements of discourse are articulated together as parts of the same social formations, and how fragile these articulations are since any social interaction is basically an argumentative situation where claims are open for counter-arguments. Appeals to common sense often constitute the common premises on which a "communicative consensus" is reached but the implication often is that a particular taxonomy of the social has to be accepted as the premise for any kind of consensual end.

## Newspapers

The newspaper articles are from 5 major daily newspapers *Jyllands-Posten, Politiken, Berlingske Tidende,* and the tabloids *Ekstra Bladet* and *BT*. All of the newspapers are national newspapers but politically and stylistically different. None of the newspapers has direct political affiliations but many have clear political leanings in terms of the political spectrum.[5] *Jyllands-Posten* is the largest with a daily circulation of 150,000 issues (all the circulation numbers are from 2005 but there has been a considerable decline in the readership of all of the papers since mid-1980s). *Jyllands-Posten* was established in 1871 as a regional paper for the Jutland (Jylland) peninsula but has two daily regional sections for Copenhagen and Aarhus which focus on local news. The paper is known for its right-wing views, more to the right than any national newspaper. This was the paper that caused the "caricature crisis" by publishing drawings of Mohammed to teach Muslim immigrants that they have to accept being ridiculed. One of the central figures of the extreme right, Søren Krarup, who can be characterized as the ideological father of one of the largest and most influential racist parties in Europe, the Danish People's Party, had a column in this newspaper for decades.[6] I discovered through

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[5] According to Denmark's official website www.denmark.dk, "with the Constitution of 1849, Denmark gained a free press, which quickly became an opinion-shaping press in close consonance with the major political and social conflicts following in the wake of the change from an agrarian to an industrial society. The opinion-shaping press took the form of party-political organs, the so-called four-paper system. Each of the four major political parties, The Right (Højre), from 1915 The Conservative Party (Det Konservative Folkeparti), The Social Liberal Party (Det Radikale Venstre), The Social Democratic Party (Socialdemokratiet) and The Liberal Party (Venstre), established a nationwide network of newspapers which both mobilized and formed part of the organization of the various social groups they represented." *Jyllands-Posten* was associated with the Liberals, Berlingske Tidende with the Conservative, Politiken with the Social Liberals (the Radicals), and the Social Democratic Party had its own party newspapers with different names, latest *Aktuelt* (not included in my sample as it was closed down in mid-1990s and thus did not exist throughout the project period).

[6] Søren Krarup has been MP for the DPP since 2001.

my analysis of newspaper coverage of refugees in mid-1980s that *Jyllands-Posten* was one of the principal organs of right-wing forces that pushed for restrictions on immigration through panic creating stories about refugees.

*Politiken* (established in 1884) is the second largest newspaper (circulation: 129,000) and is with its "social liberal" political values and, among the newspapers included in this project, on the "opposite" end of *Jyllands-Posten*. *Politiken* had the most consistent "immigrant-friendly" line throughout the project period. The paper was affiliated with the Radicals in the party-paper period but lost its direct links with political parties as newspapers became "independent" during the second half of the 20th century. Paradoxically, the publishers of *Politiken* and *Jyllands-Posten* have joined forces economically in the first half of 2000s but this merger has not so far influenced the political leanings of the newspapers.

*Berlingske Tidende* (established 1749) is the third largest daily newspaper with a circulation very close to that of *Politiken* and is known for its conservative views. Whereas *Jyllands-Posten'*s values are often linked to agricultural sector and their ideologies, the conservative *Berlingske Tidende* is considered as the voice of the "corporate business."

*Ekstra Bladet* and *BT* are tabloids published respectively by *Politiken* and *Berlingske* publishing houses to maximize profits and provide sensational papers. Both papers have circulations around 100,000. Despite great similarities in their coverage and style, *Ekstra Bladet* was traditionally known as the voice of "the little man" whereas *BT* was considered more conservative. Until 1987, *Ekstra Bladet* saw immigrants as a part of

its "little man" and had a very aggressive anti-racist line, but had a sudden shift of line

with reference to "Danes' real concerns" (the racist-populist claim) in 1987. During

1990s, *Ekstra Bladet* had several aggressive campaigns against immigrants and

immigration. Søren Krarup who was called "the black priest" by *Ekstra Bladet* in 1986

was offered his own columns in the same paper merely a decade later. *BT*, on the other

hand, has always had an anti-immigrant sentiment but did not have the same aggressive

campaigns.

## The Political System

Denmark is a kingdom with a democracy established with the constitution of

1849. Historically there have been four major political parties, The Right (Højre) and

from 1915 The Conservative Party (*Det Konservative Folkeparti*) supported by

townspeople (capitalists), The Liberal Party (*Venstre*) with its roots in agriculture (and

slowly also capitalists), The Social Liberal Party (*Det Radikale Venstre*) supported by

smallholders, radical intellectuals in the cities, and the Social Democratic Party

(*Socialdemokratiet*) – the party of the workers.

The four party system remained largely intact until 1960 when The Socialist

People's Party (*Socialistisk Folkeparti*) attracted people left of the Social Democrats, but

the four party system was fundamentally shaken in what was known as the "earthquake"

or "landslide" elections in 1973 when three protest parties came into the parliament: The

Christian People's Party (*Kristeligt Folkeparti*), the Center Democrats (Centrum-

Demokraterne) which split from the Social Democratic Party, and the Progress Party

(Fremskridtspartiet) that had an election campaign on an anti-tax and anti-immigration

politics (the Danish People's Party was formed by a fraction within the Progress Party in 1995 – see chapter 2 for an extended discussion). Today (after 2005 elections), seven parties are represented in the parliament: the Liberal Party, the Conservative, the Social Democratic Party, the Socialist People's Party, the Danish People's Party, the Radicals, and the Red-Green Party (the Unity List of leftist and Marxist groups and parties). The Danish Parliament has 179 seats, 3 of which are reserved for representatives from two autonomous areas: Greenland and Faeroe Islands. Denmark has since 2001 been ruled by a coalition of the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party with the support of the Danish People's Party with an enormous influence on immigration (and welfare) policies.

## Chapters

This dissertation is concerned with social change. I am specifically interested in how the ontology of the social has been transformed to designate a new type of social division rather than class, gender or other types of social divisions that characterized post-war Europe. I am interested in how, in less than three decades, political discourse has moved to the Right through the question of immigration. This slippage to the Right has been possible by re-defining the main social antagonism as one between different cultures rather than classes. The result is the rise of racist, nationalist populist movements all over Europe; these movements define the questions to be discussed in public discourse.

The first chapter is an attempt to create a theoretical framework for understanding this change in discourse through the theory of hegemony of Laclau and Mouffe (1985/2001). However, their theory is highly abstract and difficult to apply to concrete

data such as interviews, newspaper clips or ethnographic observations. One of the basic principles of their theory is that the social is inherently heterogeneous and open. However, heterogeneity is discussed as a philosophical feature of language (the logic of signification) rather than through an examination of actual discourse. To show the rhetorical nature of meaning – that the meaning of a discursive element is determined interactively in a dialogic relationship – is the first objective of the first chapter. However, an emphasis on the social world as constituted through indefinite series of linguistic potentialities, which can be realized in a wide variety of different ways in an ongoing interpretative process, makes it difficult to conceptualize hegemony, which requires some kind of fixity. The second objective of the first chapter is, then, to discuss how and where exactly that fixation happens. My basic argument in this chapter is that even though the meaning of an element can only be fixed in its immediate context; the opposite is true: the meaning of social categories that are repeated across immediate contexts can only be fixed if they are emptied of content. It is the empty character of the social categories that provides a basis for constructing "we" and "they" distinctions. Appeals to common sense in actual discourse work on the basis of these empty and abstract categories, which fix the meaning, and produce social formations. This particular ontology works as a magnetic focal point that pulls discourse towards the center - the antagonistic divide between Danes and immigrants in my case; and consequently disperses subject positions along the dividing line. This chapter is based on qualitative interviews with ordinary Danes (see the section on data).

In chapter 2, I answer the question: how do we know something is hegemonic? It is easy to demonstrate that immigration discourse has become extremely culturalized and

ethnicized but the ethnicization of immigration discourse does not necessarily indicate that a hegemonic system is formed over the issue of immigration. The main argument in this chapter is that the racist ontology of the social has moved into the center of public discourse in the sense that power is structured around a racist system that excludes immigrants from the collectivity.

One of the most important indicators of the racist hegemony is the intense preoccupation with Denmark's ethnic composition, which reflects the hegemonic perspective of contemporary discourse (regardless of where one may stand in that question). The debate on Denmark's cultural and ethnic past and future has moved into the center of political discourse and cuts across many social fields. It means that basic social divisions are no longer imagined in terms of class, gender, environment, etc., but in terms of cultural/ethnic differences. That is, the ontology of the social has undergone a tremendous transformation. Gender equality, for instance, is no longer viewed as the result of decades-long struggles by feminist movement but as a part of Danish national culture as opposed to immigrants' "Muslim" culture that is represented as women-oppressive. Or more importantly, the welfare system is now viewed as the result of the homogeneity of Danish nation rather than a slow adoption of working class demands into an ever-expanding social state. Once articulated this way, immigrants become a "threat" to the welfare system. And the threat by immigrants is also used as an argumentative resource to promote a "reform" (dismantling) of the welfare system. The issue of immigration has, thus, a tremendous impact on the debate on the future of welfare state.

Chapter 3 is an attempt to answer the question: how did we come to this point? The argument in this chapter is quite simple and straightforward. There was a sudden

increase in the numbers of incoming refugees in 1984 and the then Justice Minister and other right-wing forces (e.g. the police) used the numbers to create a moral panic in order to put pressure on the parliamentary opposition to impose restrictions on immigration laws. But the panic got out of control and created a deep hegemonic crisis, opening up the field of discourse for a counter-hegemonic intervention by the extreme Right in 1986. The impact of the intervention was immediate. By 1987, the debate was thoroughly culturalized and has remained so through a successive series of moral panics, which continuously reproduced immigrants as a cultural threat to the unity of Danish nation.

Chapter 4 is a closer analysis of the hegemonic intervention by the extreme Right in 1986. This chapter is a follow-up to chapter 3. The main question of the chapter is: why and how did the intervention succeed? Why did the main figure of the intervention, Søren Krarup, have an almost unlimited access to public discourse – an access that he did not have to the same extent before September 1986? He claimed to represent "the silent majority" (or Danish people) against a dictatorial political elite who were about to destroy Denmark. The main argument is that the moral panics around the numbers of incoming refugees created a deep hegemonic crisis which in turn provided the premises on which he could impose himself as the representative of the "silenced" masses. The chapter is a detailed rhetorical analysis of the discursive environment that made possible his intervention.

Although this dissertation is about Denmark, many European countries show similarities in terms of the discursive change and have experienced similar trajectories with different actors and chronologies. This dissertation is a case study that can be used to understand the state of European public discourse(s) on European/national identity,

immigration, and distribution of wealth. It is also about how the discursive shift happened in the course of a decade; who had access to and influence on public discourse; and the role of the media in this process. In short it is about the nature of hegemonic interventions in discourse. Analyzing hegemonic interventions are crucial if we are to consider ways in which we can block the path to power of racist and nationalist populism and construct an anti-racist hegemony based on other types of political identities than cultural-ethnic-religious ones.

# CHAPTER 1
# DISCOURSE AND HEGEMONY

"The blacks are smelly," a Turkish teenager said in a Turkish takeaway in one of the "black" areas of London. He was part of a Turkish high school troop who had just arrived from a relatively small town in the northwestern parts of Turkey. I was startled by the statement and asked if had met any blacks. Yes, he had seen them around – in the streets of London.

It was obvious that he knew nothing about blacks; he had never met them in his hometown and he had only been in London a couple of days. His statement certainly did not reflect his experiences with any black people. In this sense, it was a typical prejudiced statement.

Having identified a prejudiced statement, I could just stop here and start discussing how prejudices work; namely making judgments prior to any experiences and knowledge; I could discuss how he may have gotten those ideas from the media; and consequently the role of the media in the production of prejudices and stereotypes. Then I could relate it to a general discussion about racist ideology; how racism is sustained through this kind of prejudiced statements and stereotypes repeated in the media. But it would not solve the puzzle for me. I would still be bothered with his sudden burst of a racist statement without any provocation or obvious context - except that there were many blacks around. Did he really think blacks smelled? Was it something that he had learned? Where and from whom did he learn it? Why was he saying it? He might, of

course, have thought the homeless person at the corner of the street who happened to be black was smelly. But even if it were the case, why would he identify him as "black" rather than homeless, and why would he generalize from that particular individual to a whole group of people?

I slowly realized that I was not asking appropriate questions if I really wanted to understand his utterance. My questions were trying to figure out his mindset; his cognitive world through which he understood and evaluated reality. Maybe, his statement was not about understanding and evaluating reality, and I should start asking other types of questions: rather than asking, what he was thinking, I should be asking what he was trying to do with this statement. "Why did he think that his statement right there and then made more sense than anything else?"

My interpretation of his utterance is that this kid was trying to make sense of the world; not so much the world as it exists independent of his subjectivity but rather his own place within the web of social relations as he found himself right there and then in the middle of a "black" area in London[7]. Was it his way of marking his collective subjectivity with other Turks in the Turkish takeaway? If it were the case, why did he think that his statements about blacks would provide the right resources? Was it because he was among blacks in the midst of what he otherwise saw as "White" London, and this was his way of identifying himself with Whites?

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[7] If I had a record of the interaction which I could transcribe and analyze, I would be able to answer some of these questions with a greater certainty. I will return to this question later in this chapter with recorded and transcribed interviews.

Nina Eliasoph's (1998) ethnographic study among members of a country-western club demonstrates that expressions of racism cannot be taken at face value as if they were mere reflections of racist minds but rather they function as markers of group belonging to the context in which they are uttered. Eliasoph argues that the group atmosphere in the country club was more racist and sexist than most of its individual members; and that the same person would utter racist jokes "just to keep the tone right" and to appear casual in social gatherings while expressing "un-racist" attitudes in a moment of seriousness in more private settings – a discrepancy in attitudes which she explains with a Goffman's (1959) distinction between "backstage/frontstage" in terms of interactional needs (Eliasoph 1998: 100-103). The implication of her observations is that beliefs, attitudes, and cognitions are not entities separable from interaction; rather they are managed and constructed in interaction (Potter 1998a).

Asking what a statement does rather than what kind of beliefs it reflects implies that the student from Turkey may have uttered those very words as a (miscalculated) way of positioning himself in relation to the other Turkish speaking people in the takeaway. But does this kind of interpretation excuse his utterance? Does this kind of interpretation make the utterance more acceptable or less racist? I certainly do not think so but this is beside the point that I am trying to make. A more flexible understanding of his utterance will help us develop analytical tools sensitive to the contingencies of actual discourse. It will alert us to put the focus of our analysis on the function of the statement in its concrete context rather than its relationship to a putative reality.

Our descriptions of the world are much more goal oriented than we may recognize and we draw on many different – sometimes contradictory – ideas to fit the

demands of the rhetorical situation. This would imply that our utterances about the world should not be taken as the reflection of our mental picture of the world; we may say different things at different moments about the same piece of reality depending on the situation and whom we are speaking with. Here, I am not talking about impression management techniques which would imply a distinction between sincere and insincere thinking but about the inherently fragmented and episodic character of our relationship with the world, which renders our accounts of it variable and inconsistent. Social scientists have long been aware of inconsistency in people's opinion and attitude expressions, especially in opinion poll and survey questions, and tried to explain it with ambivalent feelings towards objects of discourse.

The problem with the notion of ambivalence is that while it acknowledges the ambivalence in people's attitudes towards the world, the world itself, or the objects of discourse are still treated as if they are already given independent of our accounts of them. I may say inconsistent things about immigrants but the notion of ambivalence questions my utterances about the category of immigrants, not the category itself.

But what if the very objects of discourse are not as stable as they seem? What if the way objects are described constantly shifts? What if the social is so inherently heterogeneous that is almost impossible to capture the essence of it in language? How can we and do we then talk about the world in a meaningful way? How can we for example compare people's attitudes and opinions about an issue (e.g. homosexuality, immigration etc.) or objects of discourse (e.g. gays, immigrants etc.) over time? How can we talk about society and politics as more or less stable categories? How can we even begin conceptualizing hegemonic ways of talking about the world?

These are the basic questions for this chapter and I will answer these questions through the notion of hegemony which provides a useful framework to understand the heterogeneous and contingent nature of the social and the patterned ways of speaking about society. This chapter is, in this sense, a theoretical map for the rest of the dissertation. I begin with a summary of the central arguments, relate them to the theory of hegemony as formulated by Laclau and Mouffe, and then demonstrate my points through discourse analysis of the interviews with ordinary Danes. At the end of the chapter, I discuss how hegemony works at concrete levels despite the heterogeneity of the social.

## The Social is Thoroughly Heterogeneous

In my theoretical world, the notion of heterogeneity is central to human communication (discourse). It is through communication that we make sense of the world, ourselves and other people as distinct and stable entities, and communication requires some kind of language[8] or symbolic representation system. Despite the centrality of language for human communication and thus meaning-making process, the role of language in the relationship between humans and outside world is rarely questioned. Virtually all social science depends on language for its judgments about reality, but in most social science research involving experimentation, surveys, questionnaires, ethnography and most content analysis, language is treated as a relatively transparent medium through which the "real" matter – be it events, identities, cognitive structures,

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[8] I can hear objections to this statement from both philosophical currents that engage with mysticism and from scholars of visual communication or communication through other media than language, but it is my contention that to make sense of the world and to distinguish between things as meaningful entities, we need some kind of symbolic representation system (including sound and images) that produce meaning at a symbolic level, through symbolic representations. It is precisely at the level of the distinction between the real and the symbolic that heterogeneity comes in.

cultural, social, institutional patterns or causal relations – can accessed by the researcher. Language, in this sense, has been pervasive but invisible (Potter 2004). However, the so-called linguistic turn in 1960s in human sciences has found its way into social sciences as textual analysis of commercials, political speeches and other everyday phenomena have become integrated into social science research. The ontologically privileged points of references such as economic structures or a subject's interpretation of the surroundings are no longer taken for granted and meaning is seen as produced in historically specific social and structural contexts in which both the nature of objects and subjects are seen as constructed and transformed. Social change has become, in this sense, also related to changes in discourse.

However, it is my contention that despite constructivist influences on social sciences, ontological categories are often treated as points of reference for evaluating statements as if those categories were already given prior to discourse. I will discuss this point in detail later in this chapter; for now it suffices to say that in my view, all of these distinctions between oneself (mind), other subjectivities and the outer reality are created and managed flexibly in discourse. And the heterogeneity of the social is the result of the context-bound flexibility of category constructions.

Since all discourse is contextual and dialogic, how can we make sense of the ontologies of the social that appear to be stable constructions? In other words, once we begin to conceive the social world in terms of indefinite series of linguistic possibilities, which can be realized in a wide variety of ways and which are continually reformulated in the course of an ongoing interpretative process, how do we account for the fact that we do speak about society as a stable entity and seem to understand each other? How do we

even begin conceptualize politics that deal with larger "structures" if discourse is fragmented and episodic?

This is an analytical as well as a theoretical question. How are we going to deal with data? Are we going to choose parts of the data that fit with our analysis or theoretical framework? Or are we rather to focus on discourse as social action in which people orient themselves in creative ways? The first method widely used in research (I will show examples in later sections of this chapter) usually means categorizing similar statements in groups and presenting them as analytical conclusions. This method enables us to talk about representations of social groups, ideologies, or discourses as easily recognizable categories. Often, social groups, ideologies or discourses are conceptualized prior to the analysis and the analytical work focuses on finding linguistic evidences for the existence of these "structures." The difficulty with this approach is to locate these "structures" in actual discourse. How do we define a social group and its ideology, when "members" of that social group have differing and contradictory descriptions and views? If we define the social groups according to some predetermined criteria (such as their place in the relationship of production), what do we do with all people who do not fit into the categorization? What are the criteria for including or excluding people from a social class such as working class? Is it merely enough that they are workers producing goods? Can they be considered as social actors if they do not have a common consciousness that form their identity as working class? And how do we know what their common consciousness is if, when articulated in actual discourse, they express differing views about matters of social life? Or in other words, how do we recognize the "world view" of

this group when it is difficult to locate it in actual discourse? Is it merely enough if they identify themselves as members of working class?

Part of the answer to these questions is that we need to make clear distinctions between our own analytical categories and categories used by participants in our analytical sample. Our notion of "working class" and the way "working class" used as a category in the sample may be quite different. People often use categories such as immigrants, racism, ideology, religion, culture, society and so on but the way they use it varies from context to context and even during the same conversation. For instance, even though people use the term "immigrant" consistently, the meaning and content of the category changes easily depending on the rhetorical context of the utterance. In this sense, the social is essentially heterogeneous.

But at the same time, we do talk about these categories as if they are independent, self-contained, and stable entities towards which we orient ourselves and about which we express our views (mental evaluations). They enable us to speak about the world, interact with one another and create collectivities however contingent they may be. I see these categories as discursive resources – rather than reflections of "real structures" whose meanings are given through their place in the real world – that help us to talk about the world in a factual way; they help us to construct our subjectivity through our subjective positions about the world; they help us distinguish ourselves as distinct subjects from one another as well as from the objects with which we deal.

The important question is, again: if subjectivities and objects of discourse are constructed flexibly in a dialogic mode, how can we make sense of the world and one another as stable entities? The meaning of these categories must somehow be fixed at one

level or another. It may seem, from what I have been arguing hitherto, that the meaning

of an entity can only be fixed in a concrete, rhetorical context. In fact, my argument is the

opposite: *if we are able to talk about the world in terms of stable entities and relate*

*ourselves to one another politically, it is because these entities are emptied of content*

*and we use them as empty signifiers*. I would like to explain my argument through the

structuralist view of language as the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure developed it.

Saussure's ideas were articulated around one fundamental distinction: a

distinction between language and the reality it purportedly describes. Language, in

Saussure's view, does not have a substance; it does not have positive content. The

meaning of a "sign" (signifier and signified) is produced through the differential system

of language; words (signifiers) gain their meanings not from what they signify (signified)

but through their difference from other words (signifiers). The significance of Saussure's

ideas was that he challenged the status of language as a relatively transparent medium

between things and meaning by pointing at the constitutive nature of language. In my

context, the important aspect of his structuralist theory is the distinction between

"signifier" and "signified." The word, "dog" signifies not so much the animal itself but

the concept of it. What Saussure was saying is that the meaning of the word "dog" is

produced by its place in paradigmatic and syntagmatic chain rather than by the thing

itself.[9]

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[9] For Saussure, language was a closed system of a structural space and it was only within that system that
the meaning of a sign could be fixed. He distinguished, subsequently, between langue and parole – the
latter being the individual speech act or utterance. For Saussure, it was langue, the underlying structure of
rules and codes, which could be studied scientifically because of its closed nature. Parole lacked those
structural properties and was therefore difficult to study. This notion of a closed system of rules and codes
that produce meaning is clearly in conflict with my approach according to which there is no meaning unless

When we hear the sound of the word "dog" or see the image of the word "dog,"
we think of an animal whose look may differ substantially from one another but still have
something in common. But what if we talk about much larger concepts such as "society"?
What does it signify? What do we think of when we hear words such as "society" or
"native" (in my case "Dane")? A common definition would be that a native (Dane) was
born in "this" country (Denmark) as opposed to an immigrant, but does it give us a
concrete idea about who is included and who is excluded from the definition? Where
exactly do we delimit what a Dane is? Is it merely enough to say that Danes are those
who were born in Denmark? We could include another element in it: being born to
Danish parents, but already here we have the problem: what if one was born abroad?
What about those who were born in Denmark but to non-Danish parents? How far back
do we need to go to define one's roots as Danish?

As evident in these questions, the meaning of the signifier, "Dane" becomes
immediately vague and contested as soon as we begin defining the term. Once we put the
meaning of the sign into the exigencies of human communication, "Dane" becomes even
more complicated and polysemic: people use the word to signify a wide variety of
features some of which may be contradictory (examples to follow later). Obviously, the
signifier "native" (Dane) cannot signify a clear concept of a "thing," a person, a group.
The meaning of the signifier, "Dane" is, then, much more arbitrary to the extent that it is
almost empty. The meaning of the sign is only temporarily fixed at a concrete moment of
communication which limits the possibility of proliferation of the signified. On the other

there is actual speech act, and as Saussure correctly recognized, it is a terrain that does not obey scientific
rules and codes, which is why it is easier to "fix" the meaning of a sign at an abstract level.

hand, total closure is never possible since the local premises that limit proliferation of signification can potentially always be contested.

Yet, at the same time, Danes talk about themselves as if Danish culture is the most natural and given entity in the world. Others, too, have a clear sense of who Danes are as if it is a clear definition on a group of people who have something in common even if we may have problems with pinpointing what that common essence is. How is that possible?

## Empty Signifier: Common Sense

This is where my argument that the empty quality of the signifier "Danes" makes it possible to speak about the category of Danes comes in. We can talk about these abstract entities as the most natural things in the world as long as we keep them at an abstract level and treat them as "shared knowledge" or simply common sense. In other words, it is by emptying the category of content that we are able to use it to refer to something beyond our immediate grasp. But in this way, it does not signify a certain group of people: rather it "signifies the presence of meaning in opposition to its absence: a specific institution which has no positive, determinate function - its only function is the purely negative one of signaling the presence and actuality of social institution as such..." (Zizek 1999). It is the reference to such an empty category that enables people to experience themselves as members of a collectivity. Since it has no positive, determinate function and only negatively signifies the presence of an entity, the signification needs some kind of an external reference, which neither can, for the same reasons, signify a positive content. It means that the category of Danes signifies a distinction from

something else, and as the line of my argument would suggest, the distinction would depend on the concrete context of the utterance: in its rhetorical context, it could signify Danes as different from Germans by assigning opposite characteristics to either side of the equation such as free-mindedness vs. authoritarianism (from my sample). But neither free-mindedness nor authoritarianism (also vague categories) in and by themselves signify Danishness or Germanness. In that particular context, they are associated with respectively Danishness and Germanness. Since neither of the terms is logically related to Danishness or Germanness, and since both terms can be used interchangeably to describe Danes and Germans as individuals or groups, they cannot in general connote Danishness (or Germanness). Rather, the terms connote the distinction, or an antagonistic relationship between these categories. Antagonism, in this sense, means that Danishness and Germanness are constructed as two incompatible categories associated with two incompatible characteristics but the characteristics assigned to them are not, as we have seen, specific to them and could easily be replaced or inverted. What is constant is the antagonistic divide between these two categories. The empty signifier, "Danes" (or Danishness) signifies, then, the divide which is otherwise difficult to apprehend since the divide does not consist of objective relations. That is, antagonism does not mean a simple opposition between two positive entities.

As soon as the meaning of Danishness is concretized, it becomes also contestable. To signify a collectivity, Danishness has to be emptied of content and treated as an abstract, everybody-knows-what-I-mean kind of category. It needs to be treated as common sense. Here, I use the term "treated" because I see common sense more as a discursive resource that is appealed to and managed interactionally in concrete discourse

rather than as something that can be described and identified as a discursive structure (see Edwards (2003) for an intriguing analysis of common sense discourse in race talk).

To talk about the ontology of the social in a commonsensical way requires some degree of emptying of the ontological categories for content as the categories need to be treated as taken-for-granted. From this, it follows that "Danes" is a hegemonic category whose empty character stabilizes its meaning but only to the extent it is treated as taken-for-granted which requires a continuous hegemonic struggle: at each moment of utterance, it is loaded with a particular meaning which subverts its emptiness and makes impossible its closure.

The interesting question is, then: how do we manage to speak about Danes at an abstract level when each moment of its utterance renders it open to destabilization? Richard Jenkins' (1999) study of how Danishness was invoked in a political debate about the European Union may give us some clues. He studied letters to the editor in a local Danish newspaper in a small town during the referendum debate on Maastricht Treaty (of European Union). He found that many of the contributors could with ease refer to Danishness as a relatively clear-cut and homogenous culture as if everybody knew what it was. "On closer inspection, however, they did not always agree about what it was that they had in common. It is the assumption of Danish cultural homogeneity – and the mobilization of that idea as a political and rhetorical resource – that we are talking about here, rather than its actual existence" (Jenkins 1999: 131). He showed not only how differently – and sometimes in contradictory ways – Danishness could be described in concrete arguments but also how even the same characteristics assigned to Danishness could be used to argue for or against the European Union. But Jenkins made a further

crucial observation: the specter of external threats to Danishness (Germany, immigrants, and cultural and political elites) was conjured up regularly and that these threats were common to both sides of the argument (p. 133).[10] In short, in order to maintain the commonsensical character of "Danishness" despite its inherently polysemic nature, its presence had to be signified by some kind of external reference that helped to sustain Danishness as a specific ontological category. What Jenkins' study illustrates is that it is not the assignment of specific characteristics in concrete contexts that make up the category of Danishness but its difference from something else: it is the antagonistic relationship between some "external" categories and Danes that enable people to speak about it as an abstract category because the category basically signifies a fundamental difference.

If this is the case, then Danishness constantly needs an external category to be able to continue its existence as a separate category. But since the "threat" to its existence has to be always present, it would also prevent it to "be" full in the sense that it can never achieve a complete closure or positivity. The presence of the "other" will always subvert its own existence; which can only mean that Danishness is the name of the desire to constitute itself as a totality rather than the totality itself, which will explain another crucial observation by Jenkins (1999): the great emphasis in the debate on cultural homogeneity of Denmark. Danishness is, then, the name of the attempt to constitute the

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[10] It is not that both sides articulated Germany as a clear-cut threat that had to be kept in distance; some argued that a "yes" vote which involve Germany in a tighter European community would prevent Germany from returning to its bad old ways.

cultural homogeneity that can never be achieved since it can only negatively be signified as a cultural category through the presence of an "Other."

My argument here is simple: the antagonistic "Other" that constantly threatens the social formation has to be continuously produced in discourse. In times of conflicts with Germany, Danishness is kept alive as a meaningful category by a constant focus on the German threat. In this relationship, something interesting happens: some ideas (themselves relatively empty and vague) are repeatedly connected with Danishness producing certain phenomena as if they are corner stones of Danish identity. Hospitality, for instance, is put together with the ontological category of Danes, and thus it becomes "Danish hospitality." It sounds immediately commonsensical and normal, but at closer inspection, what does it mean? How can "hospitality" be Danish? What is it about hospitality that is specific to Danes except that it is attached to the ontological category of Danes? Is equality a Danish quality? Can "gender equality" be the result of "Danish mind"?

At war times, Danish-German antagonism moves into the center of discourse subordinating other types of social antagonisms. At other times, other antagonisms define "society." In over a century – except at war times – class antagonisms were at the center of the discourse producing other types of collectivities that people can identify with. My argument is that *during the last two decades, a new type of antagonism – one between Danes and Muslim immigrants – has moved into the center fixing the meaning of Danish society in new ways and fracturing other types of antagonisms along the main divide*. Gender equality, for instance, has, from being one of the basic demands of women's movements, come to signify Danishness as opposed to Muslim immigrants' view of

women. It is now striking to see the ease with which Danes talk about gender equality as a feature of Danish culture. It makes sense because there is something else that is being talked about much more: immigrants' oppressive view of women. Immigrants' oppressive gender view is constructed through phenomena such as "honor killings," "violence against women," or "gang rapes." Here, we have the same problem: what it is that makes an act such as killing specifically "honor" killing – a social phenomenon that belongs to a social formation? Many people – regardless of their ethnic background – kill because of "honor" and many murders that are described as "honor killings" are committed for a wide variety of reasons. What makes "honor killings" a specific phenomenon is not so much the specific character of the killing but the use of the word in conjunction with "honor" which signifies "immigrant." And through a repetitive focus on this and a few other such phenomena, something called "immigrant culture" is constructed and held on place signifying a fundamental difference between immigrants and Danes. In turn, it is references to this fundamental difference that makes it possible to speak about Danes and immigrants as fundamentally different social categories.

What makes this antagonism hegemonic is that ethnicity and culture is now used in a commonsensical way to signify social divisions in political discourse through which the future of Denmark is discussed and sanctioned. Even the future of the welfare system is now articulated as a question of ethnic and cultural differences. During the time of class struggles, compromise (welfare society) was the name of the impossible suture between capitalists and working class. It is now the term "integration" that has come to signify the main evil of society: the impossible suture between immigrants and Danish society.

The last point I want to make before I move on to my analysis is the relationship between discourse and reality. My approach does not make a distinction between discourse and reality: the ontology of the social is not something already given in nature or in the economic relationships among members of a society but created through an articulation of those relations in particular ways. As such, they are political relationships. The identity of a social formation such as working class, for instance, does not originate in some objectively identifiable material interests but in the articulation of those interests as common interests of the working class. In this sense, there is no difference between the ontological category of working class and the articulation of it with reference to their common interests. Those interests have been, as we have seen throughout the history, articulated in quite different ways only keeping the category of working class intact. What kept the working class intact was the experienced gap between members of working class and capitalists and their political representatives.[11] It was this particular gap that sustained the ontology of the social in class terms.

Neither are immigrants, in this sense, a group of people with any common essence: there is no positive content that can be attributed to immigrants as a group even if we delimit the group to Muslims. As such it is an empty place. The nationalist-racist right project succeeded to fill this empty space with particular signification by referring to the incommensurable nature of immigrants (who have been culturalized and ethnicized) with Danes. This antagonistic divide, once established through repetition and other politico-rhetorical moves (which I will demonstrate in the coming chapters),

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[11] I am not talking about the ontic content of these classes.

functions as a magnetic focal point pulling certain meanings of the discursive elements towards itself, pushing other potentially subversive ones into the background. It fractures along the divide particular aspects of discursive elements by articulating them as parts of the same social formation. Although people's descriptions of immigrants and Danish culture may vary contextually, their repertoire becomes immediately limited when the issue is articulated as an abstract issue (e.g. Danish identity in relation to immigrants). Only at this abstract level can Danish culture stand for modernity, progress, reason, emancipation, gender equality, law obedience, and democratic mind as opposed to immigrants' "religious, middle-age" culture, as the previous integration minister Bertel Haarder put it.

Articulations along these lines create immediate political effects that institutionalize this particular definition of immigrants into an ontological category of the social (e.g. laws and institutions that deal with Muslim immigrants). Identity categories are thus inherently political entities that involve antagonisms and the exercise of power. The material effects produced by a category such as "Muslim immigrants" contribute in turn to the maintenance of the hegemonic articulation because the material effects can now be treated as given facts related to the social categories.

## Theoretical Roots

The arguments that I have been summarizing have two sources of influence: Laclau and Mouffe's theory of hegemony (1985/2001) and the Loughborough School of discourse analysis (Discursive Psychology). The latter builds upon three different theoretical traditions: rhetoric (in Michael Billig's (1996) sense), constructivist studies of

science, and ethnomethodology and its sister discipline conversation analysis. The first

tradition emphasizes the action oriented nature of discourse and sees categorical

distinctions such as human and non-human, artificial and natural, child and adult,

representation and reality and so on as resources people use to say contentious things

about the world, to claim and dispute things, to describe and account for how things are,

to justify change or continuity (Edwards 1995, Edwards and Potter 1992). The second

tradition, constructionist science studies, encourages an understanding of science as a

cultural practice and nature as the product of scientists' discursive practices rather than an

independently existing entity. They study not only how reality is constructed but also

how discourse itself is constructed. The third tradition, ethnomethodology, focuses on the

way participants use categories in interaction rather than as reflections of underlying

cognitive entities. It also implies that there should be an analytical distinction between

how participants use categories in discourse and the analytical categories the researcher

constructs. The understanding is that the researcher engages in the same kind of

discursive activity as the participants.

I draw on all of these notions of discourse in my own analysis. However, this kind

of discourse analysis rarely takes its gaze away from the immediate context to look at

how larger "contexts," which are not explicitly formulated in the course of interaction,

may produce or constrain talk or text in certain ways. Laclau and Mouffe's theory of

discourse shares many of the basic assumptions of Discursive Psychology about the

nature of interaction, language and social life such as constructionist view of discourse

and rhetorical approach to language and meaning. However, there is one fundamental

difference: whereas Discursive Psychology is mostly concerned with what is happening

in here-and-now of discourse, Laclau and Mouffe's focus is more on how social life is organized around certain moments of discourse that both produce and constrain the way social divisions are envisioned and talked about. Subsequently, they are interested in the structuring effects of power, while power is almost absent in Discursive Psychology.[12] What is intriguing about Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory is that they offer a theoretical model which attempts to understand how certain movements, classes, or other types of identities are established and sustained over time as relatively stable entities despite the inherently rhetorical and contingent nature of discourse (which they call "the openness of the social" or "radical relationalism").

## Laclau and Mouffe's Theory of Hegemony

Laclau and Mouffe (1985/2001) draw heavily on Foucault's notion of discourse but reject Foucault's distinction between discursive and non-discursive as a form of mentalism. However, to say the social is nothing but political does not mean that there is no world external to thought: "an earthquake or the falling of a brick is an event that certainly exists, in the sense that it occurs here and now, independently of my will. But whether their specificity as objects is constructed in terms of 'natural phenomena' or 'expressions of the wrath of God', depends upon the structuring of a discursive field" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985/2001: 108). At the root of this prejudice is the [Cartesian] assumption that there is a dichotomy between an objective field of reality that constitutes

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[12] Discursive Psychology is not a single, coherent approach to discourse analysis but covers a few different approaches. Michael Billig, for example, is interested in analysis of ideology which implies looking at larger structures of discourse, whereas Derek Edwards and Jonathan Potter's approach is closer to Schegloff's notion of conversation analysis that focuses on talk-in-interaction and how people use categories in settings rather than what those categories may be outside the discursive moment.

itself outside any linguistic articulation and discourse as the pure expression of thought –
a dichotomy which several philosophers such as Merleau-Ponty, Wittgenstein, Heidegger
tried to break with. For Laclau and Mouffe, discourse is human meaning-making process
in general. Their definition of discourse includes both linguistic and non-linguistic
elements. They give an example from Wittgenstein's notion of language games, which
"include within an indissoluble totality both language and the actions interconnected with
it." The entire activity of building a brick wall is made up of speech acts and the physical
acts. "The linguistic and non-linguistic elements are not merely juxtaposed but constitute
a differential and structured system of positions – that is, a discourse" (ibid: 108) In other
words, the whole social space is discursive: it is a vast argumentative texture through
which people construct their reality.

Drawing on Derrida's deconstructionism, Laclau and Mouffe see the social –
signification – as an infinite play of differences, in which meaning can never be *finally*
fixed. The being of objects and people can never be encapsulated, once and for all, in a
closed system of differences. However, this radical relationalism is different from
Lyotard's particularisms in which no political articulation is possible due to the
incommensurability of language games. The social fabric is constituted by social actors
who occupy differential positions. In this sense they are all particularities, but these
particularities – that have no necessary relationships with one another – are pulled
together in relatively stable forms, which may last for quite long historical periods (such
as "working class"). This "pulling together" around some "nodal points" is a discursive
articulation by the intervention of a discursive exterior. Power is the capacity to form

"nodal points" around which social formations are articulated and to make those articulations pervasive, and thus achieve hegemony.

Hegemonic articulations are what temporarily fix the meanings of elements of discourse, which is what hegemony is all about. In this view, elements are not predetermined to enter into one type of arrangement rather than another; nevertheless they coalesce as a result of an external articulating practice. In other words, hegemony is the theory of decision taken in an undecidable terrain where the relationships between discursive elements are contingent. "*The practice of [hegemonic] articulation, therefore, consists in the construction of nodal points which partially fix meaning; and the partial character of this fixation proceeds from the openness of the social, a result in its turn, of the constant overflowing of every discourse by the infinitude of the field of discursivity*" [authors' own emphasis] (Laclau and Mouffe 1985/2001: 113). As a result, hegemony can never be complete. If hegemonic articulations produce antagonistic relations between internal frontiers, the very nature of these relations renders a total closure impossible. Laclau and Mouffe (1985) explain this impossibility through a philosophical discourse of differential and equivalential logics.

First, they make a distinction between discourse (e.g. immigration) and discursive field – "free floating" elements in the general field of discursivity are transformed into "moments" in an articulatory practice. A moment is the momentary fixity of the meaning of a single element that is articulated in a chain of equivalence. However, the meaning of the element is only fixed momentarily; this fixity is threatened by the overflow of meanings in the general field of discursivity where other discursive formations "fix" the meaning of that element in different ways. It is only by its place in a chain of equivalence

that is articulated in an antagonistic relation to another chain of equivalence that the floating element is transformed into a discursive moment.

Through equivalence, a positive identity of the object is expressed as that which the object is not. Danes and immigrants are not constructed in a system of positive differential positions; their identities are expressed as the negation of the other: Danes are what immigrants are not and vice versa. A negative identity cannot be expressed in a direct manner, so it is represented indirectly through an equivalence of its differential elements (for Danes, Christianity, secularism, tolerance, care for humans and animals etc.). However the logic of difference and the logic of equivalence subvert each other. Two terms must be different in order to be equivalent; otherwise there would be a simple identity that consists of only one element. On the other hand, equivalence can only be reached by subverting the differential character of those terms. This is the point where the contingent subverts the necessary by preventing it from fully constituting itself. In Laclau and Mouffe's words, "certain discursive forms, through equivalence, annul all positivity of the object and give a real existence to negativity as such" (1985/2001: 128).

In a more concrete form, for example, the elements of Danish identity are articulated in a chain of equivalence in an antagonistic relation to the elements of immigrant identity. I am rational insofar as the immigrant is irrational. However, rationality or irrationality cannot exist as independent positivity, only as poles of the same ontological order. Hence, a society cannot be rational without also being irrational; rationality is only achieved through representation of its negativity. The elements of Danish and immigrant identities cannot be totally external to each other.

In order for a discursive articulation to become hegemonic, there must be a plurality of meanings. It is only in the field of "floating discursive elements" that a hegemonic articulation is possible. Hegemony presupposes, thus, plurality and contingency of meanings; otherwise there would be repetition in every practice, and there would be nothing to hegemonize. This is where Laclau and Mouffe parts with Gramsci. Gramsci recognized the fragmented and disjointed character of popular thought (common sense) which is the terrain that hegemonic projects contend to master, but he saw inconsistency as a flaw and weakness: the working class consciousness had to be brought in line with their "real" class interests. For Laclau and Mouffe, the openness and incompleteness of the social as a field open to articulatory practices is the precondition for any hegemonic articulation. And also there is no difference between consciousness and "real" interests as if the latter is located at some other levels outside discourse.

Given this flexibility of meaning and relative fragility of hegemonic articulations, it is surprising that the theory of hegemony is so often misunderstood in the academic world in the US. Benson, for example, argues that hegemony theory with its "essentially functionalist assumptions ignores the ways in which media systems do not always reinforce the power status quo, but under certain conditions may actually transform power relations in other fields." (Benson 2000: 10). Schudson shares the same basic understanding of hegemony theory and writes sarcastically that according to hegemony theory "the media reinforce the "cultural hegemony" of dominant groups, that is that they make the existing distribution of power and rewards seem to follow from nature or common sense and so succeed in making oppositional views appear unreasonable, quixotic, or utopian – perhaps even to the dissenters! [...] The ability of a capitalist class

to manipulate opinion and create a closed system of discourse is limited; ideology in contemporary capitalism is contested terrain" (Schudson 2000: 180-181). Schudson (2003) also argues that concepts such as hegemony do not fundamentally discard the notion of indoctrination or propaganda.

I suspect that this view has something to do with Gitlin's (1980) widely quoted study of the media's treatment of anti-Vietnam war protests and the New Left movement. His study can be read as if hegemony is, in the last instance, an ever expanding system that incorporates parts of the oppositional movements while rendering irrelevant or even illegitimate the other parts. However, hegemony perspective could also be used to understand fundamental social changes: for example how conservative populism in the US has succeeded to rearticulate the traditional opposition between capitalists and workers in terms of "regular guy" (or "average Joe") as opposed to almighty bureaucracy in Washington and their alliances among minorities by replacing the link between "people" and "workers" with an association between "people" and "regular guy" (Laclau 2005: 135-137).

On the other hand, Laclau and Mouffe rarely get their hands dirty with hands-on analysis of how their theory may explain what is happening. Therefore, they often resort to philosophical discussions when they want to explain that a complete closure of meaning is impossible; for example, when they explain that a social identity can never be fully constituted, they argue that the presence of the antagonistic "Other" prevents me from being totally myself, but nor can the force that antagonizes me achieve a full presence: "its objective being is a symbol of my non-being and, in this way, it is overflowed by a plurality of meanings which prevent its being fixed as full positivity"

(Laclau and Mouffe 1985/2001: 125). Or Laclau explains that even in mathematics, complete closure is impossible because of the presence of zero which is not a presence but it is both a condition and impossibility of a complete mathematical system (Laclau 1998). What they are saying simply is, to give an example from my case, that Danishness can, in current discourse, never become a full identity because the presence of immigrants prevents it from becoming a full identity. Danishness is in this sense can only signify the absence of it, something that is to be achieved. In an ideal world (where Danishness is not surrounded by something else), if immigrants were not around, there would only be Danes, and Danishness would loose its meaning; it would simply cease to exist. But what does "being overflowed by a plurality of meanings which prevent me from achieving full positivity" means? It means simply that whatever characteristics are attributed to immigrants (or Danes) would always be challenged by the existence of other and possibly opposite characteristics that can also be attributed to immigrants (or Danes). Danes can never only be friendly without also being hostile; neither can other people. Friendliness and rationality can, thus, only be fixed as parts of Danish identity if hostility and irrationality are attributed to immigrants' culture as constitutive moments.

But where and how does that attribution happen? What does it mean in terms of analysis?

In which situations does "the plurality of meaning of an element" overflow it and prevent it from achieving positivity? Is polysemy a potential feature of discourse or a feature constantly actualized in discourse? If it is the case of the latter, how does that happen? These are the questions I will turn to in the next section.

## Analyzing Hegemony in Discourse

Since the contexts of utterances are episodic and full of variations, is it possible to analyze hegemony through an analysis of discourse? My answer is a careful yes. The ways in which hegemonic articulations are stabilized and institutionalized are reflected in discourse in the sense that people orient themselves towards these articulations even if in creative ways. They talk about social divisions in commonsensical ways and find certain arguments more powerful than others. I believe that an analysis that is sensitive to variation can demonstrate which discursive resources are considered more powerful in certain situations.

Studies of immigration discourse in Denmark generally point to the repetitive construction of immigrants as "them" as opposed to "us" Danes (Schierup 1993, Sampson 1995, Hussain et. al. 1997, Diken 1998, Wren 2001, Andreassen 2004 just to name few). Many of these studies also recognize that immigrants are often described as religious-fundamentalists, culturally backward, criminal, oppressive of women and so on – as people whose cultural values are incompatible with Danish values. These studies provide concrete, insightful analyses of the ways in which "we" and "they" distinctions are produced in discourse. Most of them make use of concrete data and are as such very convincing studies of immigration discourse. I find them convincing partly because I recognize the dichotomies and the characteristics which are attributed to the dichotomic categories. These studies are also convincing because the data that they present is immediately recognizable as it is abundantly repeated in public discourse in Denmark.

However, they often deal with methodological questions in a heuristic manner as if we actually know how the various distinctions in actual discourse relate to generalized "we-they" constructions.

Clearly, the data is "real" and often contains repetitive descriptions of immigrants and immigration. Rikke Andreassen (2005), for instance, examines representations of immigrants in TV news from 1970 to 2004 and identifies a number of stereotypes about immigrants that are repeated in the news. I would like to discuss one example that she analyzes – a news story from 2001 – about Danish referees at high risk games, i.e. games with immigrant teams. The story is about referees who refuse to referee games with immigrant teams who, according to the head of a local Soccer Referee Club, "have [because of their cultural background] a different temper and have a different way of acting." Andreassen interprets this statement as an expression of "the belief that culture determines behavior, this belief made it logical to generalize about all visible minorities' behaviors. If they represented the same culture they had to behave similarly" (2005: 100). In the same news story, a representative for the League of Ball Players on a regional basis expresses similar views of immigrant teams: "their temper flairs up a little more violently than it does among us Danes." According to Andreassen, the representative "thereby created a clear division between 'them' and 'us', implying that 'our' behavior was considered more proper in that 'our' behavior did not lead to conflicts with the referees. Therefore, 'our' behavior received a privileged place in his hierarchy of cultural values" (ibid: 101).

The first problem is that that her analysis does little more than repeat the utterances in her own words; and then she presents her own representation of the

utterances as her analytical comments. The bigger problem, however, is that the utterances themselves are taken out of context and related to a more general discursive structure, that is "cultural racism." In this way, they come to signify a patterned way of talking about immigrants, but what is interesting is that we only know the existence of these patterned ways (cultural racism) through this type of utterances that are repeated throughout the data sample. The analysis becomes to some degree tautological: we know cultural racism through these utterances and but we simultaneously treat these utterances as concrete expressions of those more abstract structures or ideologies.

But if the starting point is that discourse is inherently dialogic, contextual and episodic, can we then make conclusions out of isolated utterances that an utterance signifies a larger construction? What if we find evidences that point at the opposite direction? Are we going to treat them as anomalies? I do not have Andreassen's actual news story so I cannot comment on the utterances in a detailed manner, but the starting point of the news story seems to be the actions of a referee club which already defines the problem as a cultural phenomenon at the outset. This type of story enters the news usually because a press release has been sent to the media or because the head of this or that organization has said something spectacular about a social group. If I had the news story, I would be interested in looking at the reporter's selection process and what the other actors say in the same story. Exactly what incident made it newsworthy? Do all the referees in Denmark agree with what is being said? What do immigrant teams say about it? I am sure that it is possible to find immigrant players who will testify to the truth value of these statements as well as players who will describe them as "racist." Some will challenge the cultural explanations; others will try to use the same cultural framework to

push the argument in opposite ways. If the story was at the outset defined about referees

who refuse to referee at games with immigrant teams, it is very possible that this

definition may have led the journalist to find similar evidences for the "problem" at hand.

If more than a single source expresses the same views, the story becomes more credible

and newsworthy as a wide-spread phenomenon (which is that Danish referees are afraid

of immigrant teams) rather than being an individual incident. The editor may have said:

"go and find if there are other referees who complain about immigrant teams." If this is

the case, the implication would be that the phenomenon is constructed through the

selective actions of the reporter. Once constructed this way, the reactions towards the

referees would be oriented towards the statements. In other words, what referees in the

news story say would determine the very premises for the reactions against or in support

of it.

It is difficult to know, but what we can ask is: whatever is being said, can it

signify anything else than what it does in that very context it is said? Or in reverse order:

can we simply use an analytical method in which we take similar statements out of their

immediate contexts and put them together in abstract analytical categories which are then

presented as analytical conclusions?

When the referee argues that "their temper flairs up a little more violently than it

does among us Danes," is he really saying, as Andreassen argues, that he considers "our"

behavior as more proper because it does not lead to conflicts with the referees? What

behavior is ours? I do not see any evidence in the utterance that he thinks our (Danish)

behavior is more proper. What I see is an argument where he justifies the action of

Danish referees. That is, he is in the business of constructing immigrants as potentially

violent people to justify the fact Danish referees do not want to referee immigrant teams. Obviously, the refusal indicates some kind of problems in games where immigrants are involved, but we do not actually know what the problem is except through the utterances of referees who have the opportunity to define the problem. We do not know if the problem occurs in games with Danish teams; if this is the case, we still do not know whether fights occur because immigrants have a violent tempter or because they feel that referees are not neutral and ignore the violence and racism of Danish players. I remember reading about such complaints about Danish referees from immigrant teams in the Danish media. It is difficult to know whether the referees' utterances were a direct response to this criticism, but it is clear is that the head of the referee club is explicitly responding to potential accusations of racism (he rules out that their refusal is racist "because it has nothing to do with skin color, it has to do with cultural background"). In this case, his utterance can clearly be read as an attempt to avoid appearing racially prejudiced.

Discourse analysts have demonstrated that when people are tuned to the notion of prejudice, they engage in complex mind-world mapping discourses through which "mind" and "world" are described as distinct entities (van den Berg et. al. 2003). The distinction allows people to embed their evaluations as an inherent (natural) quality of the given world rather than reflections of their subjective mind. This rhetorical move is oriented towards preventing the appearance of being prejudiced and come often with expressions such as "I think," "I wonder" which establish a relationship between what one is thinking (mind) and the real world outside as it is, but they also convey a sense of inferential work. In Andreassen's example, the interview is not transcribed in its entirety; neither is it transcribed to show any kind of inferential work. But even without a detailed

transcription of his utterance, two interrelated features are clear in his utterances: he constructs the nature of immigrants, and he does so by appealing to common sense.

Instead of expressing negative opinions about immigrants, his evaluation of immigrants is embedded in the description of them as naturally violent. I cannot see how he constructs immigrants' nature as violent in this particular case, but it would usually be done through carefully chosen concrete examples or narratives that would indicate a violent nature (I have several examples of how this is done in my interview sample). Once the violent behavior of immigrants is established as a cultural fact, he does not need to say anything negative about them. The second feature of his argument is his appeal to common sense that "culture determines behavior." This is the common sense premise of his utterance that makes possible his inferences about the violent nature of immigrants which in turn justifies the Danish referees' action. He and the other referee in the story treat this claim as a taken-for-granted warrant for their argument because this notion of culture as constitutive of our nature is an effective rhetorical resource which has become a powerful idea through repetition. However, the particular description of that nature (i.e. immigrants are naturally violent) is precisely what makes the cultural paradigm unstable because the utterance becomes, through its particular interpretation of that nature, open to contestation. We may agree that culture is constitutive of our nature (even that is contestable if presented as a claim rather than an inferential warrant), but we may not agree that immigrants have a violent nature. However, the format of the particular news story, the perspective that the reporter or editor puts into the story, and the choice of sources may create an immediate closure of meaning in that story.

If the analysis were more sensitive to the context in which the utterances were made, we would gain more insight into the potentially different versions of reality that the statements were trying to rebut. Questions such as "who says what in the news story?" "What is the argumentative structure?" "What are the points of fracture?" "Are alternative conceptualizations present in the story, and if they are, how are they treated?" would help us to see beyond the immediate statements which by themselves hardly indicate a pattern: repetition across stories is not a pattern since they may be connected to other (possibly contradictory) ideas in each situation and they may be used to convey various and sometimes opposite outcomes. This discussion indicates that what looks like patterned ways of speaking may actually be the result of the researchers' own attempt to create analytical categories of attitude patterns.

I want to illustrate this crucial point with another example from Danish scholarship on immigration discourse. Anthropologist Peter Hervik (2004) notices that one of the key features of the neo-racist discourse, as expressed in interviews with Danes, is the construction of a rigid dichotomy between "we" (Danes) and "they" (the out-group of foreigners) to the point that it is unbridgeable. He also observes that the cultural distinction between "we" and "they" is present in all of the interviews even when the question is about a specific person. When one participant is asked about Wilson Kipketer, the Kenya-born, black track and field athlete, who won the 800 m world championship for Denmark, he leaps automatically into the general "we" and "they" categories as if everyone would know which people he is referring to:

> They **can do something** we **can't.** They **are,** they **are good at playing cricket and we don't even know the rules (Søren 27, carpenter, student) (Hervik 2004: 253).**

When the same person is asked about headscarf, he switches from a gendered pronoun to the anonymous unspecified "it":

> I think it doesn't make sense. This is about keeping 'it' [cultural difference] within the four walls of the home (Søren) (Hervik 2004: 253)

The extracts show, Hervik concludes, that the tendency to treat "we" and "they" categories as taken-for-granted (common sense) is salient in most of the interviews. To make his argument clearer, he presents another extract/statement from a young teacher who also resorts to the distinction to make her point:

> Even when **they** try their hardest to do like the Danes do – in order to be accepted, then that is still never sufficient. **They** can't all of sudden have blond hair like the **Danes** (Helle 25, teacher) (Hervik 2004: 254)

Hervik notes that regardless of the concreteness of the terms used in the questions, the participants immediately turn to the general stock of "they" but who "they" are is usually not specified, indicating common sense reasoning. Hervik's observations about the participants' persistent use of dichotomic categories of "we" and "they" almost always as generalized, abstract entities through appeals to common sense (as if we all know what we are talking about) are extremely interesting and completely in line with my analysis. They also confirm my observations in my interview sample about the persistent use of the categories such as "Danes" and "immigrants" as common sense categories which is only possible by emptying the content of these categories. These observations tell us a very interesting feature of discourse on social divisions: the ontological categories of Danes and immigrants cannot be stabilized unless they are

treated as taken-for-granted, empty entities which only then can function as points of

reference for identification.

But Hervik takes an unwarranted leap from the finding that interviewees generally

turn to the general stock of "we" and "they" categories to a broader conclusion that the

categorical distinction is done by attributing two sets of mutually exclusive

characteristics to either side of the dichotomy. To support his argument, he uses a table

from Fadel (1999) that shows the dichotomic character of the distinction (table 1.1).

**Table 1.1: Danish and non-Danish attributes as reproduced in Hervik (2004), p. 254**

| Foreigners (immigrants) | Danes |
| --- | --- |
| Group-oriented | Individualist |
| Live in large families | Live in nuclear families |
| Have many children | Have few children |
| Exploit society | Contribute to the welfare of the society |
| Smell badly and are dirty | Are clean and therefore do not smell |
| Loud and bad-tempered | Quiet and calm |
| Fight and kill each other | Talk and compromise |
| Poor upon arrival | Were rich before immigrants arrived |
| Submissive to religious and moral doctrines | Casual relationship to religion |
| Traditional, old-fashioned, suppress women | Modern, women emancipated |
| Women wear headscarves and long dresses | Women wear bikini or go topless on beaches |

The reason I describe the move to categorize Danes' statements in mutually exclusive

categories as unwarranted is that the data does not support such a conclusion. If we take a

closer look at the three statements, we see that "we" and "they" categories are, even in

their generalized form, used as a response to the specific questions and signify different

content that cannot be generalized to the overall ontological categories except by taking

them out of context. The first statement equates "them" to sportsmen precisely because

the question was about the athlete, Wilson Kipteker. The respondent seems to be

describing "them" as a positive category (they can do something we can't) and does so by

assigning them a cultural competence (knowing rules). The problem again is that the

statements are taken out of their interactional contexts which make it difficult to see the

rhetorical work the respondents are accomplishing. It is, thus, difficult to see what

triggers the leap to talking about "their" competence in cricket when the question is about

an athlete. In the second extract, the same respondent is now talking about "them" as a

negative category because of "their" practice of wearing headscarves. What is clear is

that he is not talking about the same category of people even if he is referring to some

kind of generalized stock of "them." The black athletes from Kenya or cricket players

from India have nothing in common with Muslim women with headscarf. What keeps

them together is the pronoun "they."

The same kind of variation is also evident in the third extract that describes

"them" in a positive manner as victims of racial discrimination. In this context, "they" are

the ones who have a darker skin (or hair) color. There is nothing that binds these three

notions of "them" into a category except the pronoun "they" which keeps together the

category. But the pronoun "they" cannot, consequently, signify anything other the

presence of "them" as a category through an antagonistic distinction. The relationship

between "we" and "they" is truly antagonistic in the sense that it is not a simple "A is A

because A is not B" kind of relationship: there are Danes who do have competence in

sports or cricket as well as many immigrants have never heard of cricket. The three

notions of "them" are clearly produced in interaction. Clearly, any notion of "they"

would indicate a corresponding notion of "we," but if both "they" and "we" are filled

with particular content in concrete contexts, can these particular contents be taken out of

their interactional contexts and made into generalized statements about immigrants and Danes respectively?

I tried to analyze my own sample of semi-structured qualitative interviews with ordinary Danes conducted in the summer of 2001[13] to reproduce a table with the same dichotomic characteristics that are attributed to either side of the table. The results were interesting (table 1.2)[14].

**Table 1.2: Statements about immigrants and Danes from my own sample**

| Immigrants | Danes |
| --- | --- |
| - do not speak Danish properly | - language is important for Danish identity |
|  | - it is difficult to understand Danes from the west coast |
| - (youth) give themselves Danish names to avoid discrimination (on the phone, implies that 'they' speak Danish fluently) | - it is not in Danish culture to discriminate |
|  | - we are tolerant and guest free |
|  | - we are not open to other cultures |
| - a Turk is more open | - we are open to the world |
| - they are reserved maybe because of religion | - we close our doors and don't even speak with our neighbours |
| - they speak loudly and are noisy | - we are discreet and restrained |
| - they don't respect women in general | - Danes respect and understand people |
| - women in family are valued highly |  |
| - Muslim women in DK are not allowed to do many things on their own. | - we have sexual emancipation |
| - in Danish view, Islam and culture are the same | - Christendom binds us together in European culture |
| - they want to do something with their lives | - they want to do something with their lives |
| - they do not want education |  |
| - they have a very strong faith (religion) | - we have free will, we are rational |
| - we have to remember that where they come from people are not as law-abiding and decent as us | - we are law-abiding and not corrupt |
| - they don't pay taxes | - we don't pay taxes either but in less degree than other Europeans |

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[13] I had sociology students from the University of Copenhagen conduct hour-long, loosely structured interviews with ordinary Danes about Denmark, Danishness, globalization and immigration. I also had 45 similar interviews from the fall of 1996 but in this chapter, I am mainly using examples from the 2001 sample. See the introductory chapter for an extended discussion of the data and the methods used to analyze the interviews.

[14] Potter and Wetherell (1987) have a similar table to mine that show that the attributes have wide variations across their own interviews with White New Zealanders about Maoris.

The first thing that distinguishes my table from that of Fadel is that the statements in my table are not as generalized as in her version. As a scholar who is sensitive to the workings of interactions, I had tremendous difficulty with generalizing utterances into abstract statements as if they reflected my respondents' general opinions about immigrants or Danes. They were all produced as a response to the interviewers' questions and cues in an ongoing conversation. A statement such as "Muslim women in Denmark are not allowed to do many things on their own" was uttered in a strip of a talk about immigrants and criminality to explain why crime rates were relatively low among Muslim women, which in turn was brought in to avoid making sweeping generalizations about immigrants. The respondent in that case was questioning the numbers that showed that immigrants were represented with overwhelming rates in crime statistics (e.g., "uhm, that you gradually become so affected by all those statistics you get on your head"). Since the statistics were not available at hand which she could deconstruct, the low representation of women was easily accessible and useful statistical resource that could be used to challenge the meaning of statistics as the next extract shows:

> **Extract 1**
> Uhm, that you gradually become so affected by all those statistics you get
> in your head. One of the things I hold on to, it is that the least criminal
> group in Denmark, it is the Muslim women. It goes of course without
> saying that it is so, (.) what shall I say, (.) so strict regulations for what
> they are culturally allowed at all to do on their own, but but this is
> something you seldom hear, isn't it? This is one of those things that you
> can look up for, like, weird, isn't it? But you hear (.) you (long pause)
> (Birgitte, Ph.D. in natural sciences, researcher in a research institute).

As can be seen, the statement about Muslim women is not a generalized statement about their nature but a reflexive moment – a modal qualifier – that assesses the strength of the

argument (that all immigrants are not criminal because of their culture since the women who share the same culture are not criminal). It is a rebuttal to a potential objection to the premise of her argument (that culture does not make immigrants criminal). As such it has a clear rhetorical function in her account, but it is not a well-thought and well-executed rhetorical move; it is brought in a haphazard manner. She brings in the argument to challenge the idea that immigrants are culturally conditioned to be criminal, but she immediately weakens her own argument by culturalizing her own rebuttal (e.g., "of course, Muslim women's behavior is strictly regulated"). As the repeated "but, but" indicates the respondent has problems with relating back to her main argument (that culture does not make immigrants criminal) after her own cultural explanation.

My purpose here is not to conduct a thoroughgoing analysis of this strip of the talk but show that descriptions and attributes are accomplished in a very flexible manner to establish one's ethos, support or undermine claims, or to defend or criticize actions or practices. Even in this little strip of the talk, we have two different and contradictory notions of culture: there is, on the one hand, an inexplicit (but deducible from the context) challenge to the notion that culture determines behavior (culture does not make all immigrants criminal), and an explicit argument that re-culturalizes and essentializes immigrants (in order to explain why immigrant women may not be as criminal as immigrant men).

The second difference between my and Fadel's tables is that my table contains opposite characteristics on each side of the attributes. It shows that the same characteristics can be attributed to both groups and that opposite characteristics can be used to describe the same group. Danes and immigrants are simultaneously described as

reserved and open; Danes are both tolerant and not open; immigrants as both respectful and not-respectful of women; both capable and incapable of speaking proper Danish (the second statement about immigrants calling themselves with Danish names to avoid discrimination indicates that they speak without accent and that only their names give them away). One of the respondents explain that language is very important for Danish identity when asked about Danish culture but expresses, during the same interview, a desire for subtitles when Danes from the west coast are interviewed on television.

It is important to note that my table was only possible because I took the statements out of their interactional contexts and presented them as general descriptions of the tacit categories of Danes and immigrants. Not only did I have to present contextual utterances as general statements, I also treated Danes and immigrants as taken-for-granted categories. On the other hand, I can see why it is tempting for many researchers to treat contextual statements as expressions of people's general opinions about immigrants. As Hervik also notices in his analysis, respondents do very easily turn to the general stock of "we" and "they" and present their accounts as generalized statements about these categories. That the descriptions of these categories become slippery and inconsistent during the course of the interview is a rhetorical feature that demands the analysts' awareness and sensitivity. It is the use of "they" and "we" distinction that creates the appearance that people express their general opinions about the general category of immigrants; this appearance does not originate in the category itself as it is used.

My sample is full of such expressions: "you think of criminality, you think of immigrants," one respondent says, but unlike Birgitte who attributes this tendency to the

selective nature of statistics and repetition of these statistics in the media ("Muslim women are not criminal"), this respondent explains "immigrants' criminality" with conditions in "their homeland:" "But I also think that we should remember where they come from – a place where they are not as law-abiding and decent as most of us Danes are." Another participant "thinks," "they have to learn that you do not steal and you do not rape young woman;" yet another participant explains that "here we don't kill [people]. We don't do such things in Denmark. It is illegal and it is punishable." Also Birgitte has a similar statement about immigrants' values: "my set of values tells me that you don't kick down an old lady."

In most cases, these utterances are not challenged by the interviewer either because of interactional purposes or because it sounds commonsensical. Once taken out of their context, the statements appear as extremely prejudiced and racist. I am not challenging the idea that many of the statements have racist implications but my problem is that once racism is related to prejudice, it caries the risk of reducing racism to prejudiced talk and practice. As I intend to demonstrate later in this chapter, racism (as a discriminatory practice) can be the result of racist hegemonic formations which produce racist effects by limiting the ways in which issues such as race, ethnicity, immigration and religion can be talked about.

However, given the volume and ferocity of this sort of statements, it is tempting to put them together as expressions of prejudice and present them as dichotomic constructions of Danes and immigrants. The idea that the meaning of social categories can only be stabilized ("fixed") if they do not signify anything else than presence of these categories through negative signification is difficult for social and human science

researchers to deal with. What, then, is there to talk about if we can only understand

people's statements in their local contexts which are episodic and ultimately subversive

to the notion of generalized categories of the social? How can we describe a discourse as

racist if discourse is ultimately episodic and full of variations – a feature that renders

futile any attempt to construct a patterned way of talking which we call "discourse" or

"racism"? If we set out to analyze "neo-racism" in discourse, where and how precisely do

we locate it when categorizations of immigrants are slippery and inconsistent? To go

back to my discussion of Hervik's analysis, the need to be able to say something

qualitative about discourse is, I guess, behind Hervik's unwarranted move to attribute

certain characteristics to either side of the equation of "we" and "they." I suggest that

racism should be looked for not so much in the expressions of prejudiced opinions but in

how racist practices somehow are justified – whether one intends it or not – as the result

of a cultural distinction between "we" and "they." I would like to discuss this point with a

longer extract from the interview with Birgitte in which one of the statements about

immigrants' violent nature can be seen in its larger context (see endnotes for transcription

conventions[15]). I have emphasized the statement "My set of values says that you don't

kick down an old lady" (in bold) in the response to the fourth question. Questions are

italicized.

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[15] (.)    The noticeable pauses are marked with a dot in parentheses, but longer pauses are stated   as such.
//    The starts of overlap are marked with a double oblique.
keep.. Two dots after a word means the person interrupts herself and start a new sentence
cu-    A sharp cut-off of a prior word or sound
under Emphasis in volume
°soft° Speech noticeably quieter than the surrounding talk.
U:hm Stretching of the preceding sound.

**Extract 2**

*Q1: But when we speak about problems and all those things, do you think of them [immigrants] altogether or do you think of particular ones?*
A1: But then again, I think this problem is related to a particular social group. And it is not the average. There, I am sure that it isn't a coincidence who have the good opportunities and who have the socially bad opportunities. I believe an American who comes here with a medical education has good opportunities also to get good social terms, whereas if you have an equivalent background from Bosnia, there you don't have so good opportunities.

**Q2: It is about discrimination, you think?**
A2: Prejudice. I think again it is self-perpetuating. Again something like, how many of them do we have? I think so. How much have we heard of problems with American migrants, and how much have we heard of problems with second generation Pakistani, Turkish migrants?

*Q3: Uhm, you mean for instance that many of the things we hear come from the media. It is the media's fault that there is so much focus on particular groups.*
A3: I think it is partly so.

*Q4: You said those halal-hippies, that's what I wanted to ask you, that they have this fear of touch. For instance they don't want to discuss whether refugees and immigrants, should be expelled when they commit criminal acts. Who did you think of there? Did you think of someone who seeks asylum or the youths in Vollsmose [a neighbourhood in Denmark's 3rd largest city) or..*
A4: I am thinking especially those youths in Vollsmose where there were to groups of opinions about how it should be handled, right? One of them, it was, we simply shouldn't touch this at all. 'Away, on a deserted island, home, away from this country!' Or 'just decapitate them!' This was one side of it. The other side, it was, 'send them on holiday, a holiday of adventure of one month in Bahamas with some pedagogical support and let's convert them!' Right? I mean, there are somehow these two sides. On the one side you have the hawks [those who advocate tightening the policy], and then you have (*you mean there are*) those Naser Khader [a politician who is immigrant] calls halal-hippies on the other side.

*Q5: I understand it so that halal-hippies wouldn't debate at all whether they should be expelled.*
A5: Not that they won't debate, but they just take.. they have just the fear of contact to sanction.

**Q6: How do you think one should sanction?**
A6: (Sigh). Again, it is difficult to have the right answer to this. I again think that you have to look at what they would respect. What is it.. again in their set of cultural values which is also mixed, there are things that are Danish, there are things they have gotten from their parents and grandparents during their upbringing at home. What is it that they would respect? What is it that would make them behave properly? I can't judge it. There isn't of course an easy answer to that. Or so somebody would have found it, and done it. But, (.) It wasn't an especially clear answer.

**Q7: Can you expel them, for instance?**
A7: I think it is difficult to expel some young people who if their parents stay here in the country, and they are maybe 18 year old or 17, they cannot be expelled. Children whose family is in this country. I mean, it is difficult. On the other hand you have to sanction strongly, especially if it is repeatedly and you have.. I mean also that you must.. we have some rules that you have to submit yourself to. **My set of values says that you don't kick down an old lady.** That is, there are, there are some.. I can understand that groups of 17 years old Danes and immigrants may fight over, what do I know, their attitude towards girls or something else. But that you man.. (long pause)

**Q8: Do you think it has something to do with their ethnicity?**
A8: No, I don't think it has. I think it has something to do with being really, really deprived. Of course, you also have Danes who do such things. But there are probably.. there it is pushed to the extreme because they are under pressure from forty sides. That's what I mean them.. if you have immigrant background, you are under pressure on many fronts. It isn't just skin color or language, your name in itself. I mean, if you call.. if you call with your name and want to rent a room, it is easy for Niels Hansen [typical Danish name] to rent a room than it is with your name to rent a room. It is so simple. There is.. there have been research on this that I have seen, heh, heh, heh.

*Q9: You said that it is maybe their culture (unclear). Where do you see the biggest difference?*
A9: On what? (.) There, I mean if you are a second generation migrant, that is, you grew up in this country and, then you have a culture that is mixed.

**Q10: I know that. But what is the Danish, what is the non-Danish for you?**
A10: It depends again on what the non-Danish.. what it is the background they come from. Again, I don't think you can generalize. I mean, I believe also that, heh, there may be.. of course individual within families. I mean,

there will be families where you (.) have another.. after two generations in a country have another cultural standpoint than other families that have lived here in two generations. It is extremely difficult (long pause) to express a simple formulation on, 'well, bilingual background then you have those and those cultural problems!' I don't think you can say that.

I deliberately included a very long stretch of the interview to illustrate the circular and contradictory fashion in which the interview moves; a feature which in turn indicates the limits of social imagination. The respondent is very intellectual and reflexive: she is tuned in to the notion of prejudice and often reflects upon her own "prejudices" with small anecdotes during the interview. The intellectual reflexivity may be heightened by my presence as an "immigrant" and social researcher, but it also helps construct her ethos as a rational person who is able to distinguish between her own prejudice and the real problems in the world. It is here, in the description of that reality, and its connection to immigrants as a culturally defined group that the talk becomes circular in the sense that despite her attempts to deconstruct immigrants as a culturally defined group, she nevertheless cannot move out of the cultural paradigm.

In her answer to my first question, she clearly defines immigrants as a social group that is defined by their marginalized position within society. Marginalization is related not to their culture but to Danes' prejudices. "It is so simple," she says at the end of her answer (A8). Both answers 1 and 8 are direct responses to my questions that explicitly challenge her to denounce cultural definitions, which otherwise would imply prejudiced thinking. A question such as "do you think it [criminality] has something to do with their ethnicity?" would in most cases cue respondents to become sensitive to the issue of prejudice, which is what is happening here. Not many people would answer

"yes" to a question that explicitly links criminality to people's ethnicity particularly when the question is set forth by an immigrant.

The interesting observation is that she had actually culturalized immigrants' behavior in her answer (A7) immediately before this question. In between answer 1 and answer 8, something else happens, where the statement, "my set of values says that you don't kick down an old lady" is produced. This long extract is taken out of a larger discussion about "real problems" and what can be done about them – an issue to which we return in the extract. The real problem is defined as criminal acts by some youth groups who happen to be immigrants (even if they were born and raised in Denmark). Circularity and contradictions begin here: the respondent had just deconstructed the criminality statistics by adjusting them for other factors, which implies that it is not culture that makes the youth commit crime. But on the other hand, we have a "real problem" and real problems need real solutions. We have to sanction against this group of youth but we need to be able to discuss the problems instead of pushing it away. This is again prejudice-relevant talk as indicated by the term "fear of contact" (A5) which implies that people do not want to speak about real problems to avoid appearing prejudiced. These people are opposed to those who are "prejudiced" – she (and most of the other respondents) never uses the term racism or racist – and who just want to get rid of these youth groups by expelling them. This is a rhetorical constellation that helps her to talk about real problems without being identified as prejudiced and she constructs the dichotomy (hawks vs. halal-hippies, the latter of the pair implies liberals) through a publicly known immigrant, Naser Khader who is in this context treated as an

uncontroversial figure.[16] Her use of Naser's derogatory term, "halal-hippies" – "immigrant-friendly liberals" who do not want to face the real problems with immigrants – enables the respondent to distance herself from this "unrealistic," "politically correct" liberal crowd and establish her position as a balanced, moderate one.

But talk is flexible; what one says to establish one's ethos in one context may work against one's position in another. When I ask how one can sanction against this group of youth (Q6) – a question to which I return several times during the interview – an interesting situation occurs. She has to produce a concrete answer that is moderate and distanced to both sides of the debate as constructed by her. She has put herself into a difficult, dilemmatic situation: on the one side, her answer cannot be the same as those who say "they should all be put on a deserted island away from this country," on the other, she has to produce something more concrete than those who say "send them to Bahamas with some pedagogical support," which would imply an avoidance of discussing the real problems. At the same time, she has tremendous problems with suggesting any concrete solutions to the real problems. I suspect that her problems with producing concrete solutions have something to with another dilemma which is not as explicit as the first one. Her definition of the problem as rooted in social conditions rather

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[16] Naser Khader is a controversial figure who is criticized for focusing on immigrants and their culture as the root of the problem, just like the Dutch immigrant politician Ayaan Hirsi Ali who was also controversial before she left politics for a job in the US in May 2006. Treating him as uncontroversial helps construct him as an authority who, as an expert, can testify to the nature of reality that is described by the respondent. I am sure she knows he is controversial, and this argument also only works insofar it is not challenged by the interviewer (me), but this is how discourse functions: if every single premise is challenged in each case, no ordinary conversation or interview would be possible. Some definitions have to be treated as tacit facts if the participants are going to be able to interact and talk about issues. Otherwise, communication would be interrupted and there would not be any common ground on which people can communicate.

than culture or ethnicity does not leave much space for cultural explanations and solutions, yet the demarcation of the group as "immigrant youth" yields a solution specific to the group. The category of "immigrant youth" forces the conversation into a circular pattern. First, she relates "their" criminality to their marginalization and discrimination – parameters external to the group. If one accepts it as the premise, then the focus should be put on "society" rather than immigrant youths, but this would immediately put her in the same category as "halal-hippies," who are often accused of finding excuses for immigrants in the name of tolerance. And also there is no direct relationship between crime and deprivation as not all of those who are deprived commit crimes. We cannot just excuse criminality with reference to their conditions and leave them alone. We have to do something about it.

About what? Crime or immigrants? It is precisely here, discourse on immigrants becomes tricky and slippery, not only in the context of this particular interaction but generally in Danish discourse on immigration. Once paired with immigrants, crime becomes more than simple crime; crime refers back to its predicate (e.g. immigrants) as that which renders it a specific phenomenon. Specific problems require specific solutions. But when she explicitly tries to avoid defining immigrants by their culture, she has a problem: if it is related to external factors (poverty and discrimination), how can we even begin talking about sanctioning against a group yet alone make them to respect rules and behave properly? She is aware of these contradictions as indicated by her last sentence in this section of the talk (A6) (but (.) it wasn't an especially clear answer). Here, it would be great help if the extract were transcribed to show intonation: it is an utterance that

indicates an attitude of having given up.[17] Her feeling of the dilemma becomes clearer in the next answer (A7) that ends with an interrupted sentence and long pause immediately after she implies some fundamental cultural differences with reference to values.

The sentence, "my set of values says that you don't kick down an old lady" has to be understood in the context of this dilemmatic situation rather than a simple reflection of her prejudiced mind about immigrants, which we then can compare to other prejudiced utterances. Rather, it seems to be a resource that is brought in haphazardly to explain what those young people have to learn and submit to. The utterance refers to an actual incidence of violence against an old (Danish) woman by young immigrants as reported in the media shortly before the interview. In this part of the talk (A6 and A7) the respondent is trying to find an answer to the question: how can we make these young people respect rules? Once the focus is on the group and their actions, the solutions, too, need to be related to the group, which immediately culturalizes discourse regardless of one's intentions. This is what I call hegemonic thinking.

The reference to the incident pushes her back to the sphere of cultural explanations, of which she immediately becomes aware, as indicated by the following interrupted sentence: "that is, there are, there are some..." (A7). She becomes aware that she is going back to the culturalized dichotomy that she was trying to avoid. The violent incident indicates some fundamental differences: that young people (Danes and immigrants) fight over girls, it is understandable, but violence against an old lady does not fall within the definition of ordinary youth culture. It must be something specific to

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[17] I am not sure that this issue could be solved with a more precise transcription that shows intonation since intonation is often lost in translation or can be misunderstood by the speakers of another language.

that group, but this conclusion is not reached as a firm belief or view. Rather, it is a conclusion that is reached reluctantly, something which she has not really thought of before but infers on the basis of the evidences as they come up during the conversation. Here, I am not talking about her intentions but what happens during the interaction.[18]

In my view, the tension between her attempts to deconstruct the cultural category of immigrants and her inability to describe them in other terms than cultural indicates the dilemmatic situation she puts herself into. The dilemma is the result of the hegemonic thinking: her attempts to deconstruct the cultural explanations of criminality bounce back from the notion of immigrants as a social/cultural category. The focus on immigrants as a demarcated group demands its own explanations and targeted solutions. The construction of immigrants as a culturally defined social group is not only the result of the particular interaction but a pervasive socio-ontological category towards which she is oriented. Demarcating a social group with specific problems – be it social, cultural or medical – implies a targeted effort to solve the problem by focusing on the causes specific to this group. We may say that the causes to a specific problem are not cultural but social, but if we can only access the social through the cultural ontology of the social, we would immediately find ourselves in a dilemma, which is what is happening here.

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[18] Here, it is necessary to say a few words about the inherent tension in this kind of analysis in the sense that I may sound as if I criticize her for doing what she is doing in that particular context. First of all, these are generic rhetorical strategies that are common in all kinds of discourse available for all kinds of people, but since I attribute them to her in this concrete context, it sounds as if these strategies are used as a way of justifying racist discourse. There is, however, a deeper moral and ethical tension in terms of my position as an analyst: analyzing people's utterances automatically puts me into the position of an expert who appears to know more about the person than she does herself. Most discourse analyses would be prone to this criticism. It is a difficult tension to resolve. Some discourse analysts (e.g. conversation analysts) attempt to counter it by avoiding invocation of any category that is not used by the respondents in the interaction in order to avoid imposing ideas, categories, intentions, or ideologies onto the participants.

The discursive resources for a counter-hegemonic answer to the question, "how can we sanction?" can actually be found in her own considerations. Several times during the interview, she explains that (Muslim) immigrants do not have the same opportunities as Whites (Danes or Americans) and that they are subjected to prejudices. But moving the focus from the group to "society" (i.e., discrimination) as the constitutive moment for immigrants is not easy: to be subjected to discrimination, the group must exist prior to discrimination. Some kind of attribute is necessary to demarcate the group. A group may be socially marginalized which may explain some of their behavior but its presence must be signified prior to marginalization.

Or is that so? Erase race, ethnicity, culture and religion from equation, what would remain is a socially marginalized group which would only be signified by its marginalization. Marginalization would then be the constitutive moment for the social category. My argument is that discrimination and marginalization are the constitutive moments for the social category called immigrants. I would like to explain this with a hypothetical example from the night life scene.

Let us imagine that there are often fights in a bar frequented by young immigrant men as well as the "natives." We do not know any of those young immigrants and we are told by the natives that when they come, there are often fights. We would automatically think that since the phenomenon is limited to immigrants, it must have something to do with how they behave, i.e. with their violent nature despite the possibility that the immigrants may be from different countries and have different educational and social backgrounds. But what if one of these immigrants tells us that the fights often result from racist slurs or discriminative behavior of the natives/Danes? What discrimination does in

such case is to produce the same kind of reactions from men from different backgrounds. Discrimination does not, of course, in this sense, produce difference but it fixes the meaning of difference through violence as the signifier of immigrants' culture. A racist hegemony is, as I will demonstrate in the coming chapters, constructed through repetitive moments that organize discourse around a number of social phenomena such as criminality, violence, gang rapes, and women oppression that together produce a "threat" to otherwise homogeneous "society" which in the same process come to be signified as ethnically Danish.

To go back to the interview, what makes "kicking down an old lady" into a specific phenomenon is not the violent act itself but the fact that it is locked into an ontological category that produces its meaning. If challenged, the respondent would probably rebut this conclusion: no culture on earth tells you to kick down an old lady. As I said, "kicking down an old lady" refers to a specific incident to which I found other references in my interview sample. The following extract (Else, 67 year, retired) also refers to the same incident.

**Extract 3**
1. R: Now what I am saying here is not coming out anywhere, is it?
2. *I: No, it's not.*
   R: That I won't suddenly have a lot of Turks standing here.. and beating me up?
3. *I: (laughs). You don't have to be afraid of it. No.. because Turks are that kind who beat people?*
   R: What?
4. *I: Are Turks the kind who beat people?*
   R: No, but you don't have to say much to them. Those young people. But the Danes are also like that, well. Then they get involved in fights, take Vollsmose [a neighborhood with concentration of immigrants in the third largest city in Denmark]. The police become afraid, they couldn't cope with it.
5. *I: Is it a particular incident you are thinking of in Vollsmose?*

R: It was that thing that they.. they knock on the door and then just walk in and then steal from an older lady. And then they kick the door in.. well, I could tell you about many incidents. It hasn't been so fun out there, but they are about to gain control over it now. Then there was somebody who got beaten up dead, not dead but was almost dead.. had to escape, go underground. And it doesn't look like anything, when it is our country.

This is one of the few examples where the interviewer challenges the respondent about the prejudiced implications of what she is saying, and the response is, as usual, a rejection of the implied conclusion (e.g., "no, but you don't have to say much to them ... Danes are also like that, well"). However, in this case, reflexivity falls short of retracting what is said before. Instead, the concrete incident is used to explain why she is afraid of "those young people." Concrete incidents produce factual data and enable respondents to speak about prejudice-relevant issues without appearing prejudiced. Interestingly, in this extract the concrete incident is used to justify the generalized conclusion that immigrants have a violent nature but only at an abstract level of discourse. If the interviewer also challenged the inferential link between a single incident and the nature of the whole category, the respondent might have become more reflexive, which happens in the next extract from the same interview:

**Extract 4**
R: … Why should we have them [immigrants] all here and feed? We others, we have been working, earning money, and paying taxes all these years, and what do they do? It rains with cuts and cuts on us.. because they come here.
*I: Do you have any personal experiences with it?*
R: No, on the contrary I only had positive. Because I go to an evening school, and there are many of them, too, and they want to do something with their lives. And they are very competent.

Here, the respondent is still speaking of the category of immigrants, and even in negative terms, but the negativity is now tied to the economic consequences of their being here

rather than their violent nature. On the contrary, she makes it clear that their nature is not the point of criticism; rather, they are purposeful and competent people. Of course, what I am saying is not that this description fits better with the immigrants than others, but that the descriptions of immigrants are produced interactionally depending on what the participants are trying to accomplish.

To go back to my discussion, concrete cases as reported in the media are powerful factual resources for talking about immigrants as an ethnicized social category because these cases, often explained by cultural components as parts of the same cultural formation, produce immigrants as an abstract cultural category rather than concrete human beings with various types of relationships with their surroundings. For example, a generalized statement such as "...we don't punish with capital punishment and such things in Denmark and Europe" – with reference to an actual debate during same period as the interviews were conducted about an immigrant member of the Radical Party who had refused to condemn death penalty – does not so much tell about what the respondent actually may think about "what we are" but produces the incommensurable gap between "we" and "they" and assigns a "backward" position to the other. The concrete attributes do not hold up when scrutinized: the respondent is actually describing Western culture as opposed to their "Muslim" culture, but the United States, for instance, has death penalty.[19] Furthermore, it was also revealed, during the same debate, that other (Danish) members of the same party were sympathetic to death penalty but were never questioned about it. The debate about the Muslim candidate was covered extensively in the media in

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[19] For example, another respondent in the interview sample describes identity as "shared history" and say that "Americans must also be able to find their sources in Greece or in the New Testament."

June 2001, but the debate was not in its essence so much about death penalty but the question of "how much more we can tolerate "their culture." Death penalty becomes a useful but flexible tool in apprehending cultural distinctions rather than really describing one side of the distinction. A news analysis in the conservative newspaper *Berlingske Tidende*, for example, described the debate as the expression of power struggle between candidates within the party using immigrants as the battle ground ("The Radical struggle in Østre Storkreds" [a constituency in Copenhagen], 6/3.2001).

In this sense, statement such as "here we don't kill [people], we don't do such things in Denmark, it is illegal and it is punishable" or "they have to learn that you do not steal and you do not rape young woman" (from my sample) do not mean that "it is normal that they kill people and it is legal in immigrants' own countries" or that "stealing and raping young women are acceptable for them." It should rather be read as an attempt to apprehend the cultural antagonism through issues such as murder, theft or rape as specific phenomena when they are committed by "them." As such, these utterances indicate culturalization of discourse on immigrants and the constitutive divide between Danes and immigrants as two antagonistic social formations. The actual attributes may change dependent on the rhetorical situation but the place that the category of immigrants is assigned is repeated across interviews.

## Discrimination as Constitutive Moment

I would like to return to my discussion of discrimination as the constitutive moment for a while. If the culturalization of discourse diverts focus from discrimination as the constitutive force ("society"), the repeated use of the term discrimination in reverse

sense also makes it difficult to move the gaze from "the immigrant" to "society." Since the mid-80s, the terms discrimination and racism have been repeatedly used to imply that these terms have been used against "ordinary Danes" to suppress any attempt to discuss "real" problems (see chapter for 4 for a discussion of the hegemonic intervention). By the beginning of the new millennium, the discussion around racism and discrimination was turned around to identify immigrants as the root of problem. The Minister for Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs pointed out that "the problems with integration are caused to a high degree by intolerance among immigrants..." (*Berlingske Tidende*, 3/31/2002). Danish Strategy Against Racism, the official document prepared by Danish government, for example, states that "... studies show that in particular persons with minority background living in Denmark are subjected to illegal discrimination and racism" which in a "logical" reasoning would imply steps against these acts but not for the Danish government: "A number of the plans initiatives will *therefore* [my emphasis] be specifically focused on groups of persons with ethnic minority backgrounds."[20] That is, fight against discrimination that immigrants are subjected to is, in Danish official discourse, a fight against prejudices among immigrants.

As it will become clearer over the next chapters, I am not talking about discourse or hegemony as abstract agents of social change. The racist hegemony is the result of a deliberate hegemonic project by the nationalist/racist Right to rearticulate social tensions in terms of ethnicity, culture and religion rather than class, gender or other types of social

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[20] www.inm.dk/publikationer/Handlingsplan_ligebeh_GB/index.htm. Accessed in November 2004. The quote can also be found in *Minority Report: focus on ethnic inequality in Denmark 2004* (p. 14) published by MixEuropa (www.mixeuropa.dk).

divisions and they succeed insofar their vision of "society" became the most eligible framework for identification. If discrimination is connoted reversely, it is the result of repetitive use of this idea by those who have access to public discourse (the media, public meetings, education, and other types of communication environments). In the mid-80s, the term was used to argue that Danes were discriminated against by the political elite, who would rather use resources on foreigners (refugees) than on Danes. This was one of the main arguments to construct a new type of antagonism between the cosmopolitan elite and Danish people. When this antagonistic divide became hegemonic, the focus was moved onto the foreigners as the agents of discrimination during the second half of 90s and in the new millennium.

When I was collecting my data in the summer of 2001, one of the issues that was pushed into the public debate – as a way of creating a new moral panic in the endless series of moral panics around immigration – was "discrimination by immigrants." The principal figure who forced the issue onto public debate was Kåre Bluitgen, a writer, who was also behind the crisis around Mohammed-drawings in late 2005 and early 2006.[21] He claimed in a commentary in *Jyllands-Posten* that immigrant children were using racist slurs and discriminating against Danish children ("Intolerance takes over Nørrebro [a Copenhagen neighborhood with high percentage of immigrants]" 8/23/2001). Among other things, he claimed, they [Muslim children] were bullying Danish children for

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[21] The cartoon crisis began when he claimed that cartoonists did not want to illustrate his book about Islam with drawings of Mohammed because they were afraid of Muslims. The Right-wing newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* challenged Muslims by publishing Mohammed drawings to teach them a lesson. Ironically, while *Jyllands-Posten*'s drawings attracted attention and led to the crisis (because of the arrogant statements by the Danish Prime Minister), Bluitgen's book has since been published with Mohammed drawings without much controversy.

having pork in their diet. He claimed authority to know it for the fact in his status as chair

of the executive committee of a local school that had received many complaints from

concerned parents. It was the correct timing to push forward his agenda: his commentary

came few days after a group of young immigrants had stoned a gay parade in the

neighborhood. In his commentary, he defended notions such as "freedom of speech,"

"religious tolerance," "respect for diversity" and "protection of minorities" (almost all of

which except the first are arguments often invoked by multiculturalists and anti-racists)

as a way of keeping together Denmark as a cohesive society. On the same page as his

commentary was Søren Krarup's commentary (an MP for the racist Danish People's

Party) who claimed that Danes were being betrayed by the parliament's gift of

citizenships to Muslim immigrants who were in a "deep, unbridgeable opposition to

Denmark and Danish culture" ("Danes are betrayed" *Jyllands-Posten* 8/23/2001). One of

the main stories of the day in the newspaper was the claim that the police could not enter

areas such as Nørrebro where there were many immigrants. The editorial of the same

newspaper the same day called Nørrebro "an occupied territory" – by Muslim

immigrants, that is. Similar stories and editorials were also published in other

newspapers. The timing could not be better for Kåre Bluitgen's commentary, which

attributed the problem to immigrants' religious background. Two days later, *Jyllands-*

*Posten* followed up with a journalistic piece about bullying in schools in which school

inspectors were quoted saying "we are so afraid of being called racists" (8/25/2001)

implying that they were afraid of taking up these real problems due to the prevalent fear

of being accused of racism. It would explain why we had not heard that it was indeed

Muslim immigrants who were discriminating against Danes (and secular immigrants) rather than vice versa.

The interviews in my sample were conducted in this discursive environment and the way interviewees responded to questions and talked about real problems reflected the immense focus on immigrants' criminality as a serious problem for society. Even if one recognizes discrimination against immigrants as a potential problem in discussions of criminality and other social problems, discursive resources that would help change the focus from immigrants (understood as a cultural category) to discrimination (understood as a societal problem) are not readily available in public discourse and could easily lead to accusations of being a "halal-hippie," that is, a politically correct liberal who does not want to face real problems and thus "betrays" society.

## The Prejudice Problematic

This brings me back to the notion of prejudice: I have already pointed out that the apparently prejudiced statements cannot be taken as simple reflections of prejudiced minds because the utterances have to be understood in relation to their functions in their concrete contexts. Here, I want to take it one step further and argue that prejudice is not a very useful notion to understand the nature of negative utterances about immigrants. Prejudice is usually associated with the mischief of irrationality that decent, rational human being should avoid. The difference between prejudice and rationality is that the latter is seen as the way to truth in post-Enlightenment society. Prejudice became a shorthand for "racial prejudice" or "racial stereotypes" (Wetherell and Potter 1992: 203, Billig 1988). In the same take, rationality also concerns the relationship between mind

and the world. Prejudice implies the ignorance of the knowable truth about reality. But if we at the outset have taken the approach that the distinction between language and reality is not as transparent as it seems and that language (discourse) is constitutive of the reality it speaks of, then the notion of prejudice would not be very useful. To assess whether a statement about, say, immigrants is prejudiced, we would need to know the truth about immigrants. We would have to have direct access to reality unmediated (undistorted) by language to be able assess whether a statement about immigrants correspond to the reality.

The notion of a universal rationality might rescue the notion of prejudice from being abandoned since it would help us to find the right path to the truth, but as my discussion has indicated, there is, "no ultimate rational foundation for the social, [...] but an argumentative structure that has the tendency to prove the *verisimilitude* of an argument rather than its truth. This verisimilitude is, in turn, determined by other arguments used on other occasions" [his emphasis] (Diken 1998: 63). I will be illustrating this point through an argumentative analysis later in this chapter, but it suffices to say here that the verisimilitude that Diken is speaking about is created by the constant focus on immigrants as a cultural category, a category which is also reflected and reproduced in the interviews. The interview situation is itself indicative of the focus: why else would we be doing interviews about immigrants as a social problem? The focus on immigrants creates the local argumentative context in which argumentative rationality is formed on the basis of the way social categories are constructed through descriptions. In short, rationality is highly local and depends on the argumentative structure of the concrete discourse and thus cannot show us the path to the ultimate reality. Reality would have to

be created in each communicative act once again depending on the parameters of the situation but it would also be responsive to surrounding discourse which may only have a latent presence in the concrete act in the sense that it may be analyzed out of the local context.

What this all comes down to is that prejudice should be treated as a powerful discursive resource that interviewees are oriented towards rather than something that defines the relationship between what people say about reality and the putative reality.[22] The orientation towards prejudice can often be seen in the way negative evaluations (which have the potential of being described as prejudice) are built into the descriptions of reality rather than being expressed as mental evaluations of that reality. In other words, evaluative conclusions are presented as rational inferences on the basis of facts about reality (Potter and Edwards 2001).

## Analyzing Variability and Stability

I have so far been arguing that the social is heterogeneous due to the contextual and thus contingent nature of communication. Once inserted into the exigencies of social interaction, the meaning of things becomes slippery and difficult to sustain. My argument has been that it is the abstract and empty quality of the signifiers that allows meaning to be fixed and appear as a stable entity across contexts rather than the concrete use of it. I.e., *it is the naming of it that holds together the entity*. One analytical implication of this position is that we can no longer simply look for broad similarities that occur frequently

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[22] Except, of course, when people describe a specific statement or action as prejudiced: in that case, it should be analyzed in relation to its rhetorical function.

and take these statements as accurate accounts of what people think and then construct a generalized version of these accounts as the dominant representations of, say, immigrants (Gilbert and Mulkay 1984). Once we begin to conceive of the social world in terms of an indefinite series of linguistic potentialities, which can be realized in a wide variety of ways and which are continually reformulated in the course of an ongoing interpretative process for particular rhetorical purposes, the simple procedure of sifting good from bad accounts becomes inappropriate (ibid: 7). But the golden question here is: how can we analyze hegemonic articulations if we cannot analyze them in terms of broad similarities? A close attention to the micro-levels of the talk has a powerful potential to demonstrate the ways in which a realistic image of descriptions of the world is achieved rhetorically in interaction. However, a limited focus on the internal workings of a text has the imminent danger of ignoring the wider contexts in which the text is embedded; how these wider contexts are translated into relatively stable institutions; and how the stable institutions in turn contribute to the relative stability of hegemonic articulations. The meaning of immigrants and immigration may only be read out of the concrete context of the utterance, but even studies that pay attention to variations, contradictions and disjointed character of discourse demonstrate that people usually end up justifying racist discrimination even when they display egalitarian and anti-racist sentiments (van Dijk 1984, 1987; Edwards, 2003; Potter and Wetherell 1992; Gotsbachner 2001). How do we understand and analyze this enduring tendency to justify racism in discourse?

My initial response to this question is to suggest an analytical model (Toulmin 1958) to analyze the argumentative texture of utterances and link it with the poststructuralist theory of hegemony as Laclau and Mouffe (1985/2001) formulated it.

Post-structuralist theorists often have a global view of discourse and rarely move out of an abstract theoretical realm into the exigencies of concrete moments of communication, especially into talk in interaction. Laclau and Mouffe emphasize the contingency of meaning, which implies the openness of the social but their theoretical concepts emerge on the basis of theoretical assumptions about the nature of language and social life. Laclau, for example, approaches the question of heterogeneity through a theoretical discussion of the nature of signification systems (e.g. by using mathematical/rhetorical theory on how zero is both the condition and the impossibility of the mathematical system – Laclau 1998) or, when it becomes most concrete, through a discussion of macro-analytical works that have difficulty with capturing the heterogeneity of the social. In *On Political Reason* (2005), Laclau offers a concrete example by examining the writings of Marx and Engels (and other Marxists such as Fanon) about lumpenproletariat. Lumpenproletariat designates the excess of the social that does fit into the definition of major social classes such as working class and capitalists. The concept is created as an attempt to maintain the dialectic vision of a unified history (as conceived as history of production) within which large sections of people could not be fit. He then examines the difficulty of capturing the excess of the social within this concept (2005: 143-145). My approach to heterogeneity is that it is enough to look at communication in interaction to see the extreme flexibility of social categories in the flow of a conversation. The flexibility and openness of the social do not so much "arise due to the nature signification per se but because of the reflexivity built into social interaction and the emergent and transformative properties of that interaction" (Wetherell 1998: 401).

My take is that if discourse is inherently rhetorical, then we should be able to understand the workings of argumentation and its premises through an analytical model that explicates premises treated as common sense, i.e., premises that are accepted by both sides as the basis of argumentation. The common sense premise for the racist articulation, which is repeated across interactions and texts in Danish context, is, I argue, the culturalized ontology of the social. The ways in which ontological categories fracture argumentation along particular lines (antagonistic divide) can be analyzed in interaction as I will demonstrate in the next section. What matters here is not so much the attributes the categories have but the place that social categories are assigned in relation to one another in the social fabric, which is why liberal, egalitarian and even anti-racist ideas can be flexibly articulated – on the basis of often implicit assumptions about the role of culture in human conduct – to promote discriminatory and racist practices. Immigrants are, in this sense, an initially empty category whose status is defined not so much by any actual features attributed to them but by the place they are assigned in an antagonistic relationship to the category of Danes whose. With this, I turn to Toulmin's model of argumentation.

## An Analytical Model of Argumentation

Toulmin's model is built upon the classical model of arguments of Aristotle (1909), which has three components: a minor premise (singular premise), a major premise (universal premise) and a conclusion. The classical example is:

Socrates is a man (singular premise)
All men are mortal (universal premise)
So Socrates is mortal (conclusion)

In this example, we have information available in two places of the schema (minor and major premises). According to the model, the major premise "all men are mortal" provides a certainty that proves the truth-value of the argument. Toulmin suggests instead a four-fold model where the term major (universal) premise is replaced by the term 'warrant' (W), and minor premise with 'data' (D), while 'backing' is added as the fourth dimension of the scheme in which we still have the conclusion (C). The difference from Aristotle's model is that 'warrants' are not like premises that provide the facts for the argumentation but are themselves subject to questioning and have to justify their authority. A warrant is an inference-license that legitimizes the step from D to C. 'Backing' is used to support and explain the warrant and may be carried out by referring to taxonomic classifications, to statutes or laws, or to statistical statements. This is the basic model the elaborations of which I will discuss later with examples. Now with this model in mind let us look at a similar statement:

> Whales give birth (data)
> Mammals are birth-giving animals (warrant)
> So whales are mammals (conclusion)

The argument can be set up in the following T-schema:
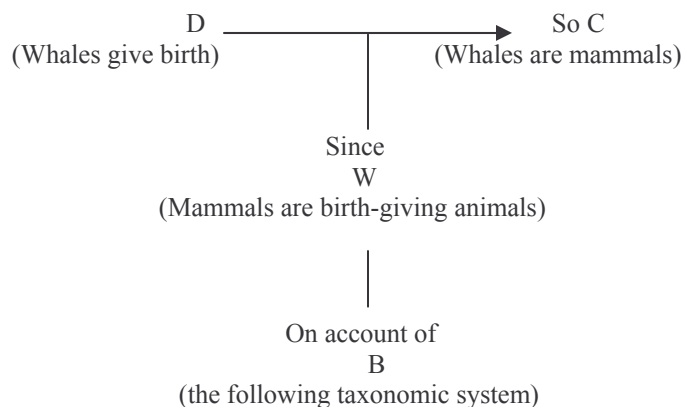


**Figure 1.1: T-schema (Whales=mammals)**

Backing is not explicated here, but in case it is used, it would be a reference to an encyclopedic entry or a taxonomic classification from a biology book. There is, of course, nothing wrong with this reasoning as long as the warrant is unquestioned. And often warrants are "conceded without challenge and their backing is left understood. Indeed, if we demanded the credentials of all warrants at sight and never let none pass unchallenged, argument could scarcely begin" (Toulmin 1958: 106), and communication can scarcely be established, I would add. However, not only the warrant but also the very category of mammals can be challenged as a valid taxonomy to classify living organisms. The argument then would not make sense and we would have a new argument about the classification system. The contingent nature of categories – although they appear as naturalized and have a taken for granted status – has long been demonstrated by scholars who study standardization systems (Bowker and Star 1999). In the example above, the warrant has a scientific authority about it and would almost never be disputed. On the other hand, even a dictionary definition of mammals can make this otherwise robust argument unstable. According to the dictionary in my Lotus program, a mammal is "any of various warm-blooded vertebrate animals, including human beings, marked by a covering of hair on the skin and in the female, milk-producing glands." So, one can argue that whales do not exactly fit into this taxonomic classification system. In this case, in order to keep the argument valid, we would have to argue and reach an agreement about the category of mammals first. Even the argument in the first example with Socrates can be destabilized if it is uttered in a context of people who have a different understanding of the relationship between life and death.

These examples are used only to demonstrate that the rationality of an argument cannot be assessed by its truth-value. Rather, rationality is field-variant and depends on the possibility of establishing inference-warrants in the relevant field: it depends on "to what extent there are already established warrants in science, in ethics or morality, in law, art-criticism, character-judging, or whatever it may be; and how far the procedures for deciding what principles are sound, and what warrants are acceptable, are generally understood and agreed" (Toulmin 1958: 176). Language does not consist of timeless propositions but of utterances dependent on the context and occasion on which they are uttered. Utterances are actions performed in given situations and assessment of the merits of this action in the context of its performance. Only in pure mathematics can the merits of a claim be made context-free and on their own terms (ibid: 180-181).

In practical argumentation, the merits of a proposition are assessed by its effectiveness. Indeed most of the time in our everyday life even when we are not aware of it, we are engaged in some kind of argumentative discourse. A vernacular sentence such 'you have your shoes on' may not look much like an argument, but in a context where a couple discover that they forgot to check the mailbox, it will be an implicit argument that the one with shoes on should go out and do it. It is an implicit argument because the conclusion of the argument is not explicit. If we set up the argument according to the T-schema, we can analyze the argumentative structure of the utterance (Figure 1.2).

D ————————————→ C
You have your shoes on            So you should go and check it (implicit)

W
Since it is easier for the one who
does not have to put shoes on.
(fairness principle; implicit)
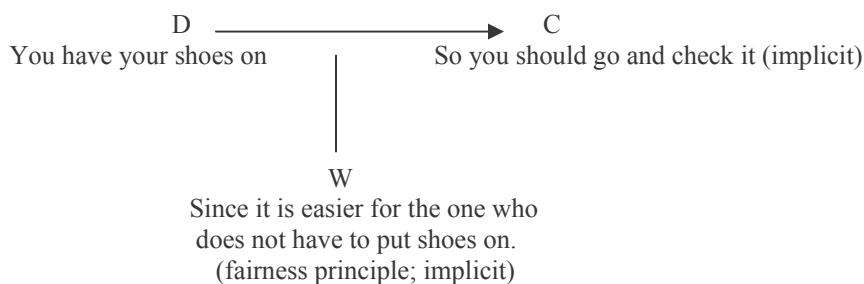
**Figure 1.2: T-schema (Shoes)**

Here, the two components of the argument are not explicated. In fact, the majority

of arguments can be expected to have implicit components – mostly implicit warrants –

because they typically refer to a general principle that is assumed to be known and

accepted by the counterpart, and they can be inferred from the combination of data and

conclusion. However, the explicitness or implicitness of the components depends on the

rhetorical situation. In this case, the implicitness of the conclusion is probably due to the

fact that the implicit parts of the argument are less likely to be challenged, and that the

data (D) refers more directly to the general moral principle (W) that makes the

connection between D and C possible. However, the argument can very easily be

challenged on several grounds. For example, that the warrant is a general moral principle

of fairness does not mean that it cannot be challenged. First of all, the other person may

accept the principle of fairness but bring new information into the situation: I am too

tired; I have been driving the whole day. It would be a new argument using the same

warrant: fairness. Furthermore, there can be arguments about the warrant itself: the

couple may discuss whether or not fairness is the appropriate principle to apply in the

given context, or how fairness should be understood and applied in that particular case.

What this example also implies is that rationality – even though the argument appeals to shared norms and values or simply common sense – is a local and contextualized way of reasoning and thus cannot as such be generalized as a universal standard of thinking which should constitute the standards for a rational (public) discussion. Argumentation is a kind of interaction, and actions (as in the example) have motivations, goals, and results and thus cannot be reduced to the logical relationship between data and claim.

I need to make a quick qualification here: when one digs deeper into the exigencies of everyday argumentation, it is much more complicated than the model 'in the book' proposes. First, actual argumentation is much more complex than suggested model: more than one proposal may fill the slots in the schema and it is not always easy to recognize claim, data or warrant. Second, which component(s) of the argument are explicated depends on the interactional situation. Third, a complicated semantic linkage exists between interwoven arguments, one argument as a whole may make up the warrant or data for the next argument or for the next level, that is, functions of propositions change place fluidly.

The following extract from my sample, however, fits perfectly into the schema and proves to be very useful for an extended discussion of the model for analysis. The two dots indicate that he disrupts himself in the flow of the discourse indicating hesitation or repair.

**Extract 7**

I: *Did you experience problems with immigrants?*
R: Nooo, I can't say I did, I mean, no I didn't. It it, uh, it was, no! Then I would have remembered it, right? It.. it is.. but there is much, some of

them are a little dominant in the streets, right? Yeah, I mean, I did I didn't, it wasn't myself, right? And it… I wouldn't want to judge anybody in that case, but I was in a discotheque where there was, uh, a friend of mine, he knew, uh, yeah he knows a biker, right? And uh, this biker and some of his friends, they had probably provoked some Turks, right? And then, uh, one of the Turks, he hit the biker on the head with a bottle, right? And it it was you know, it was I am not saying that there is something he can't, I mean, I am not on the biker's side here, okay, not at all, but I am just saying, it is such a typical reaction from an immigrant, or I just feel so, right? When they are out, you know, then they are very aggressive, like, and they by definition they are not afraid of anybody. They they have, like, their honor … I would never dare hitting a biker on the head with a bottle, so, uh, or, there are some people who just scare me, right? But it is as if, it doesn't apply to them. They just don't they just don't care, so, they were only two, the Turks together, right?

This extract is similar to some of the earlier extracts in that the respondent describes immigrants as violent people in response to the interviewer's question about whether he had experienced problems with immigrants. Instead of saying "no," the respondent engages in a complex argumentative discourse that constructs the essence of immigrants' culture as violent. However, as we have seen in other examples, he does not merely report on the incident as it happened out there in reality and then tell what he thinks about it but actively constructs both what happened and the people involved drawing on a number of rhetorical strategies. The language he is using is not simply referential to the categories he is speaking of (the immigrants/Turks, bikers) or the event (fight). The categories and his views of them are woven together. However, the aggressive and violent nature of immigrants is not treated as an undisputable fact; its factuality is achieved argumentatively. In fact, at no point does he make a clear distinction between the category of immigrants and his attitudes toward them. On the contrary, he makes several attempts to avoid expressing any views unless they can be presented as rational inferences based on facts. Let us remember that he is answering a

question about whether he ever had problems with immigrants, and he begins with stating

that he never did. So, the "problems" that one may deduce from the description of the

event is not presented as his personal views about immigrants, which in this case would

indicate prejudice against immigrants. Instead, the problems are tied to the immigrants'

own nature – the way they generally act. The argumentative scheme seems to be simple:

if you dare hit a biker on the head with a bottle, then you must have an aggressive nature,

since [as we all know] everybody else would be scared by bikers. The concept of "honor"

as a value system provides the link from the two individual Turks to the generalized

category of immigrants. To support his conclusion, the respondent uses a variety of

rhetorical devices – categorization and particularization, a combination of vivid and

systematically vague formulations, narrative techniques, invoking common sense –

through which he warrants the realism of his descriptions and the factuality of his

conclusions.

The realism of the description has to be rhetorically achieved by turning

descriptions into facts through rhetorical devices and techniques such as building up

one's credibility, managing issues of accountability, and producing descriptions as

external and independent of the speaker. In Shotter's words, "[i]t is by the use of such

rhetorical devices – as reference to 'special methods of investigation', 'objective

evidence', special methods of proof', 'independent witness', etc. – that those with

competence in such procedures can construct their statements as 'factual statements', and

claim authority for them as revealing a special 'true' reality behind appearances…"

(1993a: 25) And this is because factual versions are not only constructed to make an

argument but also to undermine alternative versions that are often absent from the

explicit argumentation (Billig 1988, 1991) except in situations of dispute such as courts or political debates.

If we put the argumentation in the T-schema, it would look something like this:

```
D  ──────────────────▶  C
They hit a biker with a bottle.        Immigrants are aggressive by nature.

                    W
        If you don't fear a biker, you don't fear anybody
                Fearlessness = aggressiveness


                    B
                The concept of honor
```
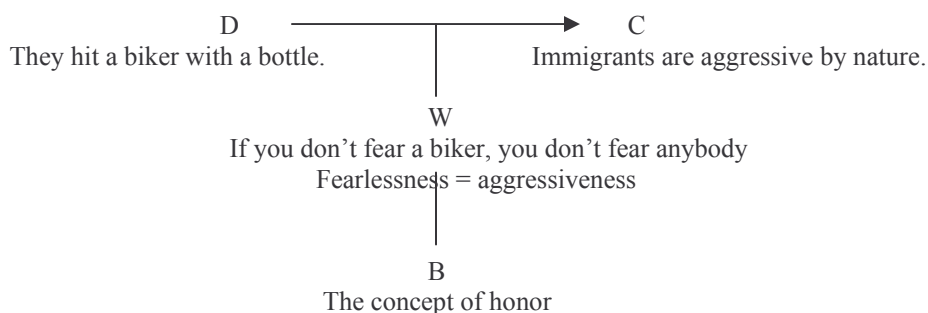
**Figure 1.3: T-schema (Honor)**

What is remarkable in this example is that all components of the argument are explicit, even the backing, which is interestingly what Quasthoff would describe a stereotype. The stereotype in her definition has "the logical form of a judgment which ascribes or denies certain properties (traits or forms of behavior) to a set of persons in a (logically) unwarrantably simplifying and generalizing way, with an emotionally evaluative tendency" (Quasthoff 1978: 6). They are characterized by a high degree of collective sharedness. This is why the stereotype appears in the backing position rather than as a conclusion – a position that would be extremely open for objections. As an expression of common knowledge, stereotypes gain a self-evident, inter-subjective validity which has to do with how and where in the argumentative scheme they used; they are an oversimplified version of Toulmin's "referring to the statistics" type of information (presented as factually robust information since we all know how immigrants react because this reaction is presumed to be repetitive and therefore well-known).

The perfection with which this argument corresponds to the T-schema is hardly ever found in natural conversation. The explicitness of all components in the argumentative scheme indicates a very interesting situation – that what we are dealing with here resembles much more a theoretical discourse rather than a practical discourse (e.g. the shoe example). I interpret the explicitness of all the components of the argument as a result of the specific interactional character of the interview situation where the participant is questioned by a social researcher against whom he probably feels a need to justify not only his specific claims but also the rationality of these claims (the way in which he inferentially reaches these conclusions). One way of establishing rationality is to explicate all the steps of inferences one is making. As Edwards (2003) demonstrates in his analysis of a similar discourse, the speaker displays a sense of inferential carefulness through expressions of epistemological concerns (they 'just' don't care, 'as if', 'it wasn't myself') and by appeals to common knowledge ('yeah', 'you know', 'right?' and so on) which do not seem to be expressions of what the participant actually thinks is common knowledge. They perform an interactional function as inference-triggering devices from the semantic level of sentences to the inter-subjective level of stereotypes.

The T-schema I have presented is still a basic model. I want to elaborate the model with more components and as a complex layered structure to make clearer both the interactional nature of argumentation and the limits of it. First, Toulmin's complex model includes two more features that are distinguishable from D, C, W and B positions: modal qualifiers (Q) that indicate the strength conferred by the warrant on this step, and conditions of rebuttal (R) that indicate circumstances in which the general authority of the warrant may be set aside. Often, the model is used to analyze the actual micro-

arguments and their internal organization but I suggest that it can also be used to analyze

macro structures of the arguments, that is the complex argumentative structures (usually

found in theoretical discourses such as this paper; political speeches or courtroom

discourse) where arguments are hierarchically organized, and to explicate the implicit

premises that structure overall argumentation.. Macro structure in this sense refers to the

global structure of argumentation that organizes hierarchically the argumentative

structure of the entire text. Let us look at the expanded model:
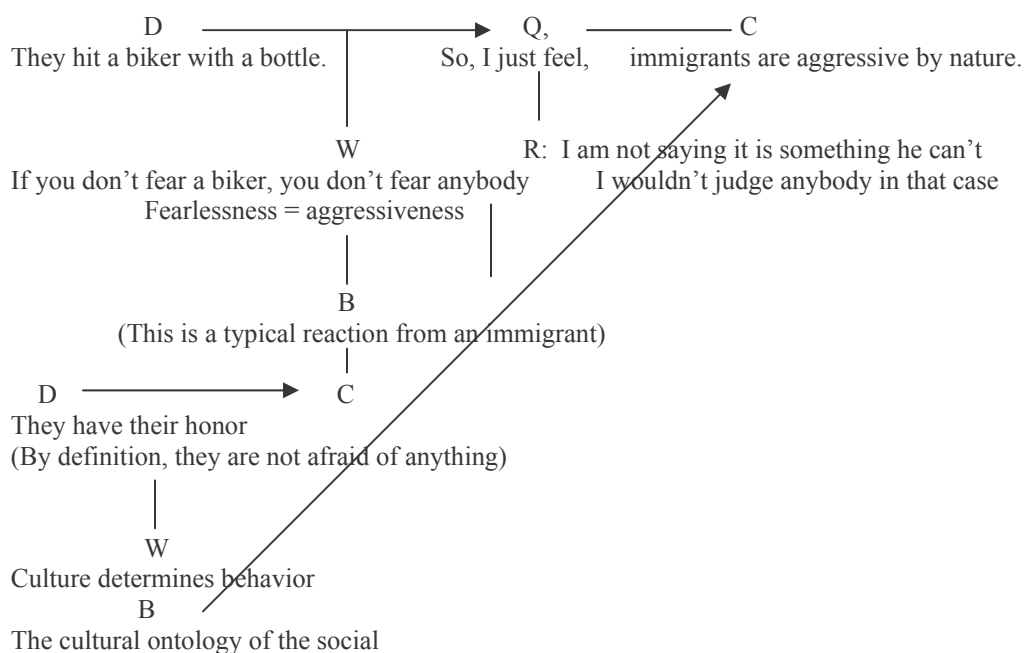


**Figure 1.4: Expanded T-schema**

The new places (Q, R) in the argumentative schema reveal what Edwards (2003) calls

"reluctance to come to a view, along with coming to a view unlooked-for,

serendipitously, or by accident." The conclusion is, in case anybody should describe it as

prejudiced, presented not as the reflection of the speaker's mindset but as a rational

(unavoidable) conclusion he, though reluctantly through a rational inference, arrived at.

Clearly, we do not need the T-schema in order to analyze this feature of discourse, but the model also enables us to analyze systematically the complex argumentative organization of the utterance and explicate the hidden premises that warrant the conclusions. The warrant (culture determines behavior) is not explicitly uttered in the interaction and thus can be said to be the analyst' own construction. Edwards for example is not interested in imposing the researcher's own categories upon the participants, but what the model shows – if we accept it as universally applicable model of argumentative analysis – is that the implicit common sense categories have a built-in quality about them and can be inferred from the logical organization of the local argument. As long as it is possible to reconstruct a proposition from its linguistic context, that proposition would be considered as having been communicated (Quasthoff 1978: 25): there is usually no semantic need to make these basic propositions explicit except for interactive purposes as I demonstrated with the analysis above. The quality of sharedness is what renders implicit the common knowledge expressions. However, sharedness is only possible because it is treated as common sense by not explicating it, which otherwise might have rendered it open for contestation (as we have seen with one of the respondents who was trying to deconstruct cultural explanations for criminality). But there is one more aspect that is important here: the culturalized ontology of the social that belongs to the backing. This is the basic premise that makes the whole argumentative chain intelligible and this is the basic proposition that holds together the various elements of discourse because it tells us about the basic objects of discourse. We differ in regard to what we make of the object in the course of the interaction; how we conclude about the nature of that object; but we do not differ in regard to the premise that the object is the basic unit of discourse.

The cultural taxonomy of the social is what makes possible the steps taken to the specific conclusion(s) of the overall argumentation. They are "guarantees" for what Hall (1990) calls the "racist logic" that fractures arguments along particular lines. If these interpretative resources are key aspects of discourse, then the analysis of common-place (common knowledge) propositions should occupy a major place in the analysis of what Billig calls "ideological discourse" (Billig 1988: 192).

However, if rationality is localized and contextualized and shaped by the goals of particular argument, we cannot speak of a single logic that always leads to the same conclusions out of the same set of data and warrants. In our analytical example, the speaker actually may have started with the essentialist cultural paradigm (culture determines behavior) and end up concluding how wonderful and respectable immigrants are because of their culture (of which there are some examples in my interview sample). And he may have advanced both arguments at once. Richard Jenkins (1999) demonstrates for example that the idea of 'preserving Danish identity' was used as justification for both "yes" and "no" votes to the Maastricht treaty in the referendum of 1992. Even more specific concerns such as "the fear for unchecked immigration" or "populist resentments against cultural and political elites" could easily be used for both conclusions.

This shows that the discursive resources available are not specific to any social, ethnic, or ideological groups. They are available for the participants in all kinds of discourses. In Sweden, a Kurdish youth who murdered his sister defended himself by resorting to the cliché that "she broke our rules." He was reminded by the prosecutor that he himself was convicted several times for drug abuse and theft. He replied back: "those are your rules, not ours," which created fury in Sweden. He may or may not have

believed what he said, but its interactive purpose was clear. What was striking about the following public cry was that his interpretation of what rules apply where and to whom was not challenged but taken as a token of immigrant culture and their disrespect for Swedish culture. The very categories of "immigrants" and "immigrant culture" were the resources that "deep" – in the sense that the existence of which is almost unquestionable categories – in the argumentative texture of Swedish discourse "structured" the argumentation along the lines of ethnic difference.

I would like to illustrate my argument that culturalized category of immigrants as the basic premise places discourse about public policy in a straightjacket through an analysis of an editorial from a Social Democratic daily newspaper. The premise in the following editorial "distorts" argumentation because the focus becomes "fixed" on what to do about the "immigrant problem" rather than the issue at hand. The following text is an editorial from *Det Fri Aktuelt*, a daily newspaper that was affiliated with Social Democratic Party until late 1990s when the paper closed down.

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**Editorial, *Det Fri Aktuelt*, Wednesday 13 December 1995**
**MAKE DEMANDS OF IMMIGRANT PARENTS**

1. More and more municipalities wish to get rid of mother tongue instruction offered by the Public Schools to the migrant children who do not speak Danish as their first language. It is the High Taastrup City Council [a municipality with a concentration of immigrants] that leads the way in the debate, but the High Taastrup is supported by many other municipalities, and now also by the National Federation of Municipalities.

2. Educationalists, researchers and the Minister of Education, Ole Vig Jensen do not hesitate to say a clear "no" to the proposal. Across a broad spectrum, it is agreed that if migrant children are to have a fair chance to learn a second language, namely Danish, they have to have a proper foundation. And the foundation should be the mother tongue the children speak at home.

3. The argument sounds very reasonable. The problem, on the other hand, is that in recent years, it has become obvious that this pedagogical argument does not fit with the reality.

4. "No matter what we did, it did not help. We cannot make it work, and we have continuously had to make new provisions to support immigrant children. It is a form of ill-treatment of these children", Svend-Erik Hermansen (the Social Democratic Party) says, the Chairman of the Education Committee in High Taastrup.

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**Figure 1.5: Editorial in Aktuelt**

5. The development in western Copenhagen [with concentration of immigrants] indicates that he is right. We have seen many examples of third-generation immigrant children who show up in nursery classes [classes before the 1$^{st}$ class in primary schools] without the ability of speaking many Danish words.
6. In High Taastrup one or both parents had mother tongue instruction when *they* were in Public Schools. They were offered place in kindergartens free of charge, so that they could learn Danish via the natural way. But migrant families often refuse the offer – and even the children born in Denmark still show up with little qualifications on the first day of school. As a result the school has to provide both Danish and foreign language teachers in the classroom. Again as a result, according to the law, mother tongue instruction has to be provided for after school hours.
7. It is understandable that several municipalities are about to give up.
8. We could, of course, hope that by repeating the operation, the fourth-generation migrants would be in a slightly better position, but the question naturally is also if there are not any other models.
9. Given that these Denmark-born children were offered free places in nursery school, and that their parents were also offered the opportunity to learn Danish, is it then unfair to demand that these children speak Danish when they begin school?
10. Hardly so. It is normal that society makes demands, and naturally, demands should be made of the parents.
11. There may be objections that there is a risk of losing some immigrant children in this course of action. But during the last 20 years, this is what happened: many migrant children were lost. They lagged behind from the beginning of school because they could not speak Danish. And even instructions of 5 hours a week – so that they could have a foundation to learn Danish – have not been able to make up for their lost time.
12. The Minister of Education, Ole Vig Jensen now points to the rights that EU-citizens have to instructions in mother tongue, and he does not want to place other immigrants in a poorer position than EU-citizens. It is, of course, a relevant point. The question to the Minister of Education is then how many third-generation immigrants from Italy and Belgium receive mother tongue instruction in Italian and Flemish.
13. There can be reasons to suggest that mother tongue instruction is not a great economical problem. In a wider context the money that might be saved are just peanuts. But at the moment municipalities follow one another in reducing mother tongue instruction down to the minimum demanded by the law. Precisely because they have extremely poor experiences with using extra resources on this field.
14. If the politicians or the Minister of Education think that it is all about keeping the minimum legal standard, then the consequences again will be that immigrant children become losers. They deserve better.

**Figure 1.5: Editorial in Aktuelt (continued)**

Here again, similar to the extracts that I have been analyzing, references to reality and "their own good" are used to argue for restrictions on immigrants' rights. This time, my analysis focuses on the cultural taxonomy of social divisions without which the argument would fall apart.

The main argument in the editorial is that mother tongue instruction in public schools is an obstacle for immigrant children to learn Danish, a necessary tool that

enables them to do better in the future. The problem is, according to the paper, that educationalists and other experts make us believe that mother tongue was a necessary foundation to learn another language, but in reality it does not work because even children of third-generation immigrants show up in school without speaking Danish. Therefore, the editorial argues, the legal right to demand mother tongue instructions should be removed so that municipalities who have the problems at first hand can decide to use their resources to better integrate children. The editorial is, thus, an appeal to politicians.

The editorial develops its rhetorical strategy in a subtle way. At first glance, the argument makes sense. First, the question of mother tongue instruction is presented as a practical problem to be solved, and then a set of binary oppositions are offered in terms of solution one of which (maintaining mother tongue instruction) is ruled out with reference to the reality that shows that it does not work. The evidence is that children show up in school without speaking Danish.

The argumentation cannot survive on closer scrutiny. The editorial is an argument for removing the legal right for mother tongue instructions. If this is the case, the title does not make sense: "make demand of immigrant parents." What demands the editorial has in mind is not clear.

One of the subtle rhetorical strategies is to demonstrate an understanding of the counterpart's arguments and hence devaluate them. The first move in paragraphs 2 and 3 is to distort and reduce the argument of the counterpart to the claim that migrant children only have a fair chance to learn Danish if they have a foundation, i.e. their mother tongue. The counter argument is reduced to a single claim: mother tongue is a vehicle for

learning Danish. The "distortion" of the counter argument enables the paper to reduce the discussion into a question of which approach is best for learning Danish, and the counterpart's claim can be repudiated with reference to an external reality which, according to the paper, shows that it did not work. The most important argument of the counterpart is actually that mother tongue is crucial for a child's development and confidence, but this part of the argument is silenced in the editorial. The European Convention on Children, for instance, states that children have right to speak and develop their mother tongue.

However, despite the distortion of the counter-argument, there is a glitch in the argumentative logic of the editorial: mother tongue instruction begins in school and as such has nothing to do with the fact that children meet up in school without a large Danish vocabulary. In other words, mother tongue instruction cannot be the reason that children do not learn Danish before they start in school.

The link that makes the argument flow is the insertion of parents who also received mother tongue instructions. There is a crucial omission in the editorial: the paper does not say whether the parents speak Danish. The argument in paragraph 6 is thus built on an ambiguity: does the paper imply that the parents who received mother tongue instruction did not learn Danish (because of the instruction), or does the editorial argue that the children born in Denmark do not speak Danish because their parents do not speak Danish with their children? What has the parents' refusal to send their kinds to kindergartens to do with instruction in mother tongue?

Interviews with some of these parents on Danish TV-channels showed that they actually speak Danish. So, the problem cannot be that the parents do not speak Danish. Then the fact that the parents also received instruction in mother tongue cannot be used

as an evidence for the assertion that *instruction* is the problem. There is no "logical" or "factual" argument for removing mother tongue instruction especially when it is not even an economic burden (e.g. "just peanuts"). Principally, there is nothing wrong with being bilingual. The real problem seems to lie somewhere else: regardless of whether the parents have learned Danish or not, the problem seems to be that they speak their mother tongue at home, not Danish with their children. In other words, the parents keep being what they are: immigrants; they do not integrate, or rather, assimilate and become Danish.

The editorial implies that migrant parents do not care about their children learning Danish (i.e., they refuse free places in kindergarten – paragraph 9), although at no point is any support or instance given to this assertion. None of immigrant organizations has ever denied the importance of learning the national language. It is rather a question of whose business it is to teach children Danish. This brings us to another crucial point in the paper's argumentation: the responsibility for teaching children Danish is attributed to the parents. However, one of the basic principals of the Danish Public School is that the school adjusts itself to the needs of the children as they start school not the other way around. This basic principle is also omitted from the discussion. The implication is that this principle does not apply to immigrants. The demand that "society" is supposed to make of immigrants, must be, then, that they speak (or at least teach) Danish to their children – a demand that is not, in its local argumentative context, directly related to mother tongue instruction.

Despite these apparent lack of the link between the demand for removing mother tongue instructions from curriculum and the "problem" at hand (that children show up in

school without having learned Danish), the overall argument flows well and makes sense (and the legal right to demand mother tongue has since been abolished by the right-wing government that came to power in 2001). Why does it work? Because the macro-level argument – or the basic premise – is a hegemonic one: the presence of immigrants is a problem for Danish society. Immigrants' insistence on being immigrants; their resistance to assimilation is a subversive act that keeps society achieving fullness, which is often expressed with an extreme preoccupation with ethnic homogeneity (see chapter 2). The legal right to receive mother tongue instruction is problematic because it signifies a desire by immigrants to keep their culture and ethnicity through generations. The presence of immigrants destroys, in other words, Danish society's ambition to constitute itself as a cohesive force, as a full presence.

The cultural taxonomy of social relations is what keeps the argumentative chain together despite the slippages in the argumentative reasoning (steps taken from data to claim). It is the culturalized ontology of the social that fractures along the antagonistic divide the main fault lines of argumentation that may or may not be explicated in local contexts or texts.

## Integration: The Impossible Ambition

The code for immigration debate is integration. Andreassen (2005) who examined the television coverage of immigrants between 1970 and 2004 found that integration was a dominant theme in the news coverage and that the debate was governed by a consensus that integration was an important goal. However, she explains, none of the news material in that time span defined or explained what integration was but since

the media did not define what immigration meant, politicians and other interviewees articulated various understandings of the improvements needed to reach this goal (ibid: 234). The differentiated definitions of integration led her to define the concept as a "floating signifier" with no specific meaning ascribed to it.

Laclau and Mouffe (1985/2001: 113) use the term "floating signifier" to designate any signifier that has not yet been "captured" in an articulation which partially fixes meaning the meaning of the signifier in relation to other signifiers constituting a hegemonic totality (which in turn never can achieve a total closure because of the floating character of signifiers). Laclau and Mouffe's theory of hegemony is highly abstract and operates with qualified assumptions about the role of language in constituting the social. A more grounded perspective would understand, as I have demonstrated throughout this chapter, that the floating character of any signifier is related to the rhetorical nature of social interaction. Any signifier, when it comes to interaction, is a floating signifier. However, as I have also been arguing, when a signifier is used in conjunction with an ontological category of the social, its meaning becomes partially fixed in that it comes to signify social divisions; it becomes what Laclau and Mouffe call a "moment" or a "nodal point" in a chain of equivalences in which its place in the chain partially fixes its meaning.

Without delving too much into the theoretical intricacies of the argument, I would like to explain it with a concrete example: a headscarf can signify a great number of different things depending on the situation. However, when used in conjunction with immigrants, its meaning gets partially fixed and signifies a culture or religion. The proliferation of the signifieds – the number of possibilities for what it might mean –

becomes limited when used as an element that belongs to the social category. Headscarf becomes equaled, through an articulatory logic, to other signifiers such as "honor," "violence" and "authoritarianism" which altogether signify a social formation (immigrants). Since none of these signifiers has a natural or logical connection with any other, the only connection they have is the connection they are forced into by the articulatory power.

However, in this articulatory process, we also see another operation: the signifier becomes more abstract or "emptier" because the partial fixation empties it of content. The headscarf becomes a signifier for the category of immigrants, which is itself an empty category (that no longer simply signifies a person who moved from one country to another). The relationship between the ontic content (the piece of textile to cover hair) and the signifier (headscarf) becomes looser.[23]

In this perspective, it is difficult to imagine that in a highly overdetermined area of discourse, such a central concept as integration remains a floating signifier that is not assigned a place in the argumentative fabric of the social. I suggest instead that what Andreassen recognizes as a floating signifier is in fact an empty signifier as indicated by the consensual use of the term in news coverage. As I have argued, appeals to common sense or shared knowledge has the function of emptying the terms of content since any attempt to fix their meaning in interaction will potentially open them up for contest. I see, therefore, the consensual use of the term integration as indication of commonsensical

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[23] The suture between the ontic content and the signifier is, at the outset, impossible as the ontic content can never be apprehended directly except through a signifier.

character of it. It indicates that the meaning of integration is fixed: it simply signifies the gap between Danes and immigrants.

Immediately after identifying the term integration as floating signifier, Andreassen explains that in news coverage, politicians, journalists and interviewees describe immigrants as a so-called parallel existence outside Danish society and that commentators often tie this description to the areas where immigrants live in high concentrations which they call ghettos. The news journalists and interviewees characterize life in these ghettos as a non-Danish way of living that breeds Islamic fundamentalism, crime and rape (Andreassen 2005: 235).

As Andreassen's analysis of the news coverage indicates, integration indeed has a very specific meaning: doing away with immigrants' parallel existence, which is generally described as a threat to the Danish way of life. Danish way of life is probably never concretized in stories but since the ghettos are often described the breeding spaces for religious fundamentalism, crime and rape, the Danish way of life may be envisioned as living in a society free of these phenomena, which is an impossibility. Integration signifies, then, the impossible desire for social unity which can only be "restored" by "including" immigrants in society – only by fundamentally transforming them from what they are (assimilation) – or expelling them. Theoretically speaking, the inclusion of immigrants in society is an impossibility since, in the new hegemonic order which I will discuss extensively in the coming chapters, the limit of society is constituted by the "frontier" between society and immigrants. Integration remains, therefore, as the name of the desire for an impossible unity rather than a concrete goal. It is this desire that keeps together Danish society.

Andreassen argues, for example, that integration could as well be defined as employment (which it is in concrete contexts), but in a culturalized discursive environment, any attempt to conceptualize unemployment among immigrants as the result of discrimination bounces back from the extreme preoccupation with immigrants' cultural background as the most likely explanatory moment. That is, it is immigrants' own lack of ability/desire that is often presented at the cause of the lack of integration. The implication is that as long as social divisions are envisioned through the ethnic/cultural antagonism, integration will remain an unachievable goal. Since "immigrant culture" is constructed around some "nodal points" such as "criminality" "head scarf," and "gang rapes," immigrants cannot be integrated culturally: the "two" cultures are incommensurable. On the other hand, if cultural antagonism did not exist, the term integration would loose its centrality. However, the consensual use of the term integration as a project is a very useful tool in forming policies against immigration (i.e., preventing those who are considered as culturally incompatible from entering the country).

## Hegemony: Long-term Effects

A hegemonic project is not an "ideological" project in the sense that it turns political subjects into ideologically duped masses. For a hegemonic project to be successful, people do not have to believe in its particular demands such as expelling immigrants. It is enough that its claims about the nature of reality are unchallenged and that its specific vision of the social order becomes naturalized as the social order itself. As Anne Marie Smith puts it, "To describe a political project as hegemonic [...] is not to

say that a majority of the electorate explicitly supports its policies, but to say that there appears to be no other alternative to this project's vision of society. [...] The lack of an alternative is not, of course, an accident of history, but the product of strategic representations" (Smith 1994: 37).

This is not a question about alternatives at an abstract political level. The lack of alternative vision for the social order captures the political subject in politico-moral dilemmas; it makes itself felt when dealing with everyday practices where hegemonic forms of the social order is institutionalized or contested. It is the contesting part that becomes difficult when alternative articulations are rendered irrelevant to the issue at hand.

An interview in *Politiken Weekly* with a left-wing resident of an inner city neighborhood in Copenhagen illustrates the point: "My daughter is not going to pay the price" (12/20/2000). The interview begins with a description of the interviewee: "She has all the immigrant-friendly views: Denmark is multi-cultural and Danish children should go to the same schools with [immigrant children] from other cultures." However, when it comes to sending her daughter to her local school where 80 percent of the children have an immigrant background, the interviewee has second thoughts about the principle: she does not think it is a good idea that her daughter attends a school with too many immigrant children: "when [my daughter] asks why she is not going to attend the [local] school, I say that it is not a good school. I cannot tell her that there are too many immigrant children [...] I am afraid that the instruction and her social life will suffer from it. How is it going to be with camping situations and birthday parties [the assumption is that immigrant children do not attend events]?" The interviewee is actually also

concerned about the fact that there are too many cultures in the local school: "I don't know if it is a smart idea. I am not sure that the school can handle it. Besides, I expect more social problems in that school. Many immigrant families also choose not to send their children to local schools. On top of it, there are language problems, too. [...] I know my fear is not based on facts, but on what I hear from my friends and from the media. I don't know how the [local] school really is. [...] I think it is totally necessary to meet other cultures in school in order to be able to manage in Danish society in future. If the number of immigrant children in [the local] school equaled to the percentage of the immigrants in local community, which is almost 50 percent, it would be okay."

Many discourse analysts would interpret the discrepancy between her ideals and her actual "attitude" towards immigrant children as a typical conflict between impression management techniques and sincere thinking, the latter of which is then interpreted as the reflection of prejudice towards immigrants (c.f., van Dijk 1984, 1987, 1993). This interpretation can be supported with her own admittance that her judgments are not based on facts but on what she has heard from friends and the media. I believe that this interpretation has to do with a particular view of ideology as "the fundamental social cognitions that reflect the basic aims, interests and values of groups" (van Dijk 1993: 258). In this view, her "prejudiced" statements can be understood as justifications for sustaining the interests of the Danish majority.

In my theoretical and methodological universe, this view of ideology would create several problems. Firstly and most importantly, the ontological boundaries between Danes and immigrants are taken for granted, which in turn implies that ideologies originate from empirically given social groups. As I discussed at the beginning of this

chapter, it is difficult to distinguish between the constitution of a social group and the discursive articulation of the group. A social group comes into being through the representation of it. In my approach, these are not separate entities but rather analytical distinctions made about the same phenomenon. Secondly, this view takes ideologies as logically connected, coherent set of statements about the world. As my discussion of Bakhtin's writings indicate, discourse is inherently fragmented, episodic and dialogic which implies that it is difficult to identify pure "ideologies" out of texts that often contain different and sometimes contradictory statements about the same issue depending on the rhetorical context of the concrete utterance (see also Billig et. al. 1988, Billig 1991, 1996, 1997a, 1997b). Thirdly, prejudice – as it normally refers to irrational feelings and attitudes rather than facts – is an epistemologically problematic term as it presupposes the objective identification of a social group the true nature of whom can be defined and categorized according to some objective criteria. The analyst recognizes, then, the prejudiced representation as distortion of this objective reality. If ideologies are socially shared cognitions; why would people assume that they would be judged as prejudiced by the other members of their social groups, particularly their social group is as inclusive as Danes?

My interpretation of the interview is different and does not operate with the term ideology as a recognizable set of coherent ideas, which inform political subjects. Rather, the interview illustrates the rhetorical nature of discourse, where utterances should be understood in their immediate rhetorical contexts and in relation to the discursive resources that are deemed to be effective discursive tools in the interaction. Seen in this way, the interview illustrates the non-ideological character of hegemony in that the

interviewee clearly identifies herself as belonging to the "immigrant-friendly," multi-culturalist left wing of the political spectrum; at no moment during the interview does she utter any "negative" views about immigrants or their culture. Her dilemma is real: on the one hand, as a multiculturalist and leftist, she does not oppose a multi-culturalist vision of Denmark, which is at the outset rejected by the racist hegemonic project. In this sense, her political standpoint can be described as opposed to the hegemonic articulation of ethnicity and culture in Denmark. On the other hand, she intuitively knows that Danishness has become an asset, an investment in a system that allocates resources along ethnic/cultural lines. She does not want her daughter "to pay the price" for her own political views because she imminently knows the limits of her vision. She assumes that in a school with 80% immigrant children, the knowledge, the rituals, the myths through which Danishness is constructed may not be acquired properly, which consequently will put her daughter in a disadvantaged situation later in life. Thus, the standards for a "good education" are defined according to the ethnic paradigm. Once knowing Danish rituals (e.g. Christmas and birthday songs) is accepted as an important criterion for fitting in, then not knowing or learning these becomes non-proficiency – an obstacle for getting jobs.[24] An interesting observation in this context is that the future of Denmark is produced in conformity with the current hegemonic articulations through her projections of what the future will bring. By sending her daughter to another school where Danish children are in majority and where she will become an ethnically Danish subject, she re-imposes the ethnic boundaries between immigrants and Danes. It is this politico-moral

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[24] Andreassen reports on similar interviews in the television news where parents complain that public schools do not teach Danish children about Danish culture any more (Andreasen 2005, chapter 7).

dilemma that constrains her movements as a political subject and forces her to conform to the hegemonic vision of society even if she does not believe in it or agree with it.

The interview clearly shows the limits that a hegemonic formation imposes on political subjects by making its vision of social divisions as the basis of further discussion. In Laclau and Mouffe's words, "a hegemonic formation also embraces what opposes it, insofar as the opposing force accepts the system of basic articulations of that formation as something it negates, but *the place of the negation* is defined by the internal parameters of the formation itself" [the authors' own emphasis] (Laclau and Mouffe 1985/2001: 139)[25]. The interviewee's opposition to the hegemonic formation is formulated within the internal parameters of the hegemonic formation because she also accepts the clearly defined boundaries between cultures as a given social reality. There is an interesting irony here: she conforms to the basic premises of the hegemonic vision of society while she negates the hegemonic vision of Denmark as ethnically homogeneous unity. She has a multicultural vision of Denmark's future; if her daughter is going to manage in a multi-cultural Denmark, she needs to learn about the other cultures by attending to the same schools as immigrant children. The first point about this statement is that she speaks about immigrants purely in cultural terms; cultural/ethnic boundaries are treated as well-defined, clearly demarcated units of the social order. The second point is more important but more speculative since she does not say it: knowledge about the

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[25] This notion is usually misinterpreted as if hegemony is a system that incorporates its opponents in its differential system in an ever expanding manner. This is a misunderstanding of hegemony theory: a hegemonic project needs some kind of constitutive antagonism that leaves out certain social groups outside its boundaries. I suspect that Todd Gitlin's "The Whole World is Watching" (1980), although more complex in its argumentation, has some responsibility for this understanding.

other cultures may give her daughter an authority in a Foucaultian sense; it reproduces the unequal power relations between the Danish majority and the ethnic minorities.

In short, even the resentment cannot find a way out of this dilemma. The interviewee consequently contributes to the reproduction of the hegemonic order not because she believes in it but because her options are constrained by the hegemonic formation, which defines the social antagonisms in cultural/ethnic terms and renders its definitions as the starting point for everyday practices and institutions. She does not seem to have many alternatives out of the dilemma as long as there are no alternative visions that can destabilize the hegemonic articulation.

It is easy for a scholar who "analyzes" other people's utterances to point to the discursive constrains that a hegemonic articulation puts on subjects, as if the scholar himself is able to see beyond the hegemonic formation and able to articulate alternative visions. Nothing could be less accurate. In fact, I chose this example because I have many friends who expressed similar concerns about their own children's education and future. They live in the same areas as immigrants but do not want to "sacrifice" their children's future for their political views. Could I give them any clear and useful advice? Absolutely not. What constrains them constrains me, too. In a conversation about this issue, I was put into the same dilemmatic situation as the interviewee whose dilemma I have been analyzing. On the one hand, I understood their dilemma because we all orient ourselves to public discourse (here I actually use the term in a more comprehensive manner to also include everyday institutions such as schools, kindergartens, or housing projects) in which our subject positions are interpellated in certain ways. On the other hand, my entire political struggle is about inverting these subject positions and destabilizing the

hegemonic articulation. Is it possible to suggest that we act in our everyday lives as if it is not sanctioned in certain ways, as if we could choose to live our lives in our own version of a social order?

Does it then mean what the interviewee and my friends are saying does not have racist implications? Certainly not; their actions reproduce a discriminatory system based on cultural and ethnic differences.[26] Racism should, therefore, not be defined as an ideology or a discourse (in Foucaultian sense), which guides subjects' understanding of social groups. Rather, discrimination is the result of a racist hegemony that does not require individuals to agree with its claims: the cultural/ethnic antagonism between the Danish nation and the alien immigrant functions as an interpretative key "not only to what individuals are *experiencing* and to what they *are* in the social world" [the author's own emphasis] (Balibar 1988: 19).[27] A racist hegemonic articulation "forces" even anti-racists to feel that the parameters within which the issues of race, ethnicity, and immigration are discussed are the only realistic and viable framework by which issues can be evaluated.

The denial of racism or expression of non-racism should not, therefore, only be seen as impression management techniques or insincere utterances but as an indication of an orientation towards the hegemonic formation. People become, sometimes involuntarily as I demonstrated through my analysis, supporters of the racist hegemonic

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[26] This form of racism that takes cultural rather than biological difference as the starting point is generally called neo-racism (Balibar 1988) or cultural racism (Wren 2001).

[27] This quote is from Balibar (1988) but Balibar treats racism as a doctrine in a similar fashion to ideology. Torfing (1999) and Smith (2004) operate with similar ideas about the antagonism between nation and its enemies as an interpretative key but they also seem to see racism as a way of thinking which is clearly identifiable in discourse.

project not because the racist claims are considered to be true and consistent, but rather because the racist articulation of the ethnic antagonism offers a principle of order and intelligibility in a situation of profound dislocation (Torfing 1999: 208). It is, therefore, useful to distinguish between three different uses of the term racism: as an ideology (or doctrine or discourse), as an analytical concept that describes racist practices, and as a rhetorical tool which people use or orient themselves to in discourse. In practical situations, the distinction may not be as clear-cut as one may want it to be. People may be orienting themselves to a notion of racism as it is used in a certain theoretical paradigm; racist practices may be clearly connected to racist ideas that explicitly promote discrimination because of skin, cultural or religious differences. However, keeping the distinction in mind is helpful when analyzing racism as a practice that results from the racist ontology of the social.

If racism is the result of the racist hegemonic articulation of Danishness as a social formation that excludes its antagonistic pole from the collectivity, treating racism as a mental sickness or an external accident that threatens an otherwise healthy and disease-free "nation" is not a useful approach. This approach does not only prevent a thorough-going discussion of the articulation between racism and Danishness, it also reduces racism to an individual attitude that could be fought with mindset changing strategies such as "information campaigns" as if knowing more about immigrants would cure the disease. This strategy depoliticizes anti-racist struggle and masks its vision, which prevents anti-racists from seeing the ongoing articulation between Danishness as a culture and racism as an exclusionary definition of the Danish culture. Racism "sneaks"

in, so to say, dressed in cultural/ethnic ontological clothes and renders its version of social reality into "the reality."

The school example is also interesting for a discussion of long-term perspectives of a hegemonic articulation. As indicated by the interview I analyzed, schools as well as neighborhoods are slowly becoming ethnically segregated. In a different discursive environment where ethnicity and culture is not emphasized in the constitution of society, this may not be a great problem. However, there is also the opposite tendency by immigrant parents, who send their children to Islamic-oriented schools as well as an increasing emphasis on Muslim identity. Ethnically segregated schools contribute to the production of ethnic, religious and cultural identities as relatively fixed social formations which may prove to be difficult to undo and rearticulate into other types of social formations for a relatively long time. Once society is imagined in ethnic/cultural terms and the divisions are institutionalized (i.e. through schools), the institutions reproduce hegemonic articulations of the ontology of the social.

My main argument in this dissertation is that the ethnic antagonism has become the main dividing line through which society envisions itself, and this divide subordinates all other antagonisms along the main dividing line (i.e., the demands of feminist struggle seem to be incorporated within the formation of Danish society, see next chapter).

Hegemony is never complete because of the heterogeneous nature of the social and thus demands a constant struggle to keep the ontological order in place. My second argument is that the nationalist-racist hegemony is sustained through a constant focus on immigrants through crisis and moral panics around particular issues such as criminality, gang rapes, honor killings and female circumcision. They force us keep talking about

immigrants as category whose cultural values explain (produce) these phenomena. These phenomena correspond to what Laclau and Mouffe call "moments." This is a circular process but initiated by interventions in discourse by nationalist-racist right. In the second chapter, I have an extended discussion of one of these phenomena, criminality.

In the remainder of the dissertation, I demonstrate how the ontology of the social slowly have been culturalized/ethnicized during the last two decades through interventions in discourse which created and/or capitalized on moral panics.

# CHAPTER 2
# HEGEMONY AND RETROSPECTIVE ETHNICITY

Most articles, books and research reports on immigration in Denmark begin with the mantra that the problems with immigration in Denmark reflect the huge demographic changes (Gaasholt and Togeby 1995, Hervik 2002, Necef 2001). For instance, two prominent Danish political scientists begin their influential book on Danes' attitudes towards immigrants with the much repeated wisdom that "the Scandinavian countries have long had some of the most uniform – or homogenous – populations in the world ... It is hardly wrong to describe post-war Scandinavian countries as relatively free of ethnic dividing lines[28] " (Gaasholt and Togeby 1995: 9).

The problem with this argument is not so much with the wisdom itself as with the temporal space from which it speaks. Although it presents itself as a universal wisdom, it speaks of the past through a contemporary perspective. It reflects the focus on ethnicity as the main signifier of social antagonisms in contemporary Denmark rather than being a neutral, descriptive statement about how the country was in the past. It is not that immigration and debate on immigration is new: Denmark received immigrants throughout history (e.g. Jews, Swedes, Germans, Inuits, Poles, and Hungarians) but it is assumed that these ethnic minority groups have "successfully" been assimilated without great problems and that most are now fellow members of Danish society.

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[28] My translation

Historical accounts do not merely describe historical facts. They (re)write history through significant elements of the contemporary discourse. If ethnicity is one of the defining elements of contemporary discourse, then contemporary accounts will look at history through the lens of ethnicity. This seems to be a generic strategy for all narratives that attempt to articulate a vision for the future: if society is explained by class struggles, then "the history of hitherto existing society [becomes] the history of class struggles," (Marx and Engels, 1978: 1), and if religious narratives are in focus, then the history of hitherto society becomes a phantasmatic tale of divine creation. The history of hitherto society could easily be understood as the history of women's oppression, of homophobia, or of culture wars. Any of these interpretations would indicate a past constructed from the particular perspective of a contemporary struggle on a given discursive terrain. Thus, the narrative that Denmark (or Europe) is becoming multiethnic and multicultural implicates a particular understanding of the past, i.e., what was there before the change. My point is that it is the narrative on the character of the change which constructs - in a reverse direction of causality - the very past assumed to be transformed. This narrative suggests that changes in attitudes towards foreigners are the result of the demographic changes in terms of immigrants from essentially different cultures and religions. In other words, it is the presence of culturally alien immigrants that causes reactions from Danish people. This belief is often used as an argument for presenting racism as natural reaction to and consequence of unbridgeable differences. The argument is in turn reflected in immigration laws that describe immigrants' traditional cultures as an obstacle to their participation in Danish social life, completely ignoring racist discrimination as a possible explanation for exclusion. As a solution, laws aim to erect barriers against immigration

from "different cultures" and, in the case of immigrants who are already in the country, to transform them from ethnic-cultural subjects into law-abiding, modern, democratic-rational individuals.

Historical narratives that put ethnicity in the center do not, of course, automatically attribute racism to difference, nor do they necessarily find negative reactions to difference acceptable. One central strategy, also prominent in Gaasholt and Tobegy's book, is to promote tolerance as a moral responsibility in a democratic society. Promoting tolerance has been the central strategy of putting the brakes on racism by the political and intellectual elites, albeit with vague formulations on how tolerance is to be exercised – often limited to appeals to decency in individual behavior. A multiculturalist strategy has been promoting the institutionalization of cultural rights for ethnic minorities but this approach encounters tensions about where to draw the boundaries of tolerance. Finally, there are attempts to challenge historical narratives of homogeneity by references to the hybrid character of past populations (i.e. by asserting that a certain percent of Copenhagen's residents in the 19th century were ethnically German).

It is not my primary purpose here to discard completely the idea that there may be a relationship between demographic changes and ethnicity discourse, or that contemporary European societies can be described as multicultural. Rather, I want to question the deterministic assumptions behind these historical narratives, and point at the predicate "multiculturalism" as a political construct that has "the status of the ontology of the social" (Laclau and Mouffe 2001: xiv). If there is a relationship between demography and ethnicity, it is a hermeneutic relationship constituted around the social antagonisms that create internal frontiers – based on ethnicity – within society. There is no necessary

link between demographic change itself and conceptualization of it in ethnic-cultural terms –the notion of ethnicity was not a part of the social imagination until the mid 1980s when it began moving into the center of discourse as culture became the universal explanatory resource (Schierup 1993). Schierup links the culturalization of public discourse to the culturalist bias of public policy research within academia. Even in anthropology, the notion did not come into widespread use until the 1960s (Jenkins 1997).

## Ethnicity – A Possessive Investment in Welfare

Ethnicity, race, and immigration have long been a part of public discourse in Europe but the meaning of these concepts is not fixed once and for all: they are, to repeat the much appropriated idea, subject to ongoing struggles over meaning – struggles that color these abstract entities with particular signification in political discourse. The main argument in this chapter is that these concepts have now coalesced to construct a new kind of hegemonic antagonism: the Danish people (the nation) versus the cosmopolitan elite in alliance with immigrants (mainly Muslims) and "Eurocrats" (the European bureaucratic elites of the EU). The cosmopolitan elite are the main enemy who allow the destruction of the Danish nation by opening it up for immigration from alien cultures. However, what defines Danishness (or the absence of it[29]) is not its antagonistic relationship with the elite – they are the political target of the rhetoric – but the presence of alien (Muslim) immigrants with their incommensurable culture. It is the category of

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[29] Danishness is that which was and which we desire to achieve again, thus the concept of Danishness signifies its absence.

immigrant which signifies the dividing line within society and prevents it from achieving

unity. These connections are not the analytical results of an academic inquiry but

expressed explicitly by the leading figures of the extreme right populist movement.

According to one of the prominent organizations of the racist populist movement, the

Danish Society (Den Danske Forening), "Denmark has until now been a homogenous

society with common culture and norms. Seen in the light of the tensions existing in

countries with several cultures, this is something of a gift" (cited in Dyrberg 2001:6).

According to Søren Krarup –a leading figure, a member of the Danish Society and now

an MP for the Danish People's Party– the intellectual and political elite "act as an

occupation power in a foreign country. They have deliberately taken stands against

Danes who are with a good reason concerned [about their future]." (*Jyllands-Posten*

9/21/1986).

The new antagonism has gained an all-encompassing explanatory power for social

phenomena. The antagonistic polarization between Danes and immigrants bends all

discursive elements toward the dividing line and disperses subject positions along the

line. Classical political identities based on class, gender and other types of antagonisms

have been rearticulated into this new ontology of the social. For example, intellectuals or

political activists with Muslim immigrant background are called upon, even by their

Danish counterparts, to explain or condemn criminality among Muslim immigrants or

terrorist actions by Islamists all over the world, as if having the same religious/cultural

background makes them complicit in others' crimes or enables them to know what is

going on inside other Muslims' heads. Of course, this is not a symmetrical relationship:

Danishness is an unmarked category outside the purview of ethnicity. That is, Danes are

not asked to explain the criminality of other Danes even when these crimes are committed in the name of the Danish nation (e.g. racist attacks)

That there has been a substantial change in Danish discourse on immigration is commonplace among scholars and commentators (Hjarnø 1996, Schierup 1993, Gaasholt and Togeby 1995, Hussain et. al. 1997, Aggergaard Larsen 1997, Diken 1998, Hervik 1999, 2002, 2004, Wren 2001, Andreasen 2005), many of them arguing that racist views have become normalized and woven into the very fabric of Danish society. It is difficult not to agree with the main thrust of these observations. After all, if a political project is to obtain a hegemonic status, it must become normalized and its basic vision must become (or at least treated as if it is) common sense.

I would like to take this argument a step further and suggest that what we are witnessing in Denmark and Europe is more than the normalization of racist views – it is about ethnicization of the whole field of social formations. Ethnicity/culture – and specifically Islam – has become the master signifier for the main controversy around which the issues of identity, globalization, and the welfare system are discussed and (re)articulated. In Denmark specifically, Danish national identity has become – to borrow Lipsitz' phrase – a "positive investment" in welfare – the issue of welfare is no longer discussed in the framework of class struggle about how to distribute wealth (i.e., reforming the capitalist system) but now is a question of ethnic access to welfare. At its core, it is about the nature of the welfare state, about who is entitled to remain in the Danish welfare system's benevolent realm and who should be pushed out. Since the mid-'80s, immigration has been represented as a threat to Danish national identity, which is simultaneously constructed as a homogenous, secularized

Christian culture (as precondition for welfare and democracy) and opposed to Muslim culture, which exists to destroy it. The nationalist/racist right's intervention in discourse articulated this antagonism between Danish national identity and immigration/Islam in terms of incommensurable cultures. However, in its hegemonic version (as articulated by mainstream parties, intellectuals and the media), Islam does not stand for a particular religion but for religion per se: it is a category that signifies the antagonism between religious totality and enlightened individualism.

In this hegemonic articulation, Danish culture is connoted with: rationality, freedom, individualism, progress and effectiveness, capacity to negotiate and reach consensus, the nation state, democracy, secularism and Christianity. Whereas immigrant culture is the opposite – irrational and prejudiced, emotional, intolerant, criminal, alien, one-sided, ineffective, backward, culturally and traditionally bound and despotic.

In this articulation, arguments about identity, culture and economy are woven together. The hegemonic project targets the anxieties of workers, the unemployed and elderly Danes who feel that they are left behind in the post-industrial society and the neo-liberal globalization process. Their anxieties are directed at immigration as a major threat to the only remaining basis of their access to welfare – their Danishness. The racist hegemonic project presents the welfare system as a 'closed circuit' for a homogenous population. The success of the hegemonic project is indicated by the infusion of the entire political spectrum in the ethnic paradigm.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will discuss one basic question: how do we know that the entire political spectrum is infused with the ethnic paradigm, which is at

the basis of social division? In the next two chapters, I will analyze how the complex interplay among the various actors with access to public discourse created a discursive environment ready for the nationalist/racist right's hegemonic intervention.

## Danishness: The Name of the New Hegemony

Hegemony is, in Laclau and Mouffe's words, "a political *type of relation, a form* ... of politics; but not a determinable location within a topography of the social" (1985/2001: 138, author's emphasis). Hegemonic relations are constituted around some nodal points – points of condensation of a number of social relations. Nodal points function as magnetic focal points that pull different elements of discourse into a discursive formation. A formation is an articulated totality of its differential elements.

Danishness is one such nodal point in contemporary hegemonic discourse. It signifies the differential totality of the demands of the "Danish people." In this articulation, disparate demands –such as the maintenance of the homogeneity of Danish nation, access to welfare, keeping Christian values in focus, withdrawal from the EU (and other international treaties), and the removal of the liberal elite from power – are elements which do not have any necessary logical relationship with one another but nevertheless are linked together in an equivalential chain. The logic of the relationship is created through the articulation. The maintenance of Danishness - although only one of the demands - stands for the whole. It is only through the fulfillment of this demand that other demands can be met; only by creating a cohesive Danish nation can the welfare system be saved; only by withdrawing from the EU and by excluding alien elements can the homogeneity be sustained and social peace be restored.

Clearly, Danishness is an empty category. It does not have an ontic content; as my

discussion in chapter 1 has shown, its content cannot be localized in discourse and will

have to be represented negatively by another social formation whose elements are

excluded from Danishness. In Torfing's words, "in order to become hegemonic one must

be able to speak in the name of the nation... and hegemonize the empty signifiers of 'the

nation' and the people' by giving them particular content ... [But since] the true essence

of the nation escapes a predication ... the homogenization ... of the nation can only be

obtained in and through the discursive construction of 'enemies of the nation', which are

simultaneously outside and inside the nation..." (Torfing 1999: 192-193).

In Danish case, the Danish nation can only be comprehended by its difference

from its antagonistic (excluded) opposite: the Muslim immigrant. However, the Muslim

immigrant also does not have a clearly identifiable ontic content: a left-wing political

activist from Iran, an electrical engineer from Sri Lanka, a farmer from Turkey, a

feminist scholar from Bosnia are all put together into the category of immigrant that also

covers young people who were born and educated in Denmark. They all interact with

Denmark and Danes in different contexts in their daily routines, none of which is

particularly or necessarily antagonistic. Thus, as a category, the immigrant is not a simple

ensemble of all these different empirically given agents and moments of discourse. If

they are to be recognized as elements of the same totality (the category of immigrant), we

must be able to distinguish them as elements of the same formation with regards to

something external, something that the immigrant is not. And that something is "the

Danish nation." In other words, it is my ethnic background that is not Danish that puts me

into the category of immigrant rather than any positivity my identity has. I am no longer

just another difference in the fabric of society but an immigrant in the same way as a Sri Lankan refugee – a differential element of the category of immigrant excluded from "society" thus drawing the limits of society.

Immigrant, then, is an empty signifier with no predetermined content; it did not occupy an antagonistic position in 60s and 70s but rather was a new element (external labor force) introduced into the social field that was constituted mainly around class antagonisms. As such, it was to be configured into this type of social ontology.

## A Brief History of Immigration: The Late 19th Century

To paraphrase Marx and Engels' infamous quote, the history of hitherto existing society can also be interpreted as the history of immigration. Gypsies in 15th century, Jews in 17th and 20th, Swedes, Polacks and Germans in 19th and in 20th century, and Hungarian refugees in 1956 are often mentioned in the historical narratives of immigration to Denmark, together with small groups of the French and Dutch immigrants in different periods. Swedish, Polish and German immigration in 19th and 20th centuries was mainly tied to the agricultural and capitalist production. It is difficult to say how much these early immigrants were the subject of a public debate partly because the mass media are relatively new phenomenon and because immigration as a concept seems to be tied to the contemporary understanding of movements from one national geographical space to another. If nations are relatively new inventions (Anderson 1983), the characterization of immigrants as ethnic and national groups must also relatively be new. Niels Finn Christiansen (cited in Jensen 2000: 60) explains that Danish "workmen" in the first half of the 19th century did not have nationalist orientations. Only after

confrontations between Denmark and Germany in 1848 and Denmark's defeat by Germany in 1864 did Danish "workmen" begin demanding that Germans not be allowed to work in Denmark. There were several newspaper stories from 1865 and 1866 about groups of Danes attacking German workers. Jensen notes that in both cases there were no characterizations or descriptions of the German workers in the media. The incidents were treated as an instance of Danish internal political controversies rather than as problems caused by the Germans and their background (Jensen 2000).

Additionally, Swedish immigration in the second half of the 19th century created a potential for confrontations between Swedish and Danish workers because Swedish workers were seen as wage suppressors by the Danish working class movement which was then in the making organizationally and politically. In this context, the coverage by the working class press is interesting[30]. The Social Democratic Party's official paper *Social-Demokraten* described the problems with Swedish immigration in terms of wage suppression and strike-breaking, but the internationalist orientation of the party also meant that their strategy was to co-opt the immigrants into the working class struggle for socialism. Social Democrats were relatively subdued in their criticism of Swedish immigrant workers as long as they agreed to be organized in labor unions. On the other hand, the right-wing political parties, while generally in favor "the mobility of work

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[30] According to Denmark's official website www.denmark.dk, "with the Constitution of 1849, Denmark gained a free press, which quickly became an opinion-shaping press in close consonance with the major political and social conflicts following in the wake of the change from an agrarian to an industrial society. The opinion-shaping press took the form of party-political organs, the so-called four-paper system. Each of the four major political parties, The Right (Højre), (which became after 1915 The Conservative Party (Det Konservative Folkeparti)), The Social Liberal Party (Det Radikale Venstre), The Social Democratic Party (Socialdemokratiet) and The Liberal Party (Venstre), established a nationwide network of newspapers which both mobilized and formed part of the organization of the various social groups they represented."

force," were simultaneously restrictive in granting residency permits and citizenship, which would allow immigrants to use public resources and curb foreign workers desire to break strikes. The progressive, urban *Politiken* (which then had an arrogant attitude towards peasants and immigrants) did not hold back from describing Swedish immigrants as "stupid," "lazy," "loose," and "unreliable," which since have been used to describe immigrants from the so-called "third world." Depending on the context, the immigrants were also described as hardworking and reliable class comrades by *Politiken*.

Many of the same themes were repeated when the Polish immigrants began entering the country in 1892 through 1930. Criminality was another theme that came up in relation to immigrants. In a *Politiken* story (11/11/1908) on experiences with Polish immigration, the local police officers reported an increase in violence and theft related to the Polish immigrants. In another story in the same paper two days later (in the aftermath of a murder by an immigrant), the Polish community in Copenhagen was described as "not so bad as they are described to be" because they do not express solidarity with the murderers. Rather, they were described as "very nice and extremely contented" (Jensen 2000: 155). Clearly, both the negative and positive designations and themes (e.g. criminality vs. good moral character) are generic and are flexibly used in both racist/anti-racist, nationalist/internationalist constructions of the "Other." The designations are often used in particular contexts in relation to specific political projects or controversies. The question is, then, whether a listing of these recurring themes and concepts in the name of analysis would say anything about the relationship between: the native majority and the immigrants; the nation and its adversaries; or the center and periphery. We may want to think of them as rhetorical resources in a generic reservoir of political projects.

Here, the debate between the left and the right about the Swedish immigrants shows interesting fractions. The main rightwing Højre (later the Conservativ People's Party) accused the Social Democrats of being "un-Danish"[31] and treasonous with their internationalism, while Social Democrats fired back with the argument that Højre was being "un-Danish" with their support for the use of foreign workers and foreign strike-breakers. The interesting point here is the function of the term "un-Danish." The use of this term signals that foreignness and nationalism were already powerful ideological resources in the late 19th century; however, "foreign" and "nation" did not signify substantive or positive content. Rather, each utterance is an attempt to fill these categories with particular content by describing actions that confirm or defy the abstract, taken-for-granted qualities of the categories. The debate indicates also an uneasy connection between political ideologies and notions such as nation and nationalism, race and racism.

What we have is a category of immigrant that is simultaneously described as lazy and hardworking, loose and decent, criminal and contented. Looking at historical narratives, we find more or less the same kind of abstract and generic characterizations of all immigrant groups throughout the history. From here, it is easy to conclude that xenophobia and racism is a natural or at least an understandable reaction to anything foreign and threatening, and that there have always been forces in defense of immigrants and their rights. Such a conclusion, however probable, would be at odds with the huge

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[31] A term that is used again and again as a forceful rhetorical figure in debates up to the present day by all kinds of political actors: if you support gay marriages, you are un-Danish because Danish culture is based on Christianity; if you are homophobic, it is un-Danish because Danes are essentially a tolerant people.

body of research on racism which indicates that the various articulations of these generic and contradictory resources seem often to lead to the justification and maintenance of racist practices rather than anti-racist practices (Wetherell and Potter 1992, van Dijk 1984, 1987, 1991, Entman and Rojecki, 2000, Omi and Winant 1994, Ono and Sloop 2002). Furthermore, no matter how generic these resources may be, the hegemonic struggles in each historical context configure and reconfigure around certain nodal points. Nation may be an empty signifier, but nonetheless it signifies a social formation in each historical context – not as something fixed once for all but as the locus of hegemonic attempts to fix discursive elements into an associative logic of equivalence. The meaning of nation depends on its limits – how those limits have been constructed as frontiers between the nation and that which is beyond it. It is the frontier that is the center of gravity and bends the different discursive elements into chains of equivalence.

In short, in the late 19th century when political discourse was dominated by class struggles and when society constituted itself around these antagonisms, immigrant, it seems, was articulated within the framework of class struggles rather than ethnicity and culture.

## Immigration since the 1960s

The contemporary phase of immigration is usually dated back to the second half of 1960s  when groups of 'foreign workers' from Turkey, Yugoslavia, Spain, Morocco and later from Pakistan began to work in Danish factories and farms (Mikkelsen 2001, Jensen 2000, Gaarde Madsen 2000, Gaasholt and Togeby 1995). At first, the flow of a foreign "workforce" did not happen in an organized fashion in the sense that they were

not recruited systematically in their country of origin but received work permits if they found jobs while in Denmark. The first restrictions – which made it necessary to apply for work permits from abroad with an actual job offer – were introduced in 1970 and in 1973 when the oil crisis led to economic stagnation, the Danish parliament imposed a complete stop to the immigration of foreign workers.

However, the law was not effective in stopping immigration which continued in two distinctive forms: First, "guest workers" did not return to their countries of origin. Instead, they were joined by their spouses and children in Denmark, and through family reunion laws, the number of immigrants continued to increase. The second form of immigration was, after 1984, through political asylum with the arrival of large refugee groups from Iran, Iraq, Lebanon (Palestinians), Bosnia, Albania, and Somalia. Consequently, the debate since the mid-80s centered on asylum and family reunion laws, which have been tightened continuously up to today. According to the statistics from February 2005 by the Danish Statistical Institute, foreigners make up 8.2 % of the population in Denmark, and approximately half of the foreigners (4.1%) are from "non-Western" countries. It is the non-Western half of the immigrants – rather than Germans or Americans – who are the objects of the discourse.

The debate on the latest immigration began in 1964 even before the arrival of the first immigrants. In a newspaper commentary on June 19, 1964, the Trade Minister, Hilmar Baunsgaard advocated for the expansion of Danish production and wealth through bringing in foreign labor (Jensen 2000: 398). The dividing line was similar to the one a century ago: between labor unions and their political organizations who were traditionally skeptical about the imported workforce on the one hand, and on the other,

employers and right-wing political parties who traditionally were open to the controlled importation of foreign labor. The arguments were also similar. Employers and right-wing political parties (the conservative and the liberal parties) argued that there was a shortage of labor and that the import of foreign workforce would mean more productivity and thus more wealth. The labor unions, on the other hand, were generally skeptical about the prospect of imported labor, which would suppress wage increases for Danish workers. The lowest waged workers were most resistant to the idea and argued that there was no need for foreign workers as long as there were Danish workers who were unemployed. Labour unions were inclined to accept foreign workers to the extent they were employed according to existing labor agreements and regulations, including automatic membership in labor unions. After the 1973 halt in immigration and during the economic stagnation in second half of the 1970s, the debate was mostly about foreigners being a burden on Danish economy and their social conditions. According to Jensen (2000), there was a general consensus among political parties and the news media about the importance of decent treatment of foreign workers (who were called immigrants towards the end of the decade).

The first letter to the editor appeared before the arrival of foreign workers and had the title, "Are they going to have our houses?" The dominant themes in the letters were unemployment, criminality, lack of housing and Danes' right to the land, which are, on the surface, similar to the themes discussed today. Many letters expressed concerns about the economic burden by foreign workers who lost their jobs and argued that they should be sent back to their homeland. The first attack on foreign workers by Danes happened

already in 1969 and perpetrators defended their action with the argument that "Turks take our jobs" (*Aktuelt*, 5/5/1969) but the media generally condemned the attack.

Foreign workers did not only take "our jobs" but also "our women." Some readers complained that Danish women preferred these "darker looking" men; others criticized the men for their treatment of women and generally their view of gender relations. A letter in 1970 in a local paper *Vestkysten* articulated a view of Denmark that became dominant during the '80s. The writer was concerned that a proposal to forbid race discrimination would render illegal "the fundamental and indispensable right to fight for sustaining Denmark as an independent nation with an ethnically homogenous people, a common cultural pattern, and a common religion." The writer also noted that there was a pro-immigrant alliance of employers, influential individuals and left-wing intellectuals. And ordinary citizens' concerns were not represented in the political system by any party (Jensen 2000: 417). This is where we see the first traces of the crisis of representation that enables the nationalist right's populist intervention in discourse in the 1980s. However, the general tone in letters to the editor was generally consistent with the positive tone in the newspaper coverage of immigration debate. According to Gaarde Madsen's count of letters to the editor and commentaries in three daily newspapers from 1970, there were three times as many positive comments than negative ones (2000: 23). This should be compared to my own and Gaasholt and Togeby's counts which show overwhelming negativity since 1985 (Gaasholt and Togeby 1995: 134).

The first two decades (1964-84) of debate on the latest immigration phase showed many similarities to the last century's debate on Swedish immigrants: concerns about wage suppression, working conditions, criminality, the burden on welfare system, and

immigrants' social problems. The labor movement had the same ambiguity towards foreign workforce: on the one side, they were seen as exerting a pressure on Danish workers' rights and class integrity, and on the other, there was an attempt to incorporate incoming workers into the labor movement. The employers and right-wing parties generally welcomed the foreign workforce as a contribution to the economy and downplayed social problems. Culture, ethnicity, religion, although present in discourse, were not the dominant themes in terms of numbers. In 1970, there were only 14 (out of a total 448) stories that focused on cultural problems (Gaarde Madsen 2000).

## Analyzing Hegemony

If I were only looking at the dominance of cultural themes as an indication of culturalization of discourse in the last few decades, I could stop the discussion here and show the dominance of cultural themes after the mid '80s. But such a move in itself is not sufficient to support my main argument that what we have experienced in the '80s is the establishment of a new type of hegemony – a right-wing hegemony that is based on an ethnicized notion of "Danish people." Merely showing that cultural themes in the immigration debate have become dominant in terms of numbers may indicate that the immigration debate has been ethnicized but does not necessarily point to the central role ethnicity has in the new ontology of the social. What we need is to take a further analytical step to relate the immigration debate to the re-constitution of hegemonic relations. In other words, the argument that contemporary Danish society is constituted around the notion of Danishness and this is fundamentally different from the periods preceding the mid-'80s needs to be accounted for. This is a serious analytical challenge if

the task is to undertake a systematic analysis of data, but before I move on to discuss methodological problems, I would like to explain how the immigration debate was related to the hegemonic relations prior to the contemporary period. It is not the primary purpose of this project to analyze these periods; I will only make few generalizations about how immigration was situated within the wider class struggle in these periods.

My first examples from the immigration debate were from the second half of the 19th century when the working class movement was trying to establish itself with a distinct internationalist notion of socialism. Immigration entered the discourse as – to use Laclau's language – a heterogeneous element and the struggle was about articulating this new element into the existing social formations. The working class movement articulated the immigrants as yet another group of workers to be included in the popular struggle, whereas, for the capitalists, they were just another resource for production similar to other types of resources and goods. The ambivalence on both sides indicates that the struggle for both parties to maintain equivalential links in their own hegemonic articulation: the working class movement fought to keep immigrants from breaking strikes and suppressing wages while right-wing parties wanted a free flow of labor but prevent immigrants' use of public resources. Positive and negative descriptions of immigrants seem to be used flexibly to fit the rhetorical demands of these struggles.

In the post-war period of the 1960s and 1970s, immigration happened in a different social context in which working class organizations, stripped of internationalism, were well-established as modern trade unions but at the same time their demands were incorporated in the hegemonic system. Danish society was articulated in terms of the welfare state; working class demands were advanced through negotiations

rather than head-on confrontations, and wage increases were linked to increasing productivity. This is what is often called post-war consensus politics on building and maintaining the welfare system, whose expansion led to increasing state intervention into more areas of social life and a growing bureaucratization of its practices, which may be considered as the starting point for people's frustrations with the system. Immigration was now discussed in terms of the expansion of the welfare system, as the first arguments by the Trade Minister indicate.

I have, in previous sections, summarized the debate in this period. Here I will confine myself to the argument that immigration did not enter public discourse as something that threatened social cohesion which was defined in terms of welfare and productivity; it was a heterogeneous element that was introduced and articulated within the hegemonic formation(s). The debate prior to 1986 can be summarized into these dichotomic positions: immigrants as a contribution to or burden on the welfare. Positive or negative arguments were mobilized around these basic positions both of which link immigration to the maintenance of welfare. Neither the public discourse nor the debate on immigration seemed to be culturalized. Insofar as culture was brought in, it seemed to be tied to specific dissatisfactions (i.e., they take our women). Immigrants' cultural background (e.g. their gender views) was used flexibly to justify 'Danish' sexism rather than to express two antagonistic cultural identities, although the latter was certainly latent in the debate. Culture, in short, was not the overall explanatory framework for social phenomena and did not signify social antagonisms. Public discourse on welfare state, then, was not preoccupied with the ethnicity or homogeneity of the Danish nation.

When researchers and politicians discuss today's immigration as a challenge to Denmark's ethnic homogeneity, they look to the past from today's hegemonic perspective, where Danish homogeneity is presented as a meaningful social category the purity of which is claimed to be destroyed by the presence of these "foreign" elements. As Pia Kjærsgaard, the leader of Danish People's Party (DPP), articulated it in this concise way: "the most serious thing is the total number of people living within the borders of Denmark can no longer be characterized as a homogenous and united nation" (In Dyrberg 2001: 6). Danish identity (as any national identity) is shaped in a sort of backward causality, or in Zižek's words, "it is the Cause itself which is produced by its effects (the ideological practices it animates)" (1993: 202).

Richard Jenkins' observations about the homogeneity of Danish identity are striking in this sense: "So, do Danes have a relatively clear-cut and homogenous sense of Danish identity and Danishness? Certainly, many contributors to the debate in Skive talked as if they did. The ease with which their audience could understand and identify with, is striking. On closer inspection, however, they did not always agree about what it was that they had in common. It is the assumption of Danish cultural homogeneity – and the mobilization of that idea as a political and rhetorical resource – that we are talking about here, rather than its actual existence" (Jenkins 1999: 131). This is how a hegemonic idea operates.

Alas, there is a need to make a qualification here. With the expansion of the welfare state to include ever-broader areas of social life, more and more domains in which the state intervenes become politicized and new types of social relations and struggles which can be considered as cultural are born (the feminist struggle is just one

example). After all, Fredric Jameson noted that "a prodigious expansion of culture throughout the social realm, to the point at which everything in our social life – from economic value and state power to practices and to the very structure of the psyche itself – can be said to have become "cultural" in some original and as yet untheorised sense" (quoted in Smart 1993: 18). In other words, this a period in which we see the emergence of political identities which increasingly include culture in their arguments (e.g. in feminism, anti-racism, ecological movements). The culturalization of the debate on immigration is not particularly surprising given the culturalization of the entire social sphere, but my specific argument here is that *ethnicity (immigration) has come to signify the constitutive antagonism for the whole social field and other antagonisms in all other domains are overdetermined by the main dividing line between essentially different cultures*.

## Analyzing Change in Discourse

Most research points to the mid 1980s as the turning point in the debate on immigration where the focus shifted from immigrants' social problems to their problematic culture, which is mainly expressed in terms of the "Muslim threat." Gaasholt and Togeby argue that during 1984-85, the rhetoric on immigration changed character. At the beginning of the 1980s, the focus was on "respectful integration of immigrants" and "immigrants' rights;" in the second half, Danes discussed "making demands of immigrants," "refugees of convenience" and "the Muslim threat" (1995: 162). Gaarde Madsen also points to a remarkable jump in the polls of Danes' views on "whether immigrants constitute a threat to our national character": 23% declare agreement with the

statement in 1985 while it jumps to around 40% after 1987 (2000: 87). Due to the lack of a thorough analysis of the media coverage of that period, he is cautious about giving a clear explanation but notes that the media coverage in 1987 was extremely concerned with "the Muslim threat."

That the change is a discursive one and that immigration has become one of the most important issues is beyond controversy. However, a closer reading of the discussions reveals that discursivity is generally understood in different ways. Ümit Necef, one of the prominent figures of Danish immigration research, argues, for example, that there was a qualitative shift in the mid 1970s and the immigration question was transformed from an economic and labor issue to a cultural one. Another factor in this transformation was the sudden increase in the numbers of refugees in 1984, which contributed to the potential culturalism in the Danish intellectual consciousness (Necef 2000: 134). At the same time, he identifies the problem of immigration as one that challenges two fundamental traits of the modern, democratic and rich countries in the West: nation-statehood, and welfare statehood (Necef 2001: 31).

Although I would agree with general thrust of his argument, I want to discuss his epistemological point of departure. The language is deceptive: although Necef talks about a qualitative discursive shift, he understands this shift as the result of immigration that challenges the homogeneity of Danish society. This is the typical way of explaining the shift: it is the sheer numbers of immigrants from "other cultures" that challenge (the self-understanding of) modern, welfare societies. At its extreme, even critical academics begin to think that "one has to exert oneself not to see immigrants as a burden for Danish society" (Gaasholt and Togeby 1995: 27). In my perspective (which I explained in the

introductory sections of this chapter), this is a problematic assumption in that it takes for granted the category of immigrant and its effects on Danish nation. The problem is related to the positive distinction between reality and its symbolic reflections in discourse. In such a distinction, reality in terms of ontological categories is privileged in the symbolic realm; the actions of the ontological category (e.g. Muslim immigrants) come first and determine the symbolic realm (discourse on immigration).

From a post-structuralist hegemony perspective, the category of Muslim immigrants only makes sense insofar as we understand it as a social formation that is constructed through a hegemonic articulation of its differential elements in an equivalential chain. I also explained that its meaning is gained in an antagonistic relationship with another social formation – "Danish people." Antagonism is created by a causal relationship between the past and present; a past that is linked to a myth about a cohesive Danish identity and the unity of its people, and a present where this fullness is broken due to the presence of something alien (Dyrberg 2000: 233). Understood in this way, the explanations of the present "problems" with immigration through the ethnic homogeneity of the past indicate the hegemonic status of the ethnic antagonism.

At this point, the crucial question again asserts itself: how do we know that a particular articulation has become hegemonic? The answer to this question is not an easy one because it involves a number of methodological considerations.

First, change is usually understood either as attitude change towards immigrants (Gaasholt and Togeby 1995, Togeby 2004, Körmendi 1986, Blum 1986) or a change of topics and themes in immigration discourse (Necef 2000, 2001, Hervik 1999, 2002, 2004, Wren 2001, Andreasen 2005, Bent Jensen 2000, Hussain 1997, Holm 2001, Bruun 2003)

or a combination of both (Gaarde Madsen 2001). The first kind of research is based on opinion polls and surveys with similar questions being asked across periods of time. The conclusion in attitude research is that although there are fluctuations, there is a general stability in attitudes towards immigrants over the long term (Togeby 2004). There are a number of problems with this kind of research. Problems with attitude and opinion polls and surveys are well known to many social scientists but most of these problems are described on technical grounds (for instance, representativeness of the sample). Already in 1972, Bourdieu (1979) pointed out some of the more basic problems with opinion polls. He challenged three assumptions of opinion polls. First, pollsters suppose that everyone has an opinion; second, that all opinions have the same value; and third there is a consensus about the problem (an agreement about which question are worth asking). Another criticism is that polls construct opinions by technically eliminating ambiguity in people's responses. Zaller (1992) argues, for example, that public opinion only exists in polls because people do not carry around consistent opinions but construct their answers at the moment of being asked with considerations at the top of their head.

In my context, there is a more fundamental problem with measuring change in terms of opinion polls: it is the assumption that people express opinions on the same object (immigrant) each time they speak. As discourse analytical studies show, both the objects of discourse and subject positions of the speakers shift momentarily with the slightest shift in the context (Gotsbachner 2001, Wetherell 2001, Wetherell and Potter 1992, Potter and Wetherell 1987). Gotsbachner demonstrates, in his analysis of a recorded conversation among elderly people in a community center in Vienna, that the same janitor (immigrant) is described, during the same conversation, both as hard-

working, diligent and nice and as lazy depending on which kind of function the description serves in the conversation (Gotsbachner 2001: 733-735). Similar variations were also present in my sample as my analysis in chapter 1 showed. If the descriptions and evaluations of the same object are as fluid as these examples shows, and if opinion expressions are social actions that are tied to interactional contexts, how can we assume that the object of the discourse is the same not only across different contexts but also different periods over decades?

What complicates the picture is the fact that people, when asked, do actually engage in the business of opinion-giving. Human accounts of reality are often based on a distinction between facts and evaluation of these facts. This distinction may not hold when held against analytical scrutiny, but it is a fundamental rhetorical move that enables us to speak of objects as already given in the world-out-there, whereas we distinctly engage in explaining our mental dispositions towards these factual objects. Attitude research does not question this distinction; rather the distinction is presumed when designing questionnaires, rendering invisible the constructed, ever changing character of category descriptions or so-called facts. The problem with measuring change through attitude measurement techniques is then its tacit treatment of categories. My argument is that it is the object of the discourse – the immigrant – and the discursive environment in which "the immigrant" is located which has changed, and this kind of change cannot be analyzed by looking at opinion polls over time.

There is also another sense in which attitude measurement is problematic. What exactly constitutes "positive" or "negative" evaluation? My own sample from 5 daily newspapers shows for example that the number of news stories about immigrants coded

as positive have increased from 17.7% in 1984 to 40.4 % in 1986 and 48.1% in 1987,

where there is a corresponding decrease in negative stories. Putting aside the problem

with identifying stories as positive or negative, I had a tremendous problem with coding

consistently because of the changing nature of the same topics. When the focus in news

coverage in 1984 was on incoming refugees, and when the right-wing government

attempted to introduce restrictions to immigration, I coded stories that promoted

restrictions as "negative" and resistance against restrictions as "positive." Once the laws

were tightened in 1986 (which coincided with an anti-refugee campaign by the extreme

right who pushed for more restrictions), both the parliamentary opposition and the

government defended the already restricted laws. Their rhetoric became positive because

humanitarian arguments were mobilized against the nationalist right's push for further

restrictions. In other words, what was negative in previous phase of coding was now

coded positive because there were demands for further restrictions. In short, I was not

coding the tone about the same topic over time but the tone itself in the abstract as the

result of the rhetorical moves by the actors, which says nothing about whether or not the

debate has become positive or negative. The attitude researchers also found a positive

change in attitudes in the same period (Körmendi 1986, Blum 1986, Gaasholt and

Togeby 1995).  It seems as if polls were actually measuring responses that reflected a

feeling of temporary satisfaction with restrictions rather than positive attitudes towards

immigrants.

The same observation can be made about recent surveys. A recent survey by

SORA for EUMCR (Eurobarometer 2000) concludes that Danish attitudes became

increasingly positive in the period between 1997 and 2000. They explain the positive

tendency with decreasing unemployment rates (which might have reduced Danes' concerns about immigration). If this were the case, we would have problems with explaining why, in 2001, despite Denmark's record-low unemployment rates, the Social Democratic/Radical Party coalition was ousted by the Liberal/Conservative coalition, which had an explicit anti-immigrant campaign. It also fails to explain the discrepancy between the positive attitudes and the general feeling in research and commentaries that "public racist slurs have become commonplace and political parties across the spectrum have adopted cultural racism as an integral part of their platforms (Wren 2001: 146).

The second strand of research focuses on the shift in topics and themes in the debate on immigration. Many interesting works have come out of this strand, which analyze in detail the culturalization of the discourse on immigration and demonstrates that racism has become the norm in the debate (Diken 1998, Hussain el. al. 1997, Wren 2001, Hervik 2002, Andreassen 2005). Although this body of work provides valuable insight into the workings of racist discourse, it does not, however, answer satisfactorily my initial question: how do we know that "racist discourse" has become hegemonic?

One methodological problem in this regard is that examining immigration discourse means just that: examining immigration discourse. How do we generalize to the hegemonic character of the ethnic paradigm? The findings in one area do not automatically translate into other areas of social life. Demonstrating that racist discourses and practices are widespread does not necessarily mean that this is the "dominant" mode of ethnic relations let alone the whole field of discursivity in a given society.

Moreover, Danish immigration and racism research draws on a heuristic definition of racism – cultural or not – as a more or less consistent set of ideas that guide

statements and actions. First, racism (discrimination based on racial, cultural, ethnic or religious difference) is a practice that can be accomplished by using a variety of discursive resources, some of which draw upon egalitarian and democratic ideals (there is a large body of analytical work that illustrate this point, e.g. Edwards 2003, Wren 2001, Dyrberg 2001, Wetherell and Potter 1992). Treating racism as a coherent ideology leads researchers to look for the expressions of this ideology in discourse rather than focusing on the effects of discursive practices. Second, it has also to do with the classical structuralist perspective that characterizes analyses: racism is often analyzed through a categorization of statements into binary oppositions that are considered to be the basis of the construction of race, ethnicity and nation[32]. This implies that the unity of racist ideology is due to basic categories of the human mind "which reduce all variation to a combination of elements governed by an underlying set of oppositions" (Laclau 2005: 69). If we recognize racism as the guiding principle in the treatment of immigrants, it is not because society has become imbued with a racist ideology but because society's limits are drawn by an antagonistic relation to the category of immigrant which becomes excluded from the collectivity. In the articulation of this antagonism, a variety of elements that have no necessary relationship with one another are linked together. To

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[32] Rikke Andreassen argues that nationality is constructed through negations: They are criminal, primitive, violent and sexist; we are law-abiding, civilized, peaceful, and emancipated (Andreasen 2005). Also Fadel (1997) and Hervik (2004) use the same kind of binary categories to understand racism: They are group-oriented, poor, traditional, and exploit society; we are individualist, rich, emancipated, and contribute to welfare. A closer look at their material would show that 1) for each negative description of "them" and for each positive description of "us", another respectively positive or negative (and often opposite) description also exists (a phenomenon that is often explained away by calling them 'impression management techniques'), 2) each statement is built to fit into specific interactional contexts, and generalized categories of binary oppositions are only possible through an intervention by the researcher that take statements out of their context and put them into a binary scheme.

give an example: egalitarian and democratic ideals are articulated together with ethnic homogeneity, nationalism, and religion by the populist movement, and this articulation has become hegemonic in the sense that it has become the defining paradigm for society and has been adopted by mainstream political parties. But since the antagonism is constructed along ethnic and cultural lines, racism becomes grounded in cultural difference. In other words, immigrants are discriminated against on the basis of cultural differences, although the nature of these differences may be expressed flexibly and in a contradictory fashion in the individual acts of signification.

## Analyzing the Construction of Immigrant Culture as a Threat

Understood in this way, culture becomes essentialized – both the behavior of individuals and social phenomenon in which immigrants are involved in are explained as "the result of their belonging to historical 'cultures'" (Balibar 1988: 21). It is important here to emphasize that I am not talking about an underlying logic of racism but about persistent linkages between culture, immigrants and social phenomenon – linkages that both feed into and are supported by antagonistic categories for political/social identifications.

The linkages function at two related levels of discourse: first a link is drawn associatively between a particular act and an ontological category that produces the act as something specific. "Immigrant criminality," "gang rapes" or "honor killings" are good examples of these linkages. Through the coupling of a certain activity (violence, rape or murder) with the category of immigrants, the violence, rape or murder are made into specific phenomena which demand their specific explanations. Since it is the category of

immigrant that renders the act specific, one is automatically oriented towards the category for the explanation of the specificity of the act. These linkages – similar to what Hall et. al. (1978) call "public images"[33] – are identifiable and can be systematically analyzed through interviews, media coverage, official and semi-official discourse and other types of discursive material.

The second level of linkages concern the linkages between these phenomena as parts of the same chain: immigrant culture. As I discussed in detail in chapter one and earlier in this chapter, the totality of immigrant culture cannot be apprehended or represented except as an empty notion. It can only be apprehended through its parts that are linked to one another as if they are parts of the same totality. In this sense, immigrant criminality, gang rapes or honor killings come to stand for the category itself: they function as nodal points in the formation of immigrant culture in discourse. I would like to devote some pages to an analysis of how one social phenomena – immigrant criminality – is produced as a specific act of immigrant culture, which through its specificity produces immigrants as a threat to social cohesion and peace.

In Denmark, the relationship between ethnicity and crime has increased prominence over the last decades. The debate has especially focused on immigrant youth (men) and their propensity for violent crime and gang rape. Explanations are often sought in their different cultural background and their lack of integration into Danish society (Holmberg and Kyvsgaard 2003). The term "immigrant criminality" refers to the overwhelmingly high representation of immigrants in criminal statistics (49% for male

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[33] "A 'public image' is a cluster of impressions, themes and quasi-explanations gathered or fused together" Hall et. al. (1978: 118).

immigrants). Once this "fact" has been established, the discussion focuses on the causes and culture becomes the center of the explanations. "Immigrant criminality" thus becomes an explanatory framework that forecloses serious analysis; it appears as a conclusion that bypasses analysis.

One of the basic strategies of contesting the claim that immigrants are more criminal than Danes has been to challenge the statistical facts by adjusting the numbers by age, income level and social factors (such as unemployment). After the adjustments, the difference is reduced to 8% among immigrant youth but cannot be completely eliminated. However, there are some indications that this difference may have to do with "police prejudice" rather than the volume of immigrant youths' criminal activities. First, immigrants have, compared to Danes, a higher frequency of being arrested, remanded in custody and charged without a subsequent conviction. Furthermore, they are more frequently arrested and charged in less serious cases (where ethnic Danes would have been let off) (Holmberg and Kyvsgaard 2003).

The focus in immigrant criminality is on the immigrant youth. Immigrant youth are often arrested for small offences and violence against the police. There are strong indications that this is the result of an escalation between criminal statistics and surveillance. Police officers often justify their increased monitoring of the immigrant youth with reference to criminal statistics and the intensified surveillance in turn creates confrontational encounters that end with arrests and charges which in turn feed into the criminal statistics.  Here, we already see the spiral development of tensions between the police and the youth – a spiral process, which was eloquently examined by Hall et. al. (1978) in their study of "mugging craze" at the beginning of 70's in UK. According to

their study, it becomes progressively easier to equate immigrants with social problems; and as social problems they are brought increasingly into contact with the police (1978: 49). A similar process is noted in a recent report on youth-police relations in Denmark (Ansel-Henry and Jespersen 2003). According to the report, the police equate "ethnic youth" with dark-looking young men who are often Muslim and involved in criminal activity and explain their conduct with their Muslim culture. As a result, the youths are stopped and searched much more frequently (several times per evening) and with greater hostility than their Danish counterparts, which in turn leads to resistance by the criminalized youths. (There were similar reports from France during violent clashes between the police and immigrant youth in November 2005). Police attention becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy in that immigrant youths' criminality consists often of their encounter with the police. Ansel-Henry and Jespersen (2003) report that all of the youths they studied had regular encounters with police but only a very small number of them actually had a criminal record, mostly of burglaries and robberies. The significance of the spiral development is that it may also influence judges and other criminal justice system personnel and in turn produce even more criminals of immigrant background. It should be added that all this happens in an environment with very strong anti-immigrant sentiments and "moral panics" around "law and order."

This discussion is not only about the association between immigrants and crime but also about how that presumed association becomes one of the constitutive moments of the general antagonism between Danishness and immigrant culture – an antagonism that in turn makes possible the association. Clearly, in my perspective, neither "the immigrant" nor "immigrant criminality" has an ontic content: the first designates a broad

range of people with different backgrounds categorized together around the notion of

culture, and the latter is a moment that articulates two different elements in discourse by

an arbitrary link but once that link is established associatively, it gains an explanatory

power. We could ask: what makes "immigrant crime" different than other types of

crimes? The answer would be centered on the higher rates of immigrants' representation

in crime statistics. The question would then inevitably lead us to the immigrant itself for

explanations. Since immigrant is a cultural category, the explanations would tend to refer

to immigrants' cultural background, which is what Ansel-Henry and Jespersen's (2003)

ethnographic observations among police officers confirm. In other words, the coupling of

these two words – that is the act of naming – not only constructs "immigrant crime" as a

phenomenon but also narrows down possible explanations for it. To be sure, this does not

mean that there are not real social agents who commit crime but these social agents can

be designated in various ways, only one of which is immigrant (and often they are youth

born and raised in Denmark). From the very outset, the designation forecloses other types

of explanations and types of social categories. It is a powerful rhetorical closure.

The association between immigrant and crime is condensed into the image of the

"ghetto" (certain urban areas with huge social housing complexes and a concentration of

immigrants) that at the same time links the issue of crime to the general problem with

immigrants and their culture. As Hall et. al. (1978) explain, the link between the ghetto

and crime is circular: Muslim immigrants, crime and social exclusion are the

characteristics of a ghetto and ghetto is the locus of criminality. The ghetto prevents

immigrants from breaking out of the circle and from integrating into society since it

allows them to keep their culture intact. This argument is at the basis of governmental

efforts (regardless of who is in government) to disperse immigrants since the mid-'80s. The mediation between physical environment and social conduct is provided by a culture. Ansel-Henry and Jespersen (2003) report that police officers were very determined to remove the youth from the streets, which in their eyes were the runway for their criminal take-off, but simultaneously they were also convinced that the youth were not allowed to meet at home because of the cultural rules aimed at protecting women from being seen by men outside the family. Here, the issue is scaled back to a generalized antagonism between cultures (or rather between traditional cultures and universal ideas) as both the source and explanation of the problem.

The youth in turn explained their street life with wanting to have their own spaces without surveillance by adults and that they did not feel welcome many other public places in general (Ansel-Henry and Jespersen 2003). They felt excluded and marginalized by the police and the rest of Danish society and told the same stories of being harassed by the police. They were a rather cosmopolitan group with widely different backgrounds: some were born and raised in Denmark; others came from different countries and had lived in refugee camps or experienced wars. What defined them as a group was their exclusion from Danish society rather their cultural background, and insofar as culture was the issue, their references often seemed to be a mixture of ideas influenced by parents, fashion, hip-hop and friends. The youths' use of concepts such as "honor" and "respect" originated less from parents' country of origin than hip-hop and black

American culture[34]. This brings us to our theoretical starting point that "honor" and "respect" are flexible resources with no pre-determined content; people use them to act on the social world (for instance, to create community) rather than to act out of culture. What makes this group "immigrant" is the single fact that they are not Danish.

Seen this way, immigrant ceases to be a useful category; the link between the immigrant and crime becomes arbitrary. There is an observation that seems to confirm the circular logic of the link between immigrants and crime: not all the urban spaces with high immigrant concentration are ridden with crimes, and none of these places are described as ghettos. So, the relationship between the physical environment, immigrant and crime may be there but only as the result of an articulatory logic. What makes the link possible is the presence of the immigrant as a cultural category: since the signifier immigrant does not have an actual referent that can be described in any social, political or cultural unity, it is the naming that holds together the group. And it is through the act of naming that "immigrant criminality" comes to existence as a social phenomenon. In turn, these social phenomena (through their explanatory links) organize discourse around the antagonism between society and immigrants who threaten its cohesion. A recent attitude survey by SORA (Eurobarometer 2000) in European Union demonstrates this point clearly: although many EU citizens want to improve the coexistence of majorities and minorities, they also fear that minorities are threatening social peace and welfare (Thalhammer et. al. 2001).

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[34] A. Prieur (1999) in Ansel-Henry and Jespersen (2003): *Maskulinitet, kriminalitet og etnicitet*. Social Kritik 65-66.

Although statistical "facts" – however problematic– are used as the backbone for "public images," their force does not, however, come from statistical facts alone. Rather, it is the sensationalization of the few extreme cases that provides the grounds for the criminalization of immigrants and for the representation of immigrants as threats to social cohesion. In the summer of 2001, "gang rapes," "immigrant violence," and "forced marriages" were some of the dominant topics always discussed in connection with Islamic culture and values. In the last week of August 2001, a group of immigrant youth attacked police patrol cars with stones and seriously injured a female police officer, immediately creating an outcry against violence by immigrant youth. According to *Jyllands-Posten* (8/23/2001), certain urban areas had become so dangerous that police officers were afraid of patrolling in those areas. In an environment of a renewed "moral panic," politicians from all corners of the political spectrum rushed to condemn the attack and found it unacceptable that police could not patrol in Danish cities. I am not going to do a detailed discourse analysis of the story but would like to note that these areas were not called ghettos in the stories; rather they were described as parts of Danish cities that were slowly becoming hostages to immigrant youths' life style (*Jyllands-Posten* editorial, 8/23/2001). "Immigrant communities" were called upon to condemn the attacks; imams were encouraged to speak against violence in their Friday prayers; and politicians with immigrant background felt compelled to protest the attacks. As one may expect, the youths were not given a voice in the whole process. The incident was treated as a symptom of a larger social and cultural problem that Denmark has in the face of ethnic diversification of its population.

## The Media, Crime and Explanatory Frameworks

Here, it is important to note the role the media play in the sensationalization of the cases. The incident and its consequent debate were covered by the media through the normal journalistic routines. Here, I will be drawing on Hall. et. al. (1978) and Hallin (1989) to discuss how the media, through their professional ideologies of objectivity and daily routines, contribute to the (re)production of certain conceptions of society. According to Hall et. al., news is shaped by a specific conception of society as consensus based on a "central value system," and crime marks one of the major boundaries of that consensus. Violence is the fundamental rupture in the social order marking the distinction between who are of society and who are outside it (1978: 55-69). However, not all news is shaped on a basic consensus. Here, Hallin's distinction between journalistic spheres of consensus, of legitimate controversy, and of deviance is useful (1989: 116-118).

In Hallin's model (which can be visualized as concentric circles), the middle region is the "sphere of legitimate controversy," which is the locus of journalistic objectivity. It is in this region that debates and contests between the legitimate parties are reported and treated with the virtues of objectivity and balance. "Beyond the Sphere of Legitimate Controversy lies the Sphere of Deviance, the realm of those political actors and views which journalists and the political mainstream of the society reject as unworthy of being heard" (Hallin 1989: 117). The innermost circle is what Hallin calls the "sphere of consensus." This is the region where journalists do not feel compelled to be objective or disinterested. On the contrary, the journalist's role is to advocate or celebrate what is conceived of as common values. In this region, objectivity and fairness once again fades away, and journalists play the role of exposing, condemning and

excluding those who challenge social consensus. This sphere marks the limits of acceptable political conflict. Human interest stories or war coverage (war itself) usually fall in this category, where potential controversies are eliminated.

Crime stories, regardless of who commits them, are usually treated in the "sphere of consensus" as any quick analysis of the stories would show: in crime stories, the criminal is usually silenced while journalists rely heavily on official sources that have the monopoly of imposing or using legitimate violence, such as courts and the police. Insofar as criminals are heard, they are allowed to defend themselves against allegations rather than question the nature of the allegations. It is in this area of journalistic practice that society is understood as "consensus" and the news is shaped by the tacit boundaries of the consensus. Since crime stories only rarely involve first-hand accounts of the crime itself, the media basically rely on secondary sources to report on crime, and crime stories are almost wholly produced from the perspectives of the police and judicial system. Consequently, journalists do not feel compelled to open up alternative definitions of the incident[35]. The definition by the police becomes the default definition of the problem.

How do the police represent the events? Ansel-Henry and Jespersen (2003) describe the relationship between the youth and the police as one of rivalry. While the police are preoccupied with asserting their authority by becoming more and more aggressive and with pushing youths from the streets of their neighborhoods, the youths constantly try to emphasize their right to be where they are. A police officer interviewed

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[35] Of course, controversy also exists around crime, but the counter-arguments would usually be represented by reform groups who share the same basic definitions of the problem, say, pedophilia, as the authorities. Alternative views are repressed within this consensual view. The treatment of crime would then be pushed onto the terrain of the pragmatic – given that there is a problem about crime, what can we do about it?

after a violent confrontation explains that it is the right of the police to decide who can be where at any point but every single time they try to assert their authority, there is a confrontation. He concludes that, "it cannot be right that the police cannot enter an area in Denmark." However, the authors note that the officer draws a direct line from one incident to the conclusion that the police cannot enter the neighborhood in question when the authors actually observed them patrolling the area daily without problems. Ansel-Henry and Jespersen conclude that the unusual and violent incident comes to signify the true expression of how the "ethnic youths" "really" are (Ansel-Henry and Jespersen 2003: 42). This illustrates my earlier argument – it is the sensationalization of the few extreme cases that provides the grounds for the criminalization of immigrants and for the representation of immigrants as threats to social cohesion.

The difference between the ethnographic observations by Ansel-Henry and Jespersen and the coverage by the media demonstrates my point about how explanatory frameworks stand in for actual analysis. While their report tries to understand the dynamics of the encounters between the police and the youth, the media completely rely on the police definition of the encounters. Once the nature of the problem is defined in a certain way, the question then becomes what to do about it. This is where responses from the political parties and immigrant representatives come into the picture. When politicians or immigrants respond to a problem, they usually do so because they are approached by the reporter who already has defined the problem for them through the eyes of the police or experts, or because there is a political proposal to curb criminality among immigrants. The range of their responses is limited at the outset; they can only disagree about the practical solutions of the problem. In September 2005, when the

Conservative Justice Minister Lene Espersen asked the police to map out the criminality

rates among immigrants according to location, ethnicity, and the type of criminality, the

Social Democratic Party called it a perfect idea "which would help authorities to respond

to the problems," that is, the response can be focused on particular groups of immigrants

(*Politiken* 9/14/2005).

The way the media covers immigrant criminality is particularly constraining for

immigrant representatives and in rare cases for the youth themselves who can only

respond to the question by first condemning the attack (and thus by conforming to the

definition of the problem) and then dismissing the offenders as marginal and the crime as

extreme. In rare cases when immigrant sources challenge the ethnicization of the youths,

the context in which they are quoted renders them irrelevant. In a feature story titled

"Nørrebro: Drenge af det delte Danmark – Nørrebro: the boys of divided Denmark"

(*Politiken* 6/5/2005) about the troubled young men in a Copenhagen neighborhood, the

reporter interviews four experts: a school principal, a psychologist who works with

criminal youths, a criminal inspector, and an immigrant nurse. According to the principal,

the reason for the youths' involvement in crime is the lack of attention in immigrant

families. The father works hard and does not have time for his children; the mother who

is left alone treats her sons as princes because of her culture. The police inspector

describes the troubled youths as callous boys who only understand the language of power

and respect, and who carry around some honor concepts that "we do not understand in

our part of the world." The psychologist has similar views about the boys: "if you have a

cultural background in the Middle East and a family who was a part of the insurgency [in

Lebanon], it is not abnormal to have loose weapons around. At the same time, honor

killings and defense of family are not comprehensible for us but they are not unusual in their part of the world." The only counter view belongs to the immigrant "expert" who at the end of the article warns against focusing too much on ethnicity: "they are not at all different from bikers. Their actions and concept of honor are exactly the same. We should be careful not to be blinded by cultural background." Yet, this is the only time that ethnicization is problematized during the feature story; the rest is completely modeled on the ethnic paradigm. Moreover, the defensive mode in which she is put renders irrelevant her contribution at the outset: she is asked to provide an explanation; merely renouncing the ethnic paradigm becomes irrelevant to the purpose of the story that seeks explanations. Alternative explanations require alternative articulations of social identifications, but this is not possible on the premises laid out by the article – explanation of immigrant youths' conduct. Whatever the immigrant says, the connection between violence and immigrant youth is maintained as the main focus of the reporting. This is how hegemony works: you do not have to agree with the basic proposals of the paradigm, it is merely necessary that it has no serious rival to explain the connections – not necessarily in the minds of the people involved – in the practical circumstances under which alternative ways of conceptualizing are deemed to be illegitimate or at best irrelevant.

This example was from a feature story. News stories have a considerably less flexible format when it comes to including different perspectives as they do not normally seek explanations but describe events (explanations come at the end of the story and get edited out first). But events, especially crime, are described from the perspective of

credible sources such as the police and the representatives from the criminal justice or corrections system.

It is now clear that the link between 'immigrant' and 'criminality' is more than a simple coupling of words. Its significance is in its explanatory and constitutive power. The linkage between immigrants and criminality is one major articulatory moments of ethnic discourse together with a few others such as "unemployment and culture," "immigrants, headscarf and gender view," and "honor killings." These linkages not only connect immigrants to certain cultural traits as the explanatory background for the "problem" but also delimit immigrants as a fundamental problem for "society." The focus on ethnicity and crime, for instance, is an integral part of contemporary mainstream politics, and proposals for tougher measures against criminal immigrants are frequently related to immigration policy[36].

We have now come one step closer to answering the question of how to analyze the hegemonic character of an articulation. Unfortunately, researchers who work from a hegemony perspective rarely engage with a systematic analysis of data to back up the claim that an articulation has become hegemonic. And to the extent that they do engage, they selectively analyze data that illustrate how a particular articulation finds its expression in actual discourse while the claims about the hegemonic status of the

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[36] Some examples: In spring 2003, the Danish Minister of Finance suggested that parents of criminal minors should take mandatory courses on parental responsibility. The initiative was especially aimed at foreign-born parents. In Sep 2003, during negotiations about the Danish finances for 2004, The Danish Peoples Party (a right-wing party that is part of the parliamentary base for the present government) demanded that young criminals with a foreign background be placed in a special "ethnic" facility designated for them, due to their unwillingness/inability to adjust to life in a normal prison. According to the government's new proposal for restriction on immigration (November 2005), immigrants will have to sign a document where they have to promise not to commit crimes.

analyzed articulations are merely assumed (e.g., Dyrberg 2000, 2001)[37]. I suspect that this assumption has to do with the intensity of the debate on immigration, which in certain periods such as election campaigns takes the central stage.

The central question still remains: how do we know that a particular articulation has become hegemonic in the sense that it has moved into the center of social ontology? Does the intensity of the debate on immigration and culture indicate the hegemonic character of racist antagonism?

This is a difficult question to answer. The theory of hegemony is a theory of power – a highly theorized notion of social and political relations and as such it is difficult to analyze because it is difficult to empirically pinpoint within the social field as "the social" consists of an infinite number of elements not reducible to any underlying unitary principle. However, it is possible to analyze a particular vision of society through the rhetoric of populist movements such as the DPP (e.g. Dyrberg 2000, 2001). The next analytical move is to analyze if this vision has been adopted by the mainstream political system, or in other words, if power is restructured around the populist vision. An analysis of the mainstream politics (political debate, law proposals and media coverage) may provide some clues as to whether the basic premises of the racist populist articulations have become an integral part of political discourse.

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[37] E.g., Dyrberg analyzes how racism becomes articulated with nationalism in a populist critique of the system, but the analysis is restricted to utterances by racist parties.

## Ethnicity, Culture and Mainstream Politics

Many people inside and outside Denmark testify to the intense preoccupation with Danish national identity, immigrants and their culture. Sasha Polakow-Suransky wrote that "it came as a surprise to nearly everyone when this icon of northern European welfare-state progressivism, and the erstwhile poster child of liberal immigration policy, descended into an inflammatory election campaign last November [2001]. The issues of immigration and refugees took center stage, despite Denmark's record-low unemployment and the fact that less than 8 percent of its population is of foreign origin" (*The American Prospect* 6/3/2002). Similarly, Stephen Smith, co-founder of the UK-based Beth Shalom Holocaust Centre, could report that "what we are witnessing in Denmark is nothing less than the return of rightwing extremism to respectability - not through the acceptance of a controversial Haider or Le Pen, but through the quiet adoption of their stance by mainstream political parties ... Denmark's government is now taking steps which will turn one of the world's most liberal countries into a bastion of introverted nationalism" (*The Guardian* 6/5/2002). These observations are not limited to foreigners who occasionally visit Denmark. Ulf Hedetoft, the director of Academy for Migration Studies in Denmark, has similar views on the political debate: "the present Liberal-Conservative government came to office in Denmark in November 2001, ousting the old Social Democratic/Radical Party coalition. The issue of immigration had dominated the general election campaign. The general tone of the debate was acrimonious, bordering on vengeful; immigration was projected as the most imminent and serious threat to the history, culture, identity and homogeneity of "little Denmark"" (OpenDemocracy 10.30.2003). In Dyrberg's words, "'Danishness' [which] is largely a

DPP-word, ... has no precise meaning, of course, but it revolves around forging strong connections between the national culture and the welfare state, which cuts across left and right. The welfare state is largely legitimized by reference to this unity of nation, culture and people. Both the political establishment and those who claim to challenge or resist it draw on this ideological figure" (2000: 2). At its core, Polakow-Suransky concluded, "this debate is about social solidarity and the nature of the welfare state; about who is entitled to remain in the Danish welfare system's benevolent realm and who should be pushed out."

On December 15, 2005, 12 well-known writers sent out a declaration in which they criticized ethnic discrimination which according to the text had become obvious in the public debate and in laws (*Politiken*). The writers underlined the tendency in the media and political discourse to see Muslim "fellow countrymen" exclusively as criminals, subversive elements, potential rapists or welfare clients and argued that the rhetoric is similar to the one in Balkans which resulted in ethnic cleansing. In a later interview, one of the authors of the declaration, Stig Dalager (who is also the editor of a Jewish-Danish journal *Udsyn/Survery*), compared the utterances about Muslims to utterances about Jews in prewar Germany. The declaration was quickly followed by similar declarations by the Danish Writers' Association, the Danish Fiction Writers' Association, a group of priests, and 150 psychologists all of which pointed to the similarities in the tone in the contemporary Danish debate on immigration and the debate about Jews in Nazi Germany.

The declaration in itself is not remarkable in that there have been many people in the last two decades who shouted "wolves are coming!" What is more interesting in our

context is the response to the declaration by the media and the politicians. *Politiken,* in which the declaration was announced, had three side stories on it: one was an interview with one of the authors of the text, a second small "soundbites" from the street, and a third with three MPs from the DPP and the Integration Minister. All but one soundbite interviews with five ordinary Danes expressed criticism of the *harsh tone* of the debate but also emphasized the positive aspect of the debate that put focus on "integration problems." Although the declaration clearly held the government responsible for the intolerant atmosphere, *Politiken* chose to interview three MPs from the DPP, only one member of the government and none from the opposition. The Integration Minister Rikke Hvilshøj admitted that the tone can be harsh at times but underlined that it is important to discuss problems such as "forced marriages," "honor killings" and "immigrants' gender views."

The most interesting response in this context was from the prominent member of the DPP, Søren Krarup who was the main figure behind the hegemonic intervention in discourse in mid-'80s: "First of all: this is the language of powerlessness. The previous power holders are bitter and offended because they now find themselves in powerlessness. Second: we agree with cultural radicals [cultural elite] to regret a divided and conflict-ridden Denmark, but the present clash with cultural radicalism has to do with the fact that it is a divided and conflict-ridden Denmark that had created this ruling class in 1980s and 1990s.  It was the cultural radicals who forced Denmark to become an immigration country and subsequently to cease to be a cohesive nation ... And it was a bullied Danish people who eventually enforced a system change that seeks to secure a cohesive force in Denmark. We have proposed and are about to make into law an

integration program which is revolutionary and important because it makes clear that integration is a question about foreigners' debt and responsibility. It means that they are no longer victims but responsible, and this is a new and promising premise" (*Politiken* 12/15/2005).

What Krarup is saying is exactly that what was a counter-hegemonic move in the '80s and 90' has now become the norm itself, and that the "Danish people" is about to change the system to secure Denmark as an ethnically homogenous society. He presents immigration as the cause for the current conflict-ridden state of Denmark implying that it was a nation with harmony and social peace prior to the latest phase of immigration. This is where ethnicity becomes an important discursive resource to create retrospectively a fullness which is now lacking. It is when the narrative of "once-existing fullness" becomes accepted by the mainstream (through which contemporary society is understood) that an articulation can be said to have become hegemonic. In this sense, his words connect for us the ethnicized discourse to the hegemonic character of it. It also explains why Krarup can claim victory despite the fact that the system change is not the result of a power take-over by the racist populist movement that initially articulated this vision for society, and that he is now allied with the same political elite whom he vehemently accused of treason in the '80s and '90s. The difference is that the political elite and the mainstream media slowly adopted the perspective that they once dismissed as racist and dangerous. I will be discussing this process of change in chapters 3 and 4.

## Ethnicized Hegemony

As I said before, there is already a body of work establishing the ethnicized character of the immigration debate through an analysis of "us" and "them" categories. My purpose in this chapter is not to repeat this analytical work, but support its findings (despite its shortcomings) with my own examples and content analysis, and to discuss the findings from the perspective of hegemony theory. After all, "any hegemonic displacement should be conceived as a change in the configuration of the state..." (Laclau 2005: 106).

One of the most striking examples of the change since the mid 1980 is the way the Queen of Denmark has been involved in the debate. In her annual New Year's speech on 31 December 1985, Queen Margrethe intervened in the debate on immigration and scolded Danes for their negative attitudes towards immigrants and called their utterances "dumb-smart". The tone was clearly humanitarian and she promoted tolerance towards the new "guests" who may have problems with adjusting to Danish society. Two decades later in a book published in 2005, the Queen thinks that she was "crazily naïve" when she called Danes "dumb-smart" because she now realizes that Islam constitutes a great challenge for Danes who have not taken it up because "we are tolerant and lazy." She finds the totality of Islam scary. Some priests called this change of mind "depressing" and criticized her for aligning herself with the DPP line (*Politiken* 4/16/2005).

The numbers also confirm that public discourse has become ethnicized. I read and coded 2,152 newspaper stories from five major daily newspapers, all types included, about immigrants and immigration for three months periods in 1984, 1986, 1987 and 2001. One of my codes was the perspective from which a story is told: humanitarian,

culturalist, economic/social burden, or rights. I also had a category that coded a mixture of humanitarian and culturalist perspectives.

The coding is a result of a close reading of the material. I read all the stories at least twice, once when I was trying to determine the codes, once again to code the stories. My codes for humanitarian and culturalist perspectives are constructed after a careful qualitative analysis of some stories typical of their genre, and the coding process itself was a semi-qualitative analysis of each story (I determined their perspective qualitatively rather than, say, defining some words as indicators of this or that perspective and counting them). Humanitarian perspective stands for stories where the issue of immigration is discussed (by the author or by the agents in the story) in terms of helping people in need. Unless it is explicitly discussed through other perspectives, some stories such as problems with providing housing for refugees or the process of receiving them are usually coded as stories with a humanitarian perspective. Culturalist perspective means either that the issue at hand is explained with immigrants' background or in relation to what it does to Danish culture/identity. Neither perspective is inscribed with a particular tone: a story or commentary coded for "humanitarian" perspective may be arguing that Denmark cannot afford to help all of the refugees in the world (a typical argument in letters to the editor in 1984); a story coded for "culturalist" perspective may be arguing that immigrants' culture is not a threat to Danishness (a typical argument in 2001).

**Table 2.1: Perspective in all stories**

| Perspectives/all | 1984 | 1986 | 1987 | 2001 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Humanitarian | 82.5% | 87.3% | 47.2% | 26.6% |
| Culturalist | 1.1% | 1.7% | 13.1% | 32.2% |
| Mixed | 0.5% | 1.0% | 4.9% | 8.5% |
| Not clear | 9.5% | 4.7% | 22.6% | 17.6% |
| Other | 6.4% | 5.3% | 12.2% | 5.1% |

**Table 2.2: Perspective in news stories**

| Perspectives/news | 1984 | 1986 | 1987 | 2001 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Humanitarian | 81.4% | 86.8% | 57.4% | 34.0% |
| Culturalist | 0% | 0.9% | 7.4% | 21.5% |
| Mixed | 0% | 0% | 2.8% | 5.7% |
| Not clear | 15.0% | 6.2% | 20.4% | 17.2% |
| Other | 3.6% | 6.1% | 12.0% | 21.6% |

**Table 2.3:Perspective in commentaries**

| Perspectives /comments | 1984 | 1986 | 1987 | 2001 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Humanitarian | 94.7% | 90.9% | 44.8.% | 16.0% |
| Culturalist | 0% | 4.5% | 29.3% | 50.6% |
| Mixed | 0% | 4.5% | 3.4% | 11.1% |
| Not clear | 0% | 0% | 15.5% | 12.3% |
| Other | 5.3% | 0.1% | 7.0% | 10.0% |

One of the most striking findings was the complete dominance of the humanitarian

perspective in 1984 (82.5% of all stories against 1.1% culturalist perspective), and almost

total dominance of culturalist perspective in 2001 (table 2.1). However, the numbers do

not immediately reflect my conclusion about the dominance of culturalist perspective

regarding 2001 (32.2% culturalist versus 26.6% humanitarian perspective). This has

partly to do with the methodological constraints of content analysis. Content analysis

focuses solely on manifest content in stories[38]. This becomes clearer when we distinguish

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[38] It is difficult to generalize about the media coverage if we look at the actual coverage. It is always
grounded in very concrete stories and events. For each concrete story, a new set of explanations and
arguments are used, or old and generic ones are creatively put together to make sense in the new discursive

between types of story. The humanitarian perspective in news stories decreased from

81.4% in 1984 down to 34 % in 2001, while the cultural perspective increased from 0%

in 1984 to 21.5 in 2001 (table 2.2). However, if we look at commentaries, the difference

is again striking (table 2.3). While 94.7% of all commentaries in 1984 were coded as

humanitarian, this decreases to 16% in 2001. None of the commentaries from 1984 was

coded as culturalist, whereas the rate is 50.6% in 2001. We find a similar indication if we

look at how immigrants are defined or named in total numbers dispersed over years:

while less than 1% of the stories in 1984 and 86 immigrants were named as Muslims, the

rate increases to 19.2% in 2001.

If the numbers (in news stories) do not reflect my overall impression of the

complete dominance of the culturalist perspective in 2001, it is because many news

stories in 2001 were about problems with finding decent housing for refugees, most of

which I coded as having a humanitarian perspective. This is exactly where the problem

with content analysis is: the stories may be coded this or that way to be consistent, but

how they are actually interpreted depends on the discursive environment in which they

are embedded but which is not manifest in the story itself. For example, a debate on

housing in 1984 may have been motivated by the problems of finding decent housing for

refugees, whereas the same debate may be motivated by the desire to disperse refugees to

prevent the formation of "ghettos." But this background will not necessarily be reflected

in the news stories. I coded many stories as "not clear" (15% in 1984 and 17.2% in 2001).

All of the "unclear" stories from 1984 were initially coded as humanitarian (because

environment. Unless there is a qualitative analysis of the perspectives and explanations, the numbers alone
does not say much even though this is the strength of quantitative methods.

there were almost no other perspectives available at that moment) but I had to recode

them after finding similar stories in 2001 which could, despite the similarities, be

interpreted as culturalist if the context was included in my considerations.

To make this point clearer, I want to discuss the same type of stories in different

periods. The first story is from *Jyllands-Posten* (20/22/86) and titled "*Convicted for

murder attempt*." This is a short story about an Iranian refugee who had stabbed his wife.

The reporter explains that the incident probably had to do with the divorce proceedings

between the couple, implying that the attack was motivated by jealousy. There is no word

of culture, tradition or religion to explain his conduct and the story is treated the same as

a story about Danes. A decade later, by mid 1990s it is impossible to imagine a story

about a murder by an immigrant without some kind of cultural explanation, even when

the case does not lend itself readily to cultural explanations. In May 2005, a young

immigrant was shot dead in a fight by the doorman (also an immigrant) of a night club in

Copenhagen. The police said that the doorman was defending himself against a group of

immigrant youth who attacked him. The incident seemed to be related to earlier

confrontations between the doorman and the youth. The police explained that the

"[immigrant] youth cannot accept being refused by one of their own." Cultural identity

problems, unsuccessful integration, religion, blood revenge, traditions and honor were all

conceptual resources used to understand the youth's criminal conduct. Two other murder

cases the same year were also explained through the concept of "honor killings" in all

newspapers.

Culture has thus become the pivotal category for explaining any kind of

phenomena related to immigrants, even in cases that seem to defy culturalist paradigms.

According to *Jyllands-Posten*, immigrant women have a higher representation in abortion statistics (6/17/2001). A more reflexive approach might take this story as an indication – even if we accept the essentialist premise that culture determines the actions of the members of a community – that culture falls short in explaining the statistics (assuming that more traditional cultures with strong religious overtones would condemn abortion as a practice). Yet culture has become such a powerful and default category that the reporter paradoxically chose to interview a Danish social worker who explained that "Muslim women do not demand that their men use protection." There is no way out of the realm of culture.

I have been arguing that the ethnicization/culturalization of public discourse is the result of the racist articulation of a cultural antagonism between Danishness and Islam as a repressive and anachronistic culture. The antagonism creates a frontier that can be visualized as a magnetic center that bends discourse towards the dividing line, although the nature of this antagonism is constantly contested and the struggle to fill the empty signifier, Danishness, with a particular meaning is a never-ending struggle. That discourse is bent towards this ethnic dividing line means also that it cuts across all other antagonisms in society, which is what makes it hegemonic.

The clearest articulation of the antagonism is a controversial book published by the DPP in 2001. The book, "*Denmark's future: your country - your choice...*" has on its cover a picture of a fierce looking Muslim immigrant with a gun in a demonstration on the main square of Copenhagen. The book is organized in two main parts; the first is
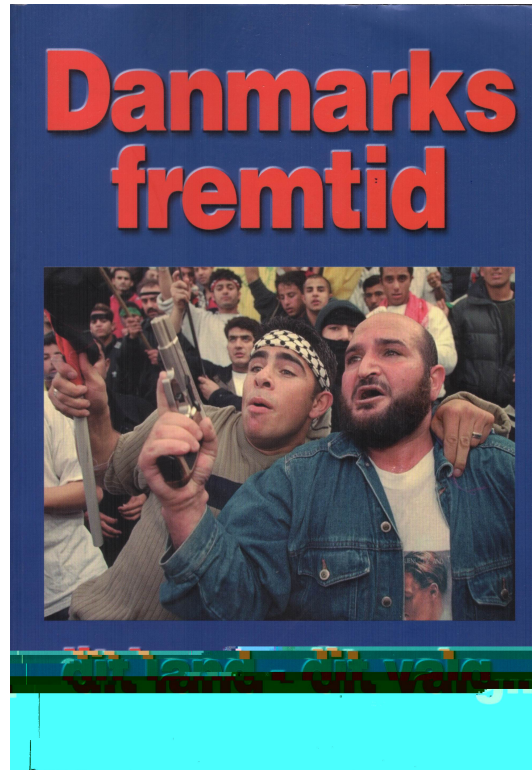
**Figure 2.1 The cover of the DPP's book**
**Denmark's future: your country – your choice...**

about immigration and what it means for Denmark, and the second is about the DPP's

policies concerning Denmark's future. The first section contains a brief history of

immigration, statistics on immigration, cases of immigrant's criminality, problems with

immigrants in Germany, international conventions and the relationship between religion,

culture and democracy. The second part is called Denmark's Future and contains a

discussion of DPP's proposals to maintain Denmark as a cohesive country. The first part

draws a picture of a problem-ridden Denmark because of immigrants and their culture

(one of the chapters is called "the impossible combination of Islam and democracy"); the

second part creates an image of an idyllic Denmark that will be restored to its original

state through the DPP's proposals.

The visual organization of the book is much more striking than that of its 30 chapters. The first part is filled with photographs of immigrants in everyday situations which could be found in any mainstream newspaper, but the combination of pictures and the text relays an image of Denmark being invaded by these alien intruders (a number of pictures depict women with headscarves). This image is supported by the visual organization of the second part.
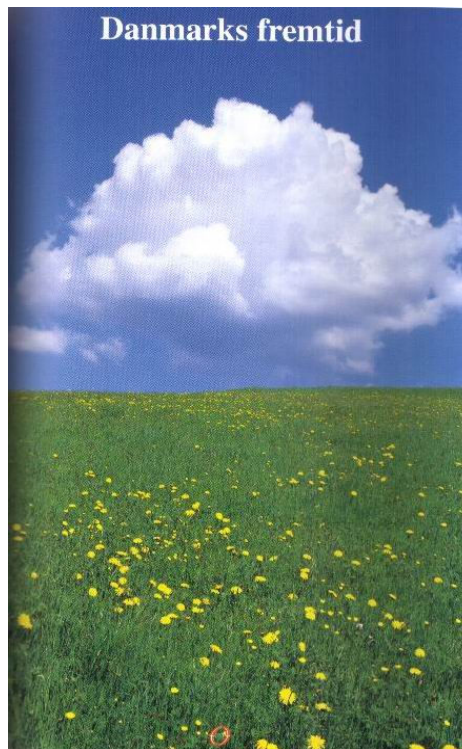


**Figure 2.2 Denmark's Future**
**(from Denmark's future: your country – your choice**

The second part begins with a section titled, Denmark's future and an uncaptioned picture of Danish landscape with green hills and blue skies. This is not an arbitrary choice of picture; landscape paintings have been an important part of the Danish nation-making process (Hvenegaard 1996). The rest of this chapter is full of idyllic pictures of Danish

landscapes, peaceful Danes in everyday activities, and of children with blond hair.

Pictures of the Danish flag are dispersed all over the book – the flag is one of the most

important signifiers of the Danish nation and is used frequently in both daily contexts and

as a marker of festivities. In short, the nationalist-racist antagonism between the Danish

nation and the Muslim-alien threat is represented by these two sections: one describes the

grim realities of Denmark; the other describes the desire for a cohesive Danish nation.

Upon its release, the book immediately created a controversy, but the controversy

was not so much about the antagonistic pictures as about the way one of the authors went

about her research for the book. The author, Ulla Dahlerup, a prominent figure in the

feminist movement in the 1970s and a well-known journalist from campaign journalism

against immigrants in a tabloid in the 1990s, had told her Danish interviewees that she

was writing the book for the Danish parliament, rather than for the DPP. Some of the

Danish interviewees felt misused by the journalist – they would not have spoken the same

way if they had known their utterances would be used in a publication by the DPP. The

controversy was about the journalistic integrity (and thus about the hidden intentions)

rather than the picture of Denmark being painted. The controversy was then not a sign of

any alternative vision for the social order but rather of the hegemony itself: the basic

premise of the book (*that there is an antagonistic relationship between Danish culture

and Muslim immigrants*) was never questioned during the debate. What was questioned

were the dimensions of the threat which is ultimately related to different strategies of

fending off that threat: the choice was between a complete stop to further immigration

from Muslim countries and a further marginalization of the present immigrants (the DPP

line which also promotes an "unsigning" of international treaties) or a more moderate

policy of tightening the borders (to the extent the international treaties allow) and of an assimilationist policy that aims at transforming the present and incoming immigrants from culture-bound peasants into modern subjects through a heavy-handed "integration policy."

If the antagonistic picture painted by the DPP was constrained to the populist rhetoric of the nationalist/racist right, this would not constitute what I call a racist hegemony. What makes it hegemonic is that it is a picture that also characterizes mainstream discourse, institutions and legal provisions. A good example is the use of women with headscarves when a story about immigration is illustrated. The right-wing *Jyllands-Posten* published a prognosis about the future of the Danish population, forecasting an explosion in the numbers of Muslims in the course of a century; the article was illustrated with a picture of a young woman with headscarf (headline, 7/15/2001). When asked about their responses to the prognosis, politicians from both sides of the political spectrum expressed concerns with the development (7/16/2001). Birte Rønn Hornbech, spokesperson from The Liberal Party, warned that, "if the tendency continues, we will destroy our country." Lene Espersen from the Conservative Party (now the Justice Minister) also appealed to the nationalist audience: "We are going to keep Denmark as a national state and the values which bind us together." Jytte Andersen from the Social Democrats did not see the number of immigrants as a problem but added that "no Islamic doctrine is going to define what Denmark is going to look like."

The liberal daily newspaper *Politiken* had a number of articles on immigration in August the same year. The logo of the series was a picture of three young immigrant women with headscarves walking by a shop window in which there are three almost

naked mannequins wearing lingerie and decorated with Danish flags (as discussed above, the flag is used on daily occasions such as sales). What is interesting here is that *Politiken* chose to use this picture as a general logo on immigration stories that is associated with the antagonism between Danishness and immigrant (Muslim) culture.



**Figure 2.3: Politiken's logo for the immigration theme in August 2001**

There are many commentaries that explicitly argue that immigration poses a threat to Danish culture. However, even for commentators who apparently oppose this view, the assumption nevertheless is that what is at stake is the Danish national identity. A commentary in the left-wing intellectual daily *Information* argues for example that, "the US is a bigger threat for Danish identity than immigrants" (8/17/2001). A second example is a commentary in *Politiken* (8/14/2005) entitled "*The threat to Danishness*" where a high school teacher urges the readers to calm down about the threat and recommends readers to "let immigrants and their descendants keep their culture, as long as it lasts" because "they will develop a modern consciousness about a convenient,

escapist life style similar to Danishness," that is, their culture will be watered down and eventually evaporate in the face of modernity. Clearly, my concern here is not whether this is the correct way of looking at the question but the very focus on Danishness, ethnicity and culture as the central premise of the debate, regardless of the alternative "solutions" that dissenters may promote.

## Ethnicization of the Whole Field of Discursivity

The scope of ethnic focus is not limited to the immigration debate; ethnic antagonism cuts across other fields of discourse and rearranges other types of social and political identities along the basic ethnic dividing line with the result that political and social movements such as leftists, feminists and gays find themselves in a dilemmatic trap. If we go back to the theoretical premise that the identity of a movement is constituted by an equivalential chain of its demands, it is these equivalential chains that are broken and rearranged by the racist antagonistic logic.

For left-wing movements, anti-racism and anti-sexism have long been articulated as parts of the same struggle and gender equality has been considered an important social and political achievement against the dominant male culture. However, the ethnicized discursive environment in which immigrants, via their Muslim culture, are repeatedly described as oppressive to women creates for left-wing movements tensions that are difficult to resolve within the given parameters of leftist political identities. What happens here is that the old antagonistic frontier between the traditional structures of power and emancipatory movements is blurred as a result of the hegemonic power incorporating some of the demands into the system. The Left-wing movement left of the

Social Democrats has been trying to rearticulate their identity around anti-racist struggles. However, without a complete transformation of its identity, it finds itself trapped in an essentialist paradigm in which they simultaneously promote minority rights for immigrants (which imply rights for well-defined groups), and fight the traditional cultures of these well-defined groups. Once immigrants are defined as cultural/ethnic groups rather than a part of the proletariat, it becomes difficult to incorporate this social identity into the classical leftist paradigm. At the same time, their mobilization around traditional anti-racist and internationalist themes renders them irrelevant in relation to large sections of workers and others whose interests are now represented in nationalist terms by the populist right.

This tension is much more pressing for the feminist movement whose identity is shaped around the concept of emancipation. In summer 2001, *Politiken* initiated a fierce debate on feminism and immigrant women with a commentary that criticized the feminist movement for letting down the oppressed immigrant women. The commentaries were illustrated with pictures of Muslim women in Burkas and naked Danish women. The debate quickly spilled over into other newspapers. In a chronicle in *Jyllands Posten*, Lone Nørgaard accused the feminist movement of being silent about the fact that some women live under the oppressive patriarchal norms from the 7th century Arabia and asked in the context of the debate on headscarf, if women's basic rights are not threatened by the religious dogmas permeated by patriarchal ideologies (7/25/01). Many of the commentaries followed this train of thought but there were critical voices, too. In a commentary in *Politiken*, Annemette Bach criticized the feminists for being intolerant towards Muslim women by interpreting the headscarf as a sign of oppression without

asking their Muslim sisters why they wear it. Her answer was that they wear it because of their religion, not because they are told so by their men. She argued that this was a contradiction for the feminists who would prefer that Muslim women conform to the oppressive ideals [of the West] which force women to dress in ways to please men (6/19/01). This is basically a debate on how to re-configure the identity of the feminist movement in the face of the new political/social ontology.

Emancipation in this context becomes what Laclau calls a 'floating signifier'. A floating signifier is a demand that receives "structural pressure of *rival* hegemonic projects" and its meaning becomes indeterminate between two equivalential articulations. The "floating dimension becomes most visible in periods of organic crisis, when the symbolic system needs to be radically recast" (2005: 131-132). Emancipation in this sense both signifies the feminist movement vis-à-vis the oppressive sexist system and Danishness vis-à-vis the Muslim immigrant with an oppressive culture. This organic crisis often leads to radical conversions among feminists or left wing radicals (as was the case with Ulla Dahlerup, the author of the DPP's book). Her case is in no way unique. The former Interior Minister Karen Jespersen (Social Democrat) is a good example on two accounts: She was a member of left-wing radical Left-Socialist Party and describes herself as a feminist. Since joining the Social Democrats, she gradually became one of the most vocal opponents of immigration within the party. In her meeting with Muslim immigrant women in August 2001, she called upon the women to riot against their husbands who, according to Jespersen, constrained them to the home. She also wanted to discuss issues such as "forced marriages" or "violence against immigrant women by their men" (*BT* 8/9/2001). The women, on the other hand, would rather talk about

discrimination in the job market and gave many concrete examples of discrimination against well-educated women. Yet, the reason that the reporter gave for why immigrant women refused to talk about their emancipation from their husbands was that these issues were too difficult for them to talk about. Consequently, the story was written completely from the perspective of the minister. What happens in those situations is that the frontier between Danish society and the "immigrant" predefines both the subject roles and the relevance of issues to be discussed, even before coming in touch with one another, or "in other words, binaries delimit the outcome of proximity, if not prevent proximity itself, by predefining the reality before practice" (Diken 1998: 40).

## Populist Ideas Move Into the Center of Political Discourse

This displacement of the traditional structures of identification – such as left and right – happened through a gradual shift from humanitarian and compassion-based approaches (to the question of asylum and refugees) to culture-based approaches (to the question of immigration in general). The questions asked in the first phase were "How can we help them?" or "Can we afford it?" These questions were gradually replaced with questions such as "Can we sustain our national identity?" or "Can the welfare system survive immigration?" The transformation was the result of a hegemonic intervention that rearticulated uncertainties about the welfare system in a rapidly changing world as the result of immigration rather than the neo-liberal policies of shrinking the role of the state in economy (the Conservative/Liberal governments in the '80s were trying to dismantle the welfare system step by step).

In the course of the 1990s, answers to such questions, both by political actors, the media opinion-leaders and ordinary citizens, became increasingly negative or skeptical. The cumulative result was a series of legislative initiatives intended to introduce stricter controls and tougher conditions for obtaining work or residence permits and for gaining access to welfare provisions.

Despite this gradual shift in the immigration debate it came as a surprise for the rest of the world when the immigration debate took a center stage with an inflammatory election campaign in November 2001. The DPP's landslide victory attracted world-wide attention but what was more significant about the election was that almost all parties on both sides of the political spectrum indulged in this debate with proclamations about tighter immigration laws and stricter provisions to restore "law and order." This was an election in which every major party competed to appear tough on immigration. The opposition (the Liberals, Conservatives and the DPP) managed to capitalize on this climate of fear, moral panic and enemy images and won the elections despite the fact that traditional economic indicators looked good and unemployment was at record-low levels. The Liberal Party adopted a similar rhetoric to the DPP and had the Muslim threat as the focus of its campaign and election slogan, "Time for change." One of the election posters carried a well-known picture of Muslim immigrant youths leaving the court after having been convicted of the "gang rape" of a White Danish girl. The only slogan that appeared on the poster was "Time for Change." "They created the expectation that not only could they put a virtual stop to any further inflow of undesirable aliens, but also reinstate Denmark to its former status as a peaceful, ethnically homogeneous and politically sovereign welfare state" (Hedetoft 2003). Immigration has since been at the center of the

policies by the Liberal/Conservative government that repeated the electoral success in 2005.
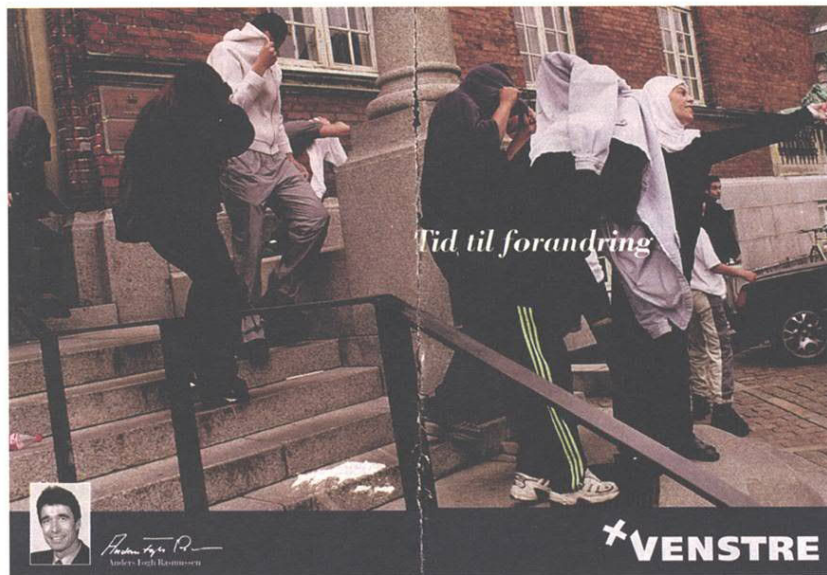


**Figure 2.4: The Liberal Party's election poster in the fall of 2001**

One of the interesting results of the last two elections is that the DPP took over the key role of securing the majority for the government, a role that has been traditionally played by center parties. In a crucial sense, the present Danish government with only 60 seats (the Liberals 52 and the Conservative 18) out of 179 parliamentary seats owes its life to the DPP's 24 votes and the question of immigration. This is what Krarup means when he talks about "system change" and "the cultural elite losing power."

The promises made during the election campaign were carried by the Liberal/Conservative government into a barrage of tough policy proposals. One of the important initiatives was to establish a new Ministry for Refugees, Immigrants and Integration – the origin of policy initiatives that a *Politiken* editorial criticized for

focusing on "ethnic purity" and "protecting the Danish tribe" (1/18/2002) (in Hedetoft 2003).

One of the laws *Politiken* was criticizing is the new threshold for transnational marriages intended to curb further immigration from "third world" countries. This law requires that marriages between residents of Denmark and foreigners can only take place if both parties are over 24 years old. The legislation, which led to a number of unintended consequences involving "genuine" Danes, has been revised so that it may only affect immigrants from "third world" countries. The law was sharply criticized by the EU Commissioner for Human Rights, Alvaro Gil-Robles in 2004 but the criticism was dismissed, like all the other critiques by international institutions, by the then Integration minister Bertel Haarder who called the law "women progressive" – because it was an effective tool against arranged marriages – and accused Gil-Robles for not understanding cultural differences – because Gil Robles himself was a Spaniard who had a similar culture of arranged marriages (sic!) (*Politiken* 3/1/2005).

Neither the restrictions nor the culturalist take on immigration is unique to this right-wing government. The Social Democratic-Radical coalition tightened the immigration laws 36 times between 1993 and 2001. The Social Democratic Interior Minister Karen Jespersen had already declared that she did not want to live in a multi-cultural society in which Muslim culture was equal to Danish culture (*Politiken* 7/8/2001). What is new is its total political hegemony: the linkage between culture, social cohesion and welfare (and the view of immigration as the threat to Danishness) is now explicitly articulated in law proposals. Until recently, open expressions of these linkages were mainly seen as a DPP policy from which mainstream parties distanced themselves.

According to the latest integration law proposal (December 2005), all immigrants seeking work and residence permit in Denmark will have to sign a declaration that sets up detailed but elusive criteria for earning the right to stay in Denmark. The declaration makes explicit all of the points that I have been making about the articulation of an incommensurable dichotomy between two fundamentally different cultures: civilized and reflexive, on the one hand, and barbaric and primitive, on the other. According to the proposal (see table 2.4), a foreigner seeking residency permit has to declare allegiance to Danish laws and democratic principles, promise not to beat up his wife or children, become self-providing, pay taxes, respect gender equality, and sexual orientation, not discriminate on the basis of gender or skin color, and finally not participate in terrorist activities. The penalty for not fulfilling the declaration ranges from a reduction in welfare payments (if one receives any), diminished hopes for permanent residence (citizenship is becoming almost impossible), to losing residency permits altogether. There are other law proposals that will make it nearly impossible to enter Denmark or to receive citizenship. For instance, immigrants will have to pass a Danish language exam *before* entering the country, and take Danish language exam level 3 to become a citizen (to enroll at a university, it is sufficient to take level 2 exam) and take an exam on Danish history, culture and values. The proposal also makes it impossible to get citizenship if an immigrant has been out of job for more than one out of the last 5 years.

**Table 2.4: Integration contract –proposal by the Danish government (Dec 2005)**

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**Declaration of integration and active residency in the Danish society.**

I hereby declare that I will actively work to secure my own and my resident children and spouse's or partner's integration and active citizenship in the Danish society.

I therefore declare the following:
- Under all circumstances, I will uphold Danish law and protect Danish democratic principles.
- I acknowledge that the Danish language and familiarity with Danish society is the key to a good and active existence in Denmark. I will therefore learn Danish and build knowledge about the Danish society as quickly as possible. I know that I can learn Danish in Danish courses offered by the municipal ministry.
- I acknowledge that the individual citizens and families are responsible for providing for themselves. I will therefore work towards becoming self sufficient as quickly as possible. I know that it helps to become self sufficient by participating in activities that are described in my integration contract with the municipality.
- I know that if I am seeking a job and participating in the Danish educational system and in these activities that are described in my integrations contract with the municipality, I am entitled to temporary economic help until I can provide for my self.
- I acknowledge that men and women have equal responsibilities and rights in Denmark and that men and women should contribute to society through education, employment, payment of taxes, participation in the democratic process and protect parental responsibilities towards their own children.
- I know that in Denmark it is forbidden to exert violence or apply illegal duress on ones spouse.
- I acknowledge that in Denmark there shall be equal respect and opportunities for development for all children, girls and boys, so they can grow up to become active and responsible citizens that are capable of making their own decisions. I will secure that my children receive the best possible upbringing, school attendance and integration into Denmark. I will also make sure that my children learn Danish as early as possible and complete their homework through their school term, and I will actively participate with my children's institution or school.
- I know that, in Denmark, it is illegal to strike your children.
- I know that circumcision of girls as well forced marriages are illegal activities in Denmark.
- I respect every person's freedom and personal integrity, equality of the genders, freedom of religion, and freedom of expression as laid out in Denmark.
- I know that discrimination on the grounds of gender or skin color, as well as threats or disdain towards groups on the grounds of faith or sexual orientation are illegal activities in Denmark.
- I acknowledge that the Danish society has a strict policy against terrorism and that each citizen has a duty to fight terrorism including assistance of the authorities in preventative and follow-up work.
- I acknowledge that active engagement in the Danish society is a requirement for a good existence in Denmark, regardless of how long that may be.
- I know that extension of my residency permit depends on that the requirements of my residency permit are met.
- I know that some requirements to receive permanent residency are that I have fulfilled my integrations contract by participating in the ongoing activities, preferably by being in education or employment from an early start; that I have passed the Danish language exam; and I do not have debt to the public sector. I know that criminal activities could delay or hinder receiving a permanent residency permit.
- I know that if I am a refugee, I no longer have asylum if the situation in my home country has changed so I can return home. I know that refugees and their families can receive economic support for traveling home to their country of origin or previous residency if they shall need it.

    Date:               Signature:

Many of the provisions in the declaration are not revolutionary: immigrants have long been expelled from Denmark if they committed crime; they have long been restricted in their geographical mobility, and they have long been denied the right to bring family members from other countries. What is new is the clear expression of the constitutive nature of cultural/ethnic difference (of the assumption that immigrants from primitive cultures are the opposite of the modern, emancipated, democratic values of Denmark.) Otherwise, what is the use of explicating that one has to obey laws; not to commit crime or beat one's children and wife; respect democratic values; and become self-sufficient?

## The Transformation of the Political Landscape

The incorporation of the populist demand on excluding immigrants from the benevolent realm of welfare state has transformed the very political landscape in Denmark. That the neo-liberalist approach demands that immigrants become self-reliant thus ridding themselves of dependence on government aid may not be spectacular in itself since the liberal approach is fundamentally about a market-based approach to social issues with minimum state intervention. However, the incorporation of the populist demand on making access to welfare conditional upon ethnicity implies that many of the welfare provisions need to be kept intact for Danes, creating tensions within the Liberal Party, which transformed itself from a typical neo-liberal party into a social-liberal party.

Considering the transformation of the left-wing social democratic parties during 1980s and 1990s into social-liberal parties all over Europe, the division between left and right became increasingly blurred and a new consensus has been constructed on liberal

policies. This consensus leaves parts of the welfare system intact while eliminating others and minimizes state intervention in the economic sphere. Privatization and putting a cap on unemployment and social aid payments have been central to this new liberal consensus, which makes it difficult for voters to see significant differences between mainstream parties in terms of economic policies. Once that difference was blurred, issues such as immigration and its role in sustaining/eroding social rights became central for parties' appeals to voters, and here Social Democrats seem to have lost out to hard-liners of the Liberal Party despite their own attempt to create an image of "being tough and firm" on immigration and crime. After having lost the elections a second time in 2005, Mogens Lykketoft resigned as the chairman of the Social Democratic Party and admitted that it was difficult to detect ideological differences between the mainstream parties.

In our context, the transformation of the Liberal Party is interesting as it is intimately connected to the central role immigration has come to play in creating visions for the future of Denmark. A single example is powerful enough to illustrate this transformation. The leader of the party and Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen forced one of his ministers, Eva Kjær, to renounce her own statement that "inequality is the motivating power of society; it creates a dynamic" (*Jyllands-Posten* 9/18/2005). In his view, creating inequality cannot be a goal itself; it does not create a more dynamic society. The goal is to create incentives to be employed and make the weakest in society do well enough" (*Jyllands-Posten* 9/21/2005). His own transformation can only be understood when compared with his own views in the beginning of 90's. It was the same Fogh Rasmussen who in his book *From Social State to Minimal State* (1993) argued that

inequality was a motivating power for society. A decade later, it is the "cultural struggle" that is at the center of politics: "It is the result of the cultural struggle which determines Denmark's future, not the economic policy. If you want to stir a society in a different direction, you have to take on the debate on values" (interview in *Weekendavisen* 1/17/2003). In his opening speech in the parliament on February 24, 2005, his vision for this direction was formulated as "a Danish society with a strong competitive ability and with a strong cohesive force – a society without great social and economic inequalities."

His vision for the cultural struggle to create a cohesive society is not far from that of Krarup's and the DPP's. In November 2005, the Prime Minister renewed his call for a struggle on values by referring to "an aggressive practice of Islam as the greatest challenge to the cohesive force in Danish society" (*Jyllands-Posten* 11/28/2005). He pointed to some isolated groups of immigrants who challenge the democratic values as the source of the problem. His emphasis on 'cohesion' and 'Danish values' are similar to that of the DPP, whose support is vital for his government.

A focus on "cultural struggle" brings concepts such as community, equality, and state into the center of the Liberals' symbolic universe. In other words, his – and subsequently the Liberal Party's – transformation is about moving (Danish) community in focus rather than the individual as was the case in 1993.

The transformation of the Liberal Party cannot be understood without understanding the hegemonic articulation of the racist populist movement in the 1980s and 1990s and the process that led to the formation of the DPP in 1995. I have mentioned the extreme right's hegemonic intervention into public discourse in the mid '80s and its success in articulating an antagonism between the "people" and its enemies. I have also

mentioned a letter to the editor in 1970 in which the author complained that ordinary

citizens who wanted to sustain Denmark as ethnically homogenous society had no

channels of discourse through the political system.

That void was partly filled by the Fremskridtspartiet (The Progress Party) and its

leader Mogens Glistrup at the end of 1970s. But despite gradual adoption of racist

rhetoric, its populism was centered on its anti-tax struggle. Maintenance of the welfare

system was not on its list; on the contrary, the welfare payments should be strictly

limited.[39] The combination of extreme forms of liberal ideology and xenophobia did not

speak to the anxieties of the workers who typically voted for Social Democrats. Its

rhetoric was also explicitly racist (with biological references). In comparison, the DPP,

an offshoot of the Progress Party, does not want hear any mention of tax breaks and

presents itself as a truly welfare party, but only for Danes.

The central difference between the Progress Party and the DPP is that the latter

has been established to capitalize on the populist movement that was being formed

outside the political representation system. I will be discussing in greater details the

formation of the racist populist movement in chapter 4 but to understand the

transformation of the Danish political spectrum in the last two decades, I will summarize

the populist rhetoric that was adapted by the DPP.

The demands of the populist movement have been articulated by Søren Krarup, a

priest, in the 1980s in the middle of a representation crisis. Many Danes felt left behind in

an increasing globalized economy based on neo-liberal principles of dismantling welfare

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[39] The Progress Party argued that disability pension should only be paid to the really disabled people –
those without any limbs.

states. The EU and immigration represented the evils of globalization but the debate was not completely characterized by a nationalist/racist articulation of these issues. Immigration was discussed both in terms of its challenges to Danishness and of its economic burden – two arguments that were often woven together. Krarup's intervention in discourse broke with the economic argument, emphasized the threat against Danishness, and articulated the main antagonism as one between Danish people and the cosmopolitan elite who allowed Muslim immigration to destroy the cohesive unity of Danish nation. The external menace, globalization, was represented by the Muslim immigrants, and it had entered into an alliance with "our own" elites who refused to defend "our interests" and "our collective destiny." It was this collusion between the elite and the Danish people that put the future of Danishness in jeopardy. The elite response to the intervention was to accept the articulation of this antagonism as the basic premise for debate but from a humanitarian approach that downplayed the threat and promoted tolerance.

Krarup's rhetoric lacked an intentional reference to the biological racism that was prominent in the rhetoric of the Progress Party. Instead, the enemy was the tyranny of the liberal political and cultural establishment (of which the Liberal party was deemed a part) which was acting as an occupation force in Denmark. As such, it did not recognize itself as racist. On the contrary, Krarup and the DPP are known for filing suits against anybody who may call them racist. After all, who can anybody object to "Danishness" and the desire to sustain a Danish nation?

The then leader of the Progress Party Pia Kjærsgaard saw that her party, despite its racist rhetoric, was out of sync with the racist populist movement which forged strong

connections between the Danish culture and the welfare state and which cut across left

and right and thus attracted the Social Democrats' voters. Uncontrollable as the party

was, a group of MPs under the leadership of Pia Kjærsgaard broke out of the party and

formed the Danish People's Party which immediately had the electoral success that the

Progress Party was unable to reach. "From its very beginning it has targeted Muslims,

whose presence, it claimed, contaminates the homogeneity of Danish culture and destroys

the welfare state" (Dyrberg 2001: 2). One of its famous posters against immigration

pictured a homeless youth and the title was "When I become Muslim, I will receive

housing," and another with a picture of a little (blond) girl with the slogan, "When she

retires, there will be a Muslim majority."

The focus on the link between Danishness and the future of the welfare state

transformed the party into a new kind of welfare party that filled the political void left by

Social Democrats (who had slowly distanced themselves from interventionist policies and

became more social-liberal than socialist). The success of the DPP and its racist populist

articulations (and Søren Krarup, the leading figure of the populist movement, became an

MP for the DPP) is one of the forces behind the gradual transformation of the Liberal

Party, which capitalized on the racist populist articulations of Danishness, welfare,

equality and anti-immigration. Once this articulation became solid enough, other political

forces in the mainstream started profiting from it.

The DPP's new position as the key party in the Danish parliament prevents the

Liberal/Conservative coalition from proceeding with their plans for so-called welfare

reforms such as tax cuts and the pension system. Instead, welfare reforms are pegged to

further restrictions on immigration, which, according to the DPP, is the main threat

against Danes' welfare. The DPP's success has also divided and paralyzed the Social Democrats, whose constituency moved away to support the DPP because of its successful articulation of the problems with the welfare system with the presence of immigrants and Denmark's membership of the EU. As a *Politiken* editorial after the elections in February 2005 predicts, the DPP's success is not limited to making impossible block politics by dissolving the polarization between left and right, or checkmating the Social Democrats by splitting the old workers' party; "it seems as if the populism which has latched on here will make it impossible to transform Denmark in the near future, regardless of which side of the Danish parliament, left or right, we are talking about."

By becoming hegemonic, I do not mean that the representatives of the racist populist movement have come to power (although they have gained considerable influence in parliamentary politics). Rather, their vision for society as ethnically homogenous and thus a cohesive community has been adopted by the mainstream political establishment. For the populist extreme right, Danishness signifies a communitarian space in which internal class and political differences are erased in a unity around the deepest Danish values; the mainstream hegemonic vision emphasizes Islam as the enemy of the Western civilization which stands for universalism, reason, and democracy, and which do not necessarily emphasize creating a communitarian space.

Whatever the differences, the basic antagonism which produces its own ethnically defined social divisions makes it impossible to articulate alternative visions under given conditions. This is what paralyzes Social Democrats: rather than articulating their own vision for the future of Denmark, they have quietly accepted the basic premise of the racist perspective in order to keep their constituency from being attracted by the extreme

right. Both the political establishment and those who claim to challenge the extreme

right's vision of Danishness nevertheless draw on this ontology. This is how racist

hegemonic articulations have found their way into the center. Once the basic categories

of social ontology are accepted (Muslims vs. Danes), it is impossible to articulate an

alternative hegemony within that division. Unless a radical rearticulation of the political

imaginary takes place, movements to gain momentum by other parties will be "limited by

the straightjacket of the hegemonic formations whose parameters remain substantially

unchanged" (Laclau 2005: 238).

In the next chapter I discuss the rhetorical process through which the vision of the

racist populist movement moved into the center of public discourse. Here, I would like to

end this chapter by reiterating that antagonistic representation is not merely a symbolic

gesture used to gain power. In Hall's words, "at the center of this is the question of who

can belong, who has access to the transmission belt through which ... [Danishness], is

carried and can be inculcated. And who doesn't belong … Symbolic lines are being

drawn, and what we know about culture is that once the symbolic difference exists, that is

the line around which power coheres. Power uses difference as a way of marking off who

does and who does not belong" (Hall 1998: 298).

# CHAPTER 3
# FROM EXTREME TO MAINSTREAM:
# THE POPULIST "REVOLUTION" IN 1986

There is a broad consensus among Danish researchers that the extreme right hijacked public discourse sometime in the mid-1980s, successfully inserting its own symbols and definitions about immigrants. With this common wisdom in mind, I collected newspaper clips about immigrants and immigration from three-month periods in 1984, 1986, and 1987 to cover a substantial part of the mid-80s. My working hypothesis was that 1986 was a turning point in discourse and had an immediate impact on the way immigration was discussed. I suspected that the turning point was the anti-refugee campaign by Rev. Søren Krarup in the fall of 1986. Krarup's intervention shifted the direction of public discourse: he described the increasing numbers of refugees as a national threat rather than as a "simple" question of an economic and social burden for Denmark. I wanted to see the immediate impact of this shift in focus in the debate the following year and collected newspaper stories on immigration from the fall 1987.

The reason for my choice of 1984 rather than 1985 was the assumption that public discourse in 1984 would have a starker contrast to 1986 and 1987. I was not aware that 1984 was an important year but once I began to read the data, I realized that 1984 represented a crucial turning point for two reasons. Firstly, during the summer 1984 there was a sudden surge in the numbers of refugees – from 350 to 3000 a year – especially from the Middle East (Iran, Iraq and Lebanon) and the debate on this form of immigration was beginning to escalate in the fall of 1984, intensifying during the next

two years. Secondly, the Danish parliament had in 1983 passed a new immigration law that granted extensive legal rights for refugees and immigrants despite objections from the Conservative Justice Minister Erik Ninn-Hansen – a key figure in the 1984-1987 debates. He blamed the new law (for which he had voted in the end) for the surge in the numbers of refugees and started a campaign to introduce restrictions to the law. His campaign created a moral panic around immigration and the moral panic created an opportunity for the far right's hegemonic intervention in 1986, which radically changed the immigration discourse. In this chapter, I analyze how the climate of the debate came to be pervaded with fears which were mobilized to create moral panics; how moral panics were capitalized on by the extreme right which channeled the discourse into a populist nationalist/racist direction; and finally how this populist-nationalist articulation immediately gained ground and shaped the basic premises of immigration discourse, achieving total hegemony within a few years.

## The Context

The refugees changed the character of immigration, not in a cultural sense – the previous immigrants were also mainly from Muslim countries such as Turkey, Pakistan and Morocco – but in the sense that refugees were not invited "guests" as were the traditional immigrants who came to Denmark as invited foreign "workforce." As opposed to the "guest workers" of the 1960s and 1970s who were immediately absorbed by the labor market, refugees were supposed to go through a nine-month integration process with language instruction and instruction about Denmark's social, cultural and political system. Once they received asylum, they could not be sent back. If they didn't have jobs,

they *would* be integrated into the Danish welfare system and receive the same level of support as Danes. The debate about this new form of immigration (refugees) was, consequently, about Denmark's humanitarian responsibilities and its capacity to receive and help refugees. The moral character of the 1984 debate was more pronounced than that of the earlier debates on guest/foreign workers.

The moral character of the debate crystallized the political positions more clearly than in earlier periods: the right wing parties that traditionally defended the free movement of "workforce" until the mid '70s became increasingly negative towards refugees and further immigration in the form of family reunification. Refugees and other immigrants who came through family reunion laws were considered as a burden on the state. Left wing parties, who were normally skeptical towards the import of "foreign workforce," were this time more generous in their support of refugees who were considered as "victims of oppression and torture." There was a general agreement about Denmark's moral responsibility towards people in need; the right wing emphasized the limited capacity of a small country such as Denmark to solve the world's refugee problem; whereas the left wing argued that Denmark was rich enough to take its share of the global refugee burden and the numbers were relatively small to be considered as a great problem. The right wing also argued that a big group of foreigners from alien cultures would create tensions among Danes who would have to share their strained resources, whereas the left wing saw the refugees as an important cultural contribution.

The increase in numbers of refugees happened in a context where unemployment rates had reached record-high levels (over 10%) and where unemployment payments and social benefits were being cut down by the right wing Liberal/Conservative government,

who also sought to weaken labor unions. It was a period of social upheaval with strikes and frequent demonstrations. In an environment in which job security was being eroded and social security was being weakened – both justified by an increasing emphasis on Denmark's competitiveness in a globalized world – it was not difficult to point to refugees as an easy target since they shared the increasingly limited resources to which they had not contributed.

Another important context was the adoption of the new immigration law in 1983 – a year before refugee numbers began to increase. The law's central improvement was that it granted immigrants and refugees legal rights. Until the new law, the decision in individual cases of immigration was mainly left to the arbitration by the police and the Justice Minister. The expulsion of a Mexican refugee in 1977 to Mexico without any legal procedures created a furor and led to demands in the parliament for an overhaul of the immigration law. The commission that was set up could not reach a consensus and presented two different sets of recommendations. A minority group within the commission recommended extended legal rights to immigrants and refugees. The government and the opposition reached a consensus based on minority recommendations despite objections by the Conservative Justice Minister Erik Ninn-Hansen who opposed granting extended legal rights to immigrants and refugees. The new law granted immigrants legal rights to bring in their immediate family and refugees the right to stay in the country while their asylum applications were being processed. Another central provision in the new law was the expansion of the definition of the refugee to include people who did not strictly fit the UN Convention for Refugees but could still be granted asylum if they would be put in danger by being sent back to their home country. During

the parliamentary debate, the Justice Minister Ninn-Hansen warned that the Danish welfare system would function as a magnet for people from poor countries and could lead to racial unrest. He wanted a more restrictive law that would help maintain Denmark as a national state in the future. He argued that legal rights should be restricted to immigrants who were already in the country, not to those who had not yet arrived. However, after the new immigration law was adopted by the parliament, Ninn-Hansen changed rhetoric and praised it for its humanitarian approach. The Progress Party (the only openly anti-immigrant party) was the only party that voted against the law proposal, accusing the parliament of going against the people's will. However, it was not the Progress Party that managed to mobilize a popular movement around "people's will" against immigration law but a small group of far right nationalists outside the political representation system.[40]

Although the numbers of refugees were increasing all over Europe as the result of the first Gulf War between Iran and Iraq, and Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon in 1982, the fact that in Denmark, the increase coincided with the new immigration law led to arguments that the surge was the result of the new law. Ninn-Hansen immediately began his campaign for introducing restrictions to the new law which he had praised for its humanitarian qualities. The law was tightened the first time already in 1985, and a barrage of restrictions followed in the following years.

It is difficult to provide a satisfactory explanation for the sudden increase in the numbers of incoming refugees in 1984 but it is certainly debatable whether the moral

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[40] See my discussion of the Danish People's Party and its parent party, The Progress Party, in the previous chapter.

panic was a direct response to the sheer numbers. Center parties, left wing parties and humanitarian organizations insisted that the numbers were not big enough to be panicked about, but nevertheless, the sentiment that dominated the media by the fall of 1984 was one of panic. My argument is that the panic was created by a coalition of sectors within the police, the bureaucrats within the administration and the Justice Minister Ninn-Hansen. Although the media covered political arguments in more or less balanced ways (depending on the newspaper), they responded to the "factual" and "objective" information fed to them by the police and the Department for Foreigners,[41] both of which were under the Justice Ministry. The numbers (facts) and apocalyptic projections based on numbers, statistics and police statements about the refugees were the main factors in the creation of the moral panic. The goal behind the concerted effort to create a panic atmosphere was probably to convince the parliament to tighten the immigration law. However, the moral panic around the refugees did more than preparing the ground for restrictions: it created a fertile ground for a (counter) hegemonic intervention by the far right, which destabilized the balance of power and threw mainstream political parties – particularly Social Democrats – into a deep crisis. The remainder of this chapter is a chronological narrative of this process.

## 1984: The Beginning of a Moral Panic

The panic that was created around the "refugee influx" between the fall 1984 and the fall 1986 fits the definition of moral panics as described by Hall et. al. (1978):

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[41] Direktoratet for Udlændinge

when the official reaction to a person, groups of persons or series of events is *out of all proportion* to the actual threat offered, when 'experts' in the form of police chiefs, the judiciary, politicians and editors *perceive* the threat in all but identical terms, and appear to talk 'with one voice' of rates, diagnoses, prognoses and solutions, when the media representations universally stress 'sudden and dramatic' increases (in numbers involved or event) and 'novelty', above and beyond that which a sober, realistic appraisal could sustain, then we believe it is appropriate to talk about beginnings of a *moral panic* (p. 16 italics in the original).

Their definition of a moral panic is borrowed from Stan Cohen's *Folk Devils and Moral Panic*:

Societies appear to be subject, every now and then, to periods of moral panic. A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereo-typical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible. Sometimes the object of the panic is quite novel and at other times it is something which has been in existence long enough, but suddenly appears in the limelight. Sometimes the panic is passed over and is forgotten, except in folklore and collective memory; at other times it has more serious and long lasting repercussions and might produce such changes as those in legal and social policy or even in the way society conceives itself (quoted in Hall et.al.1978:16).

The 1984 panic about the incoming refugees was a panic that had serious and long lasting repercussions and produced fundamental changes in the way society conceives itself (see previous chapter). It was the first panic in recent times around immigration and was followed by a series of other panics in the next two decades, which accumulated into a general panic about social order during the 2001 elections, which resulted in an unprecedented victory by right wing extremism.

While reading the newspaper clips from 1984, I could not help feeling the intense sense of panic in the coverage of refugee "flow." I recalled the feeling from the actual period when I had just began working as a reporter for the news department of Denmark's Radio (DR) (Danish public broadcasting company). To quantify my intuition, I decided to create a code for panic-creating news and panic-related news:

- Panic-creating news were stories that created a clear sense of panic through their framing. I did not include stories that merely reproduced already publicized numbers in although there were very few stories that did not describe the arrival of refugees in normative terms. These stories would have titles such as "Refugee influx explodes" (*BT* 8/13/1984), "Organized gangs help refugees to come to Denmark" (*BT* 8/13/1984) or "Refugee influx without end" (*Jyllands-Posten* 9/24/1984). They relayed the sense that Denmark was faced with "uncontrolled floods of large, anonymous groups of immigrants" (Andreassen 2005: 277).[42] There was often a sense of urgency that this should be stopped before it gets out of hand.[43]

- Panic-related stories did not directly frame the arrival of refugees in apocalyptic terms but dealt with the effects of the arrival of refuges and often focused on problems their arrival created for authorities and institutions dealing with them.

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[42] Andreassen (2005), who analyzed TV-coverage of immigration between 1970 and 2005, also describes Danish television's portrayal of the incoming refugees in mid-1980s as an explosive situation out of control and as potentially damaging (2005: 31).
[43] For example, a news story in Politiken on 11/26/1984 begins with the border police's warning that refugees will in a few years time become a major problem for Denmark ("Refugee influx to Denmark").

Examples include "Denmark will receive more refugees" (*Politiken* 8/25/1984) or

"Refugees erase all traces behind them" (*Politiken* 9/18/1984).

Out of the 113 news stories that I have from this period, 35 stories reflected a clear

sense of panic while a further 31 stories indirectly contributed to the sense by

emphasizing the burden that the refugees were putting on Denmark (table 3.1). Together,

60 percent of all news stories contributed to the sense of panic around refugees. In this

period, there are only four stories that in which the main protagonist(s) explicitly argued

that there was no reason for panic.

**Table 3.1: Panic in news stories**

| News stories | | 1984 | 1986 |
|---|---|---|---|
| | None | 43 | 362 |
| | Panic-creating | 35 (21 NH) (20 police) | 44 |
| | Panic-related | 31 | 45 |
| | No reason for panic | 4 | 4 |
| Total | | 113 | 455 |

There were two clear sources of panic stories in 1984: the then Justice Minister

Erik Ninn-Hansen and the police. Out of a total 113 news stories on immigration (mostly

refugees) in the four months period August-November, the number of stories with either

Ninn-Hansen or the Police as the main source make up a total of 49 (25 and 24

respectively). 21 out of 25 stories that had Ninn-Hansen as the main source were coded as

panic-stories. The police stand as the main source for 20 panic stories out of 24. Although

the police administratively belong to Justice Ministry, it is difficult to assume that the

police were acting on the minister's order. Rather, the coordination seems to be

ideologically motivated; the police fed the media with daily data on incoming refugees

and Ninn-Hansen interpreted them into the framework of his strategy to change the immigration law that he found too liberal. For example, in an interview in *BT,* he repeated his argument that the increased number of refugees was a direct result of the liberal provisions of the immigration law of 1983: "the influx of refugees that flow over Denmark's borders is what we predicted when the new immigration bill was passed last summer" ("Denmark has become a refugee paradise" 9/24/1984). The main purpose of his strategy seemed to be to put pressure on the parliament, which he blamed for opening the path for what he portrayed as a chaotic situation with refugees.

To achieve his goal, Ninn-Hansen used tactics that often included humanitarian arguments. In a move that was clearly intended to provoke the parliamentary majority, he declared in September 1984 that Iranian refugees would be granted asylum without the normal screening process to ease the police work. Police officers criticized the decision for opening up a great security risk (*Politiken*, 9/22/1984). The left wing and center parties reacted to this provocation and expressed concerns over minister's decision not to screen Iranian refugees (*Jyllands-Posten,* 9/23/84). Ninn-Hansen answered back in the interview in *BT* (above) by accusing them of being responsible for the situation: "If anybody wants to talk about changing the law, I am not going to object. But everybody was against me when I tried to talk about restrictions ... The parliamentary majority have decided that we want to help persecuted people. Our practice follows the letters of the law. It does not help to whine now."

Ninn-Hansen's strategic goal was to blame the political majority for the chaotic situation, but chaos itself had to be strategically constructed. To create an image of chaos, he (and the police) fed the media with daily numbers of incoming refugees, apocalyptic

projections of the increase, problems with housing arrangements and the financial burden refugees put on the state. On October 10, 1984, for instance, he informed the parliament that Denmark was unable to manage the increasing numbers of refugees, which at that point had reached 1,322 within the last three months compared to 332 for the entire year in 1983. He claimed once again that the new law functioned as a magnet for refugees and that it led to enormous increase in expenses from the budgeted 60 million (US$10 m.) to 401 millions DKK (about US$65 m.) a year. He asked the parliament if it had intended to create a law that made it impossible for Danish authorities to act on the "flow" and added that if that was the case, then the parliament had to pay for the very big costs that receiving refugees would require (*Politiken,* 10/11/1984).

A few rhetorical features are noteworthy here. What is striking in this argumentation is the omission of the fact that the increase in the numbers of incoming refugees was not specific to Denmark but was something that all (West)-European countries experienced. Answering a concrete question from the Social Democratic PM Torben Lund, Ninn-Hansen actually admitted that Denmark had received fewer refugees than other West European countries (Jensen 2000: 465). The omission helped build the argument that the increase was directly related to the new law. A second omission was the distinction between those who asked for asylum and those who received it. The numbers fed to the media were the numbers of incoming refugees. The apocalyptic projections and related costs were all based on the immediate trend in the numbers of the incoming refugees. For instance, he projected in October 1984 that 6,000 refugees would come to Denmark that year (*Jyllands-Posten,* 10/23/1984), and a few weeks later this number had become 7,500 (*Jyllands-Posten,* 11/9/1984). Likewise, the biggest part of the

projected costs by asylum-seekers was actually the costs for the so-called integration program and welfare benefits that refugees receive once they are granted asylum, which presupposes that all of the refugees would be granted asylum. However, the number of refugees who had been granted asylum in 1985 was a total of 6,313 refugees. By mid-September the following year (1986), 3,384 refugees were granted asylum while 2,000 were rejected, and 7,000 were still waiting for a decision (*Politiken*, 10/9/1986).

Apart from including costs based on the presumption that all the incoming refugees would be granted asylum, the costs expressed in millions of Danish crowns created a sense that a huge amount of resources was being channeled to the refugees while Danes were being denied welfare benefits. The fact was that most of the funds actually were allocated to the Danish authorities, the police, social workers and institutions that dealt with refugees rather than refugees, but this distinction was lost in the way the question of burden was presented.

My goal here is not to engage in an assessment of numbers but to underline the rhetorical use of the numbers to create a moral panic around refugees. One of the main arguments from the opposition for resisting Ninn-Hansen's push for a law change was that Denmark needed time to assess the impact of the new law. The numbers in themselves did not signify panic or burden: three years earlier, Austria had received 50,000 Polish refugees without much public controversy.[44] Sweden with almost the same population as Denmark was receiving 5000-7000 refugees a year. Numbers, in other

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[44] One may point to the cultural "similarities" between Poland and the rest of Europe as the reason for the relative absence of the controversy. However, the prospect of receiving Polish workers was used as an argument against the European Union in Denmark in 1990s.

words, have to be signified by an articulating force to achieve a goal. However, once made into an issue, numbers provide powerful rhetorical resources especially in the creation of moral panics.

The media's response to this controversy is interesting. Out of a total 113 news stories in the four months period in 1984, 25 (22.1%) were about numbers, most of them daily or weekly statistics of incoming refugees. 17 stories (15%) described problems with finding accommodation for refugees, and 30 stories (16.5.%) were about the political debate on immigration laws and these stories also often contained numbers. The police made up 44% of the sources for stories on numbers, while the Department of Immigration, the Danish Red Cross and Ninn-Hansen made up the rest. The coverage of the political debate, on the other hand, was dominated by Erik Ninn-Hansen who was the primary source in 46.7% of the news stories about the political debate. The Red Cross also unwittingly fed the media with news about the lack of resources and facilities to accommodate the refugees. In 1984, the Danish Red Cross constituted 41.2% of news sources on accommodation.

The following few headlines illustrate the media's reliance on the Minister and the police as sources to describe and interpret the situation: "46 Iranians in Copenhagen yesterday" (*Berlingske Tidende*, 9/23/1984), "81 Asians applied for asylum in Copenhagen last weekend" (*Berlingske Tidende,* 9/24/1984), "Refugees flow into Denmark" (*Politiken,* 9/24/1984), "New refugee influx over the border" (*Jyllands-Posten,* 9/24/1984), "Refugees cost the state 60 millions" (*Berlingske Tidende,* 10/5/1984), "Authorities are powerless" (*Berlingske Tidende,* 10/11/84), "Refugee influx cost 30 millions" (*Berlingske Tidende,* 10/11/1984), "300 millions more to refugees" (*Jyllands-*

*Posten*, 10/12/1984), "Refugee influx is on its path to 6,000" (*Jyllands-Posten*, 10/23/1984), "Refugees into the country with dangerous diseases" (*Jyllands-Posten*, 27/10/1984), "Refugees housed with mentally retarded" (Politiken 11/23/1984).

These headlines and the emphasis on the numbers should be understood in a media environment in which there was only one TV channel (not included in my statistics) which dominated the airwaves and hundreds of local newspapers which concretized the problems in local contexts. The TV and the local media reproduced the numbers and contributed to the panic. In order to imagine the scope of the coverage, North American readers might consider a situation in which they read (or watch TV news) about the numbers of Mexican immigrants "flowing" over the border and the incredible amounts of money they cost the society almost every day in their news media.

## The Discrepancy between Editorial Line and News Coverage

One interesting observation about the media coverage in 1984 was the discrepancy between the editorial line and actual news coverage. 4 out of 5 newspapers had at least one editorial in this period, and all but one defended the immigration law with references to Denmark's humanitarian responsibilities to share the burden of the global refugee problem. The right-wing *Jyllands-Posten*'s editorial ("Refugees and us, the rich," 9/27/1984) is a good example of this discrepancy. The editorial argued that "once we have made sure that Denmark receives the persecuted [rather than economically needy], all provincial pettiness should be set aside. Denmark is a part of the world, and we can only benefit from knowing other people..." An earlier editorial in the same paper ("Refugees and Freedom," 8/15/1984) also argued that Denmark should able to receive

many more than the thousands of refugees projected by the Justice Minister. The liberal *Politiken* agreed that regardless of whether the increase is due to the new law, Denmark was beginning to fulfill its humanitarian responsibility and receiving its fair share of the refugees (9/26/184). The tabloid daily, *BT* explicitly criticized Erik Ninn-Hansen in an editorial entitled, "Ideals that disappeared" (10/8/1984) for "blowing wind into a smoldering fire" of xenophobia with his emphasis on immigrants as an economic burden. The conservative *Berlingske Tidende* was the only newspaper that was more sympathetic to Ninn-Hansen's arguments and asked how big the tolerance was in the "honey pie country" [sic!] [Denmark] (10/14/1984).

In terms of news coverage, the picture was the reverse. In news stories, all of the newspapers seem to have adopted not only Ninn-Hansen's definition of the problem but also his use of language. In this period, 45% of all news items used, without any distancing, the term "refugee influx". The term "influx" had become so common by August 1984 that journalists had to add adjectives to describe the "severity" of any further increase, such as when a *BT* reporter wrote: "The refugee influx has exploded" ("Organized gangs help refugees to come to Denmark," 8/13/1984). The line between the quotes by sources and the main text written by the reporter was often blurred, rendering specific and local descriptions and evaluations of the situation as generalized facts. This is particularly true for many of the stories in the right-wing *Jyllands-Posten* as when it used the headline "Refugee influx is allowed to continue" (instead of simply stating that Ninn-Hansen's proposal for restrictions was rejected) to refer to the parliament' rejection of Ninn-Hansen's proposal. *Berlingske Tidende's* headline for the same story was more straightforward: "Refugee laws will not be changed" (10/17/1984) but all newspapers

resorted to this kind of reporting. *Politiken*, for instance, used the headline: "Iranians are free to enter to Denmark" (9/11/22) based on an interview with a police inspector who criticized the Justice Minister's statement about easing the screening process for Iranian refugees. In this story, the inspector's direct criticism of the plans was cited but some other information that also clearly came from him was written in an objective language without attribution: "Iranians do not have to go beyond giving a very short statement to ask for asylum, *which is a temporary Danish citizenship* [my emphasis]." Needless to say that political asylum has nothing to do with citizenship, which is a long and complex process. I suspect that this information was planted by the police inspector to strengthen his argument but it was written as a simple fact to illuminate the case.

Another interesting observation was that the news reporters had tacitly adopted Ninn-Hansen's argument that the sudden rise in numbers was the direct result of the liberal immigration law, even though this was a disputed claim. Whereas the counter-arguments were presented in 4 stories with a clear reference to the source (The Danish Refugee Council), I counted 19 news items in which Ninn-Hansen's argument was stated by the reporter as if this was an established fact, providing a powerful support to Ninn-Hansen's strategy to pressurize the opposition to impose legal restrictions on the right to seek asylum. The Danish Refugee Council explained through press releases and commentaries that the surge in the numbers could not be explained solely by the new immigration law since all other European countries experienced an increase in incoming refugees but this explanation never caught on in the media's coverage of the situation (only *Politiken*'s editorial supported it explicitly).

Newspapers that explained the increase with the lax Danish laws also carried stories on Sweden, which experienced a higher rate of increase. Yet, probably because of the event-centered news coverage (where each reporter writes a single episode from the perspectives of available sources), the stories on other European countries experiencing the same increase were not linked to the increase in Denmark. Neither did they have impact on the dominant explanatory framework that linked the increase to Danish immigration laws. The coverage was inherently episodic and fragmented and included stories that simultaneously pointed at the laxity of Danish laws as the reason for the increase and mentioned that other countries were experiencing an increase in refugee numbers. Other stories even explained the increase in Denmark with Sweden's and Germany's strict policies which led refugees to Denmark.

The discrepancy between the editorial line and news coverage in the newspapers was only apparent in the sample from 1984. Two years later in 1986, there was a differentiation among the newspapers, some of which aligned themselves with Ninn-Hansen in their editorials. This meant that their editorial views were now more in line with their news coverage, feature stories and background articles.

The discrepancy in 1984 has interesting implications for theorizing about the relationship between 1) the media and political discourse (and elite consensus), 2) the news media and their sources, 3) the media and social change.

A careful conclusion is that the *editorials* reflected the political consensus on immigration policy of 1983 that was intact despite the government's obvious dissatisfaction with the law while the *news* reflected the media's orientation towards the conflict and their reliance on conventional sources to describe the problems. The political

consensus on a humanitarian approach to refugees in the editorials was also reflected in feature stories which relied less on the classical sources of news such as political figures and the authorities that dealt with incoming refugees (the police, the Red Cross and the Danish Refugee Council) and more on interviews with refugees and the journalists' first hand reports from refugee camps and escape routes. In 7 out of a total 12 feature stories in 1984, refugees were described as victims of torture and oppression as opposed to the news stories that focused on the arrival of refugees and the related problems, which created a sense of chaos and panic. In 1984, there were only two feature stories (both in *Jyllands-Posten*) that could slightly be regarded as negative. One of them - "Escape to the land of happiness" (*Jyllands-Posten,* 10/24/1984) - described how the former East Germany tried to make money on Iranian refugees. Another followed an Iranian refugee from Turkey to Denmark via East Berlin. This story, although sympathetic to the refugees, described the exploitation of refugees by the middlemen on their escape route and emphasized the false impression that refugees had of Denmark rather than engaging with the reasons for their escape.

Elisabeth Eide (2002) explains the discrepancy between news and feature stories with difference in format: feature stories allow for other journalistic approaches and perspectives than the news conventions do. My observations seem to partly confirm her conclusion, but she reduces the discussion to the question of positivity and negativity: Her analysis of 15 feature stories on immigrants indicate that this genre contains more positive stories, because, according to journalists, feature stories give them a chance to work more in depth than in daily news coverage. Aside from the problematic assumption that stories can easily – across their contexts – be coded as positive or negative (see the

previous chapter), the basic difficulty with this approach is that the two genres may

include different aspects of an issue from the same hegemonic perspective, and this

cannot be assessed by the tone of the stories. For instance, a news story about a crime

involving refugees and a feature story explaining the cultural background for the crime

may have different tones (i.e. first negative because of the focus on the crime, the later

positive because of the focus on the main character as is the convention of feature stories)

but the discursive effect of both stories would be the same: they both contribute to the

construction of refugees as a culturally alien category incompatible with Danish culture,

although the latter may be promoting a better understanding of difference.

I suspect that the format allows the feature stories to better reflect both the

editorial line of the newspaper and the general consensus/controversy on immigration;

i.e. whether or not immigration is a humanitarian responsibility or a cultural issue. The

discrepancy between news stories and feature stories in this period can better be

explained by the tension between the (then) existing political consensus on a

humanitarian approach and forces that pushed for restrictions to the immigration law. In

this case, while the humanitarian perspective was expressed in the editorials and feature

stories, the xenophobic perspectives were represented by the conventional sources of the

news stories. News in this period described the problems with incoming refugees from

the perspective of these sources, whereas the feature stories focused on the individual

stories of refugees, the oppressive regimes in the countries of origin (mainly in Iran), and

the conditions under which they lived in Denmark.

## Feature Stories and the Culturalization of Discourse

Ironically, the only story that had a cultural focus in the whole period was a feature story that would be considered as "positive" towards refugees. The feature story was based on interviews with a social worker working with refugees and a cultural sociologist ("Would you like to walk with me..!" *Berlingske Tidende* 10/7/1984). Although cultural difference had not yet become a point of controversy,[45] this story focused on the cultural difference as a way of promoting tolerance towards immigrants. The social worker explained that refugees who came from a different culture believed that the individual is naturally responsible for looking after himself and did not understand the Danish system, which was built on the principle of solidarity and the sharing of burdens.

Her arguments have to be understood in the social and individual contexts in which they were uttered. For instance, the interview begins with her rebuttal of a consultant who had criticized her for using too much time on individual refugees: the kind of humanitarian work she was doing could not be rationalized (measured and efficiency maximized). As I explained in the beginning of this chapter, this was a period in which job security was being eroded and one of the popular themes among the leaders of corporate and public institutions was "restructuring," which meant an overhaul of the work process in order to maximize output and reduce the number of staff. I remember a graffiti that made fun of the trend: "I am restructured – are you?" Clearly, she considered the interview as a platform on which she felt the need to defend her work. This is where

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[45] No news story in this period (1984) focused on refugees' culture and there were only two letters to the editor who emphasized the cultural difference as a problem

the culturalization of the relationship between her and her clients was useful. Changing the deeply embedded cultural beliefs among refugees would take time, she seemed to argue, if the integration of refugees into Danish society (cultural adaptation) was going to succeed.

The point is that cultural explanations should be understood as rhetorical tools rather than reflections of the external reality. In this example, the primary goal for the social worker seemed to be the justification of her job as a bridge-builder between cultures in a larger mission of integrating refugees into Danish society. This is probably why she engaged in cultural explanations. Here, her cultural explanations had a positive flavor because of the rhetorical context in which they were used. However, the same cultural explanations which construct immigrants as culturally different can and are also used to exclude immigrants from society, which is understood as a cultural unity. It means that that it is not the positivity or negativity of the stories that is important but how they relate to the general field of discursivity: whether they treat immigrants and immigration as a question of cultural difference and if so, which meaning they ascribe to the presumed cultural difference.

Another interesting twist that illuminates the discursive change is the example she used to explain cultural difference in terms of views about gender. Her argument was that "we should not just try to get rid of them by giving them some money and sending them back." Denmark, in her account, had a moral responsibility and it could be best fulfilled by integrating refugees into society. One of the good examples of integration was when refugee women, after having learned Danish and become engaged in society, became emancipated because they could see that housework was shared between couples and that

Danish men were not macho. Ironically, she used Latin American (Christian) women as an example of becoming emancipated from their culture, not Muslim women as has become the case in European discourse.

These arguments in this piece were elaborations of an overall argument for Denmark's moral responsibility and the need for cultural integration. Cultural integration in turn necessitated an established treatment system, social workers who were the bridge-builders and academics who studied immigrants' culture to provide knowledge and expertise about how to build bridges. Not surprisingly, the second interviewee in the same article was a cultural sociologist who, on the one hand, condemned Danish racism which required "immigrants to be just like us," and on the other promoted tolerance towards cultural difference which was transforming Denmark from one of the ethnically most homogenous societies to a multicultural society. In a Foucaultian sense, the culturalization of immigration discourse can also be seen as the production of a certain kind of truth that not only produces immigrants as a particular type of object to be examined and policed but also the subject positions (authoritative experts) who examine and police them.

Another example from the same period is a feature story about immigrant children not getting enough help from the state ("Immigrants are treated worse than refugees," *Berlingske Tidende*, 11/14/84). The main point of this feature story was that immigrant women did not know how to provide a healthy diet for their children and needed help. This story, too, was based on an interview with a social worker. Her argumentative strategy was based on describing the importance of her work in integrating immigrants. This enterprise in itself implies that the subject position – the social worker – needs to

make generalized statements about immigrants' culture and their role in order to help them adapt to their new cultural environment.

This is a good example of what Schierup (1993) described as the culturalization of immigration discourse by academic research, which is closely connected to public policy. He argued that the cultural bias of academic research provided the foundation for a range of concepts that legitimated and nurtured cultural racism by emphasizing cultural difference. Even if the production of cultural knowledge has been used to promote tolerance towards cultural difference or multiculturalism, it has nevertheless contributed to the dichotomy of "them" and "us." The American-born anthropologists Jonathan Schwartz (1985) warned already in the mid '80s against the culturalist bias in immigration research, which he criticized for moving the attention away from "social conditions" to the "cultural traditions which immigrants brought with them" as the burden of problem (p. 21). Necef (2000) argued that the culturalization of the debate was actually related to the humanitarian approach which perceived refugees and immigrants as people who needed help. Being transformed from workforce to victims to be helped, they were pushed out of the realm of labor market into the realm of welfare system with its social help institutions. In his words, "alien *workers*" became "*alien* workers" or, more precisely, alien unemployed (2000: 134). This trend in social science research prevailed into the new millennium, feeding into policy decisions "with minimal emphasis on the social structures of the societies within which ethnic minorities live" (Wren 2001: 152).

While culturalist discourse ethnicized immigrants and described their culture in essentialist terms, cultural difference was not yet articulated in mutually exclusive, antagonistic categories of Danes and immigrants. Cultural descriptions of Danishness and

Danes were often associated with humanitarian approaches than with anti-immigration forces, and these descriptions served the rhetorical function of presenting Danes as hospitable and kind people who cared about the sufferings of other people. An editorial in *Berlingske Tidende*, for example, described Danes as "by nature friendly and socially understanding people with a desire to help people in need" (10/14/1984). This was just a couple of weeks after a poll had shown that half of Danes did not want to help refugees. These kinds of descriptions of Danish culture, then, were meant as rhetorical tools to push for a humanitarian approach rather than straight forward descriptions of what the editors believed to be the essence of Danishness. Many comments against growing xenophobia among Danes had the same kind of descriptions of Danish culture and called xenophobic utterances "un-Danish" (*Politiken*, editorial, 11/1/1987). Racism, according these comments, was not a part of Danish society, which was tolerant. Rather, the problem was the lack of information about foreigners (e.g. Bent Østergaard, *Berlingske Tidende*, 11/11/1984). Clearly, racism, nationalism, tolerance, or any other attributes are all parts of the battery of discursive resources available for social action in a given society. The interesting point is not whether these attributes correspond to any given essence but how cultural arguments are mobilized to support a humanitarian approach as Necef (2000) described. Paradoxically, as I will demonstrate later in this chapter, the descriptions of Danish society as tolerant and humanitarian had the reverse effect: they provided ammunition to the populist rights' claim that the establishment suppressed the real concern of Danish people by denouncing them as expressions of racism.

I took this excursion to analyze a few feature stories for their cultural arguments because one of the basic arguments of my project is that the racist hegemony has been

established through a transformation of the social divisions from a class-based to a culture-based social ontology. If the moral panic around the arrival of refugees destabilized the political consensus and created an opening for a hegemonic intervention by the nationalist/racist forces, the cultural arguments for a humanitarian approach – promoted by academics and social workers – provided a fertile ground for the transformation of social identities from class-based articulations to culture/ethnicity-based articulations. Studies of media coverage of the Danish immigration debate show both that the media coverage of immigrants has increased continuously since 1984 and that the coverage has increasingly focused on immigrants' culture and religion as a great problem for Danish society (Gaarde Madsen 2000). The blame for this transformation cannot, of course, be put solely on the academics and social workers but their emphasis on culture as the explanatory ground helped push the arguments against the extreme right's hegemonic intervention into the field of culture and ethnicity.

## News and sources

I want to go back to my discussion about the media coverage of incoming refugees in 1984. I discussed the discrepancy between the editorials and the news coverage in terms of the relationship between the media and political discourse and concluded that the editorials generally reflected the political consensus of the time. News, on the other hand, reflected the particular interests of the conventional sources.

Daniel Hallin (1989) describes the basic conventions of [American] objective journalism as the use of official sources, focus on the president, absence of interpretation or analysis, and focus on immediate events. "News," to quote Hallin, "is about events and

actions, not about ideas" (1989: 89) All these (except the focus on the president) are also to be found in Danish journalism; it would appear that Danish journalists have adopted the principle of objective news and the distinction between news and views (Esmark and Kjær 1999).

My 2001 sample shows that analysis had entered news coverage but was relegated to a specific genre called "news analysis." News was mostly devoid of explicit analysis – except when the sources analyzed the events – which meant that analytical and interpretative passages were often written as facts or simply as common sense explanations as was the case with the direct link between the "liberal" immigration law and the increase in refugee numbers. Objective journalism can, thus, partly explain the discrepancy between the editorial line and the news coverage in this period as the news coverage focused on immediate events and used official sources in covering those events immediate events were covered completely from the perspective of official sources.

However, the notion of "immediate events" is not as clear cut as it may seem. Which events are considered as immediate and newsworthy depends on the conventions of the journalistic traditions and beats. In order for an event to be deemed as newsworthy, it has to be deemed as important and relevant. Gans (1980) summarizes the criteria for suitability and the importance of events for news media as rank in governmental and other hierarchies; impact on the nation and the national interest; impact on large numbers of people; and significance for the past and future. Some stories such as the tax increase/decrease or changes in health care system can easily be recognized as newsworthy events because they have impact on large numbers of people, other events are not as clear-cut cases of importance. Many of the latter kind of issues are covered by

the media if there is a public controversy around the issue or when the credible sources interpret the issue as newsworthy and feed the media with information about it.

To discuss the complexity of newsworthiness, I would like to dwell on a commentary by an important figure in Danish journalism. In 1998, the then general director of the Danish Public Broadcasting Corporation (DR) Christian Nissen responded to public criticism of the media that they portrayed immigrants in a negative light by focusing too much on the criminal action by immigrants.[46] He described the situation as a dilemma because, on the one hand, DR as a public service station is obliged to reflect the reality objectively and cannot, therefore, embellish (beautify) reality by toning down the negative actions by immigrants, and on the other hand, it has to continually reflect on the effects of its broadcasting and its own role in creating animosity. He asked: "Are we building bridges between social and cultural groups, or are we widening the gap even further?" His answer was that news is by nature oriented towards conflicts and DR is obliged to tell objectively about "four young immigrants who beat up two Danes in a dark street" and then try to repair the possible damage through other types of programs that involve debate and commentaries. He added: "The fight in the dark street is newsworthy, whereas thousands of well-functioning immigrants are never covered in a news broadcast. Are we, then, going to adjust news criteria? Are we going to aim at broadcasting positive images of immigrants every time we have images of violence?"

His argument perfectly illustrates the common sentiments by Danish journalists who make similar arguments to justify their negative focus on criminality among

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[46] In "Nyhedsbrev om Denmarks Udlændinge (Newsletter about Denmark's Foreigners)" no. 76, February 1998, published by Udlændingestyrelsen.

immigrants. His arguments appeal to common sense notions of deviance: a criminal act is always an act of deviance that threatens social order and is as such newsworthy. But there is twist here: a fight among Danish youths "on a dark street" hardly makes into the news, not even into tabloid news. Consequently, it cannot be the event itself (violence) that is newsworthy. There has to be an element of social conflict to an event before it makes into the news. If this is the case, we should expect that racist attacks by Danes on immigrant youth would be deemed newsworthy but this is hardly the case. What are we left with? If it is not the violence, it must be the identity of the perpetrator (immigrant youth) that renders the incident (violence) newsworthy. That is, newsworthiness is determined by who resort to violence rather than violence per se. In a discursive environment in which immigrants are generally seen as a threat to social peace, a single act such as the one described by Nissen comes to signify a larger social conflict. The available agents in the way the argument is set up are Danes or immigrants. But we know already that Danishness (as an instance of the West) is characterized by emancipation from the iron rule of (religious) traditions. If a Dane resorts to violence, it is an individual act of deviance from the social/cultural norms. If an immigrant resorts to violence, it is a cultural act and thus is more than an act of simple deviance; it threatens the social peace that is sustained through "Danish" norms. Immigrant violence is thus a direct challenge to Danishness. This is why violence by young immigrants gains the status of social conflict and becomes newsworthy. This is why the violent event is deemed to have "an impact on the nation and the national interest, impact on large numbers of people, and significance for the past and future."

To go back to the issue at hand, the increase in the numbers of refugees in this period had to be interpreted as an immediate event worthy of news coverage. Both Ninn-Hansen and the police provided not only the numbers but also the interpretative framework through which the increase was represented as the disruption of social order. The format of the news stories led the journalists to the conventional sources who dealt with the refugees: the police, the Red Cross, and in much less degree the Danish Refugee Council, and for interpretation to the Justice Minister who was the most vocal commentator on the events. I want to point at two dynamics that rendered these sources even more powerful in their interpretation of the events. First, there was, in this period, a conspicuous silence among mainstream political parties about the increase except for occasional appeals to empathy and tolerance. They did not explicitly challenge the logic that connected the increase to the "liberal" immigration law; and there was a limited emphasis on humanitarian principles versus the question of burden. Their silence may have to do with not wanting to take issue with the growing dissatisfaction among ordinary Danes as reflected in the letters to the editor. It can also partly be explained with the consensual character of the humanitarian approach that did not necessitate a greater intervention. Nonetheless, this silence left Ninn-Hansen as the principal actor of the controversy in addition to his role as the main authority to interpret the events. Secondly, in most European societies the police are considered as a disinterested institution with no special stake in politics. They are as such a legitimate source to describe an event as being disruptive of the social order and, except in extraordinary situations, their authority are not challenged by the political elite. Since they are seen as a trustworthy institution, information that comes from them – particularly when it is provided in the form of

neutral description of the empirically graspable reality – is rarely questioned. Without resorting to conspiracy theories, I would like to add that many members of the Danish Association – a racist organization formed later in the period – were police officers.

## The Criminalization of Refugees

The involvement of the police led news stories to focus on the criminal aspects of asylum-seeking process, which not only contributed to the sense of chaos but also to the representation of refugees as a threat to social cohesion. In this period (1984), there was not a single news story about the human right abuses in refugees' home countries; news coverage was dominated by themes such as incoming numbers, accommodation problems, economic and social burden, misuse of asylum system, and criminal aspects of the escape from home country. I discussed some of them earlier, e.g., how numbers were inflated through projections based on a single month's statistics. Three of the themes that built up the sense of threat are worth mentioning because they originated from only two sources: Ninn-Hansen or the police: 1) representation of refugees as a huge economic burden for ordinary Danes, 2) criminalization of refugees' escape 3) representation of refugees as carriers of infectious diseases.

1. Earlier, I pointed to two aspects of the burden theme as they were represented in the news. The first was that costs were based on the presumption that all incoming refugees would be granted asylum. The economic burden theme was repeatedly expressed in millions of Danish crowns, which created the impression that the state was having problems with coping with the refugees economically, which was far from the truth. The second aspect was the impression that the funds were channeled directly to the

refugees, when in fact they were allocated to Danish authorities and institutions. The primary sources for this type of stories were Ninn-Hansen and in a few cases, some other ministers. This focus was also reflected in the letters to the editor. Most of the letters to the editor in this period – there were only 22 in 4 months – called for a tightening of immigration law and almost all of these "negative" letters contained arguments about Danes paying the costs for the refugees.

2. The second theme that was prominent in this period was the misuse of asylum system by refugees – a theme that will become even more prominent in the next two years. Misuse can be a misleading term here: I coded as misuse stories those stories that described the actions of refugees as misuse although the reported actions did not legally or morally "misuse" the asylum system. Most of the stories that were coded as misuse were actually about fake passports, bribery of officials in escape routes or payment to the middlemen to escape home countries, or helping other refugees to enter Denmark, as the following few titles illustrate: "Organized gangs help refugees to Denmark" (*BT* 8/17/1984), "DDR [ex-East Germany] make a good profit on Iran-refugees" (*Jyllands-Posten,* 10/27/1984), "Helped his fellow countrymen to illegally enter" (*Politiken* 10/27/1984), "Illegal immigration is exposed" (*Berlingske Tidende* 10/29/1984), "Organized asylum swindle" (*Politiken* 1/11/1984). In the four month period of 1984, there were 7 stories with this theme, and 5 of them had the police as the primary source, while 2 stories had the reporter as source.

I want to take a closer look one of these stories to illustrate how refugees' escape from home countries is criminalized through discursive techniques such as vivid and vague descriptions of refugees' actions. The story, entitled "Illegal immigration is

exposed" (*Berlingske Tidende* 10/29/1984) is about the arrest of an Iranian refugee who had hid the passports of four other Iranian refugees. Upon arrival, they declared that they did not have passports. Let us begin with the title. The whole enterprise of being a refugee is "illegal" in the sense that many refugees cannot obtain legal documents and passports from regimes that prosecute them in the first place. Any entry without passports or fake passports would, therefore, in principle, be illegal. In particular, refugees from Iran often escaped with passports made in other people's names and refugees often do not wish to expose the identity of the real passport holders or how the passports were produced. In many cases, these passports were re-used to help other refugees to use the same escape routes. The criminal act here is more related to the act of lying about the passports than "illegal immigration." The story had two sources: the judge and a police inspector. None of the sources explicitly describe the act as illegal immigration. The refugee was arrested on account of having broken the law that was not explained by the journalist who merely referred to the section of the law. The actions of the police leading up to the arrest, however, were described in vivid details. The police source was quoted for saying that the investigation would be continued and there would be more arrests – a relatively neutral description of the investigation. At this point of the text, there is a sudden change in the use of the subject that corresponds to a change in the transitivity of the verb in English: "more documents are waiting to be translated and they are expected to show that there are clues for an organization that gets refugees from Iran and Iraq to Scandinavia for large sums of money." The vagueness of the sentence allowed the journalist to make sweeping generalizations without explicitly attributing the generalizations to the police although it is clear that there is no other way that the

journalist could obtain the information (that documents are being translated and they will show the existence of an organization). The police clearly did not – yet – have evidence that they were dealing with "an illegal organization that helps getting foreigners to Denmark." The defendant's explanations were rendered irrelevant – as is the case with most criminal cases – and he was only cited as claiming innocence, which was denied by the judge and thus by the journalist. In a quick and unwarranted rhetorical move, the Iranian refugee is linked to an organization, which in the same move is described as a mafia-like organization that does things for money. Iranian and Iraqi refugees are collapsed into the same category of "illegal immigrants" – two refugee groups who come from countries that are at war with each other. These substantiated claims were formulated vaguely and ambiguously whereas police actions were described in a vivid and precise manner. The combination of vivid and vague formulations created an aura of authenticity in which sweeping generalizations that described "illegal immigration" gained truth value. What happens here is that "illegal immigration" becomes the general frame in which the event is understood. And the notion of illegal immigration in turn contributes, through repetition, to the general image of "uncontrollable immigration."

These stories illustrate that the police have been active in putting a negative spotlight on incoming refugees. The police did not only provide the media with numbers but made suspicious the very act of seeking asylum by criminalizing refugees' attempts to escape from inhuman conditions. Traveling with fake passports, for example, although illegal under normal circumstances, is not considered as a criminal act since a refugee fleeing persecution by his government would not have chance to obtain a legal passport from the same government. On the contrary, traveling on a legally issued passport can

often be regarded as a sign of not being persecuted and lead to rejection of asylum application. Similarly, entering the country illegally was not considered as a crime since legal entrance was not possible for many of the refugees. Refugees' networks, too, were criminalized as "organized gangs." It is difficult to know whether the police used the words "gang" or "mafia" when they spoke with the reporters but the fact that they provided the reporters with this kind of information in itself criminalized refugees' actions. The focus on the escape not only criminalized and contributed to the creation of a panic atmosphere but also moved the attention from the reasons for seeking refuge such as torture, persecution, and war to the negative consequences of the asylum system on the host society. The focus stripped away the humanitarian aspect of the refugee arrivals and slowly built the impression that refugees were people seeking better economic conditions, thereby intensifying the anxieties among Danes over the claim that the newcomers were draining the welfare funds designed for the needy "Danes" who had built up the welfare system through their taxes. In particular, stories that emphasized the huge amounts of money that refugees had to pay for false passports and visas helped create the image that these were not "needy" people but "dream chasers." Theses stories also described the unrealistic expectation of refugees of receiving social help and getting a free education although refugees did not express this kind of expectations. Headlines such as "Escape to the land of happiness" (*Jyllands-Posten,* 10/23/1984) emboldened this image. The police were not always discreet about their views of refugees; they did not put a negative spotlight on refugees only by criminalizing their escape but in some cases described them explicitly as "refugees of convenience who will become a great problem for Denmark in a couple of years" ("Refugee Influx to Denmark," *Politiken,* 11/26/1984). Reporters

rarely questioned police officers' expertise to describe refugees as "convenience refugees" or as "a great problem for Denmark." Increasingly, the description of refugees as "convenience refugees" has connected the anxieties about the erosion of the welfare system to the question of ethnic access to the welfare system: "they" (refugees) were coming here to use the welfare system that we (Danes) had created. This feeling of unfair claim on welfare goods helped create an equation between ethnic Danes and "those who built the system up" eroding the classical understanding that it was working class people who – through decades of class struggle – had created the system and was entitled to enjoy it. "Working class" includes immigrants; "Danes" does not.

3. A third theme that contributed to the representation of refugees as an acute threat was a surprise to me: the infectious disease theme.

In late October 1984, there was a sudden panic around a typhoid case among Iranian refugees. The police officers did not want to interrogate Iranian refugees unless they were quarantined first. The police officers' demand and anxieties were covered extensively by the media. One interesting observation is that almost all stories about the typhoid case included quotes from medical experts who found that the risk for being infected was minimal. No police officer was diagnosed with the disease, and the medical experts also pointed to the fact that Denmark had several typhoid cases a year and that the Iranian refugee might as well have been infected during his stay in Denmark. But the views of the medial experts were not included in the headlines that emphasized the police perspective: "Typhoid-alarm: Refugee hospitalized and quarantined" (*BT,* 10/26/1984), "Refugees enter the country with dangerous diseases" (*Jyllands-Posten,* 10/27/1984), "Police officers scared of contagion from refugees" (*Politiken,* 10/29/1984), "Typhoid-

professor: examine all immigrants" (*BT,* 10/27/1984), "Police officers scared of contagion from sick refugees" (*Aktuelt,* 10/29/1984). The news stories in general drew a picture of panic and chaos caused by uncontrollable flow of refugees, and some stories even portrayed the disease as a threat to the health of the nation in general (e.g. *BT* 10/26/1984).

Ono and Sloop's (2002) analysis of the debate on California's Proposition 187 (which was intended to illegalize the provision of public care to undocumented immigrants) indicates that the theme of contagion is a generic element of anti-immigration rhetoric. According to their analysis, stories in favor of the proposition as well as those by or about the opponents of the proposition presented undocumented immigrants as a long-standing threat to the health and security of the nation. In the articles by or on the opponents, the argument was that the proposition would "create a "subclass" or "underclass" of undocumented immigrants, and a situation in which unvaccinated immigrants would spread disease and illness throughout the country" (Ono and Sloop 2002: 77). Smith's (1994) analysis of the British discourse also shows that a connection between disease and immigrants was made portraying immigrants as a threat to the nation's health.

These themes created a sense of panic and chaos caused by an uncontrollable immigration due to the "liberal" immigration law. The stories were promoted primarily by the Justice Minister, the police, and in some degree by the Danish Red Cross. Different interests came together in creating the panic atmosphere that lasted until late 1986 where the first serious restrictions were made to the immigration laws. The opposition's wait-and-see attitude created a void which was filled by the flow of

information, often exaggerated and inflated, with the result that anti-immigration

perspective was the dominant perspective in news coverage. Setting aside the problems

with coding the stories as "positive" or "negative,"[47] the percentage of negative news

stories in this period (1984) was much higher than any other periods included in this

project. 1984 was actually the only period with a higher percentage of negative stories

than positive. Even when only manifest negativity[48] is counted, 34.5% of all news stories

were negative versus 17.7% positive stories in 1984. "Neutral" stories made up one third

of the total (35.4%). By contrast, only 4 out of 19 commentaries (21.1%) were negative

(arguing against the immigration law), where 14 (73.7%) of them were very positive

(arguing that Denmark is able to receive even more refugees than the actual numbers

coming in). The letters to the editor[49], on the other hand, reflected the negative

impression implicated by news coverage: 81.8% of all letters to the editor in the fall of

1984 were negative (the letters have always been more negative than positive but never in

this proportion after 1984). The negative tone of the readers' letters was also reflected in

opinion polls taken during the same period: 46 percent of the respondents found a

proposed increase of quota refugees from 500 to 1000 unacceptable ("Every other voter

say no to an increase in the number of quota refugees" *Jyllands-Posten*, 9/27/1984).[50]

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[47] For instance, stories that merely described the incoming numbers or governments' allocation of extra resources were coded as neutral even though they in effect contributed the moral panic.
[48] Manifest positivity or negativity: explicit arguments for or against immigrants, immigration, or immigration law.
[49] Letters to the editor and commentaries were the two genres where it was easy to determine the tone of the single story.
[50] Quote refugees are refugees who come to Denmark through UNCHR according to an annual quota. Justice Minister Ninn-Hansen had proposed an increase in the annual quota as a way of closing off the border for other refugees who came to Denmark on their own.

These numbers may be taken as an indication that the news agenda was reflected in the public agenda. According to agenda-setting research, "the agenda-setting influence of the press results in large measure from the repetition of the major issues in the news day after day. The public learns about the issues on the press agenda with little effort on their part, and considering the incidental nature of this learning, issues move rather quickly from the press agenda to the public agenda" (McCombs 2005: 159). The media's focus on problems linked to the arrival of refugees (as put onto the agenda by traditionally reliable sources) created a widely negative sentiment in the news as opposed to the positive commentaries or statements by politicians and the intellectual elite. Interestingly, the positive commentaries, although overwhelming in volume, did not echo among the readers (and in opinion polls) as much as the negative tone of news coverage did. My interpretation is that the messages sent by Ninn-Hansen and anti-immigration forces appealed, as intended, to the existing anxieties among Danes about the erosion of the welfare system and of job security in particular and to much broader feelings of threat and insecurity in an increasingly "globalized" world.

## 1986: The Intensification of the Debate: New Rounds of Moral Panics

In the next two years, the debate intensified rapidly; more and more themes were taken up in the media, which contributed to the moral panic about refugees and resulted in severe restrictions on the right to ask for asylum. But the picture also became more complex – the coverage became more positive with more arguments for a humanitarian approach in the news and a corresponding increase in positive letters to the editor.

By the end of 1984, the debate on refugees had become so intensified and negative that Queen Margrethe felt obliged to scold Danes for being too negative and unwelcoming in her annual New Year speech. She asked Danes to show solidarity with foreigners and help them adjust to Danish society. There were also violent attacks by Danish youth groups on refugees in July 1985. The whole political and cultural establishment as well as the media condemned the attacks and described the attack as un-Danish and the attackers as hooligans.

By the fall of 1986, the panic atmosphere had become so intense that the idea that the "influx of refugees" had to be reduced or stopped had almost become common sense with very few voices of dissent. There was also a polarization in the media: the three right wing papers, *Berlingske Tidende, Jyllands-Posten* and partly *BT* had become increasingly critical of the refugee laws of 1983. In this sense, the discrepancy between the editorial line and the actual coverage had become less for these papers. What is noteworthy is that the change in editorial line for these newspapers did not mean deserting the humanitarian perspective. Rather, the humanitarian arguments were now used to call for restrictions. A typical example of this shift is *Jyllands-Posten*'s editorial on September 16, 1986 entitled "Refugee halt is urgent." The editorial began with Refugee Friends' criticism of the government for "a degrading treatment of refugees that equals psychological torture" but turned it around and used it as an argument for closing off the borders "in order to provide the refugees already in the country with better and more humane conditions." *Berlingske Tidende*'s argument was similar: in line with the government, it described the situation as a "mass migration" and asked for new restrictions (9/10/1986). The call was based on two arguments: 1) neighboring countries

such as Sweden and Germany had not followed Denmark's example and liberalized their immigration laws which rendered Denmark more attractive for refugees, and 2) a restriction was in the interest of the refugees who had managed to come to Denmark. If situation became worse and got out of control, it would lead to confrontations between refugees and Danes, Berlingske argued. According to the latter argument, the scope of the immigration made it difficult to treat the refugees in a humane way. These were the exact arguments by the conservative Justice Minister Erik Ninn-Hansen who called for a temporary stop for immigration for at least one year (*Ekstra Bladet*, 9/8/1986). Ninn-Hansen argued that a complete stop would give the necessary time for authorities to find better accommodation and to go through the accumulated asylum applications. What is interesting is that the same arguments were used by Social Democrats to oppose Ninn-Hansen's proposal for a total stop. Ole Espersen, the spokesperson for Social Democrats, agreed to the need for restrictions with the argument that "as the situation has developed, we cannot just watch passively. [If we do that we will end up] ... introducing a panic-like measure for complete stop" (*Jyllands-Posten*, 10/11/1986). The rationale for the restrictions, in other words, was to prevent what Ninn-Hansen had proposed although they both used the same arguments. The formulation of "the situation as having developed" indicated a tacit accept of the definition of the situation as uncontrollable – a definition that was repeatedly promoted by the government as well as in news, editorials, comments, and letters to the editor.

It is easy to see how in the period between 1984 and 1986 the unavoidability of reducing numbers had been made into common sense through the repetition of panic stories. By the fall of 1986, the focus on the numbers of incoming refugees had become

even more intense, and there were the same kind of apocalyptic prognosis. Ninn-Hansen declared on September 9, 1986 that if the trend continued, Denmark would be receiving 25,000 refugees a year (*Jyllands-Posten* 9/101986) although the number of refugees entering Denmark for the last two years was 10,318 (combined), including those whose applications have been rejected (*Ekstra Bladet*, 9/8/1986).

In the meantime, more themes that contributed to the panic sentiment had entered discourse. One of these themes was accommodation problems. There were so many stories about problems with finding accommodation for refugees that the net effect was the impression that the scope of the refugee "flow" was much larger than Denmark could manage. I counted 70 stories (in the period, September-August 1986) in national newspapers about accommodation problems. Almost half of the sources for these stories were mayors and the Danish Red Cross. Finding empty buildings to house refugees was a task of the Danish Red Cross and municipal authorities and these problems were covered extensively in local press since the stories often were about the local contexts.

The sheer volume of the news stories reflects the intensity of the debate in this period. I counted 30 news stories in September 1984 and 113 stories for four months (August-November) the same year when the panic was being built up. In 1986 there were 236 news stories in September and 568 news stories for three months period (September-November). Despite the two years gap between the periods, the titles of the stories in 1986 showed similarities to those in 1984: "Asylum-seekers can lie to receive residency permit in Denmark" (*Berlingske Tidende* 9/2/1986), "Ninn wants to close off the borders" (*Ekstra Bladet*, 9/3/1986), "Neighboring country exports refugees here" (*Politiken*, 9/4/1986), "Refugee-export is proven" (*Jyllands-Posten*, 9/5/1986), "Asylum-seekers'

tickets were paid by West German police" (*Berlingske Tidende* 9/6/1986), "Red Cross threaten with leaving refugee-chaos" (*Jyllands-Posten* 9/6/1986), "Municipalities say 'no' to refugees" (*Politiken*, 9/9/1986), "Brakes on the influx of refugees" (*Berlingske Tidende* 9/10/1986), "Police: refugee numbers explode" (*Berlingske Tidende* 9/10/1986), "Stop for trade with refugees" (*Ekstra Bladet*, 9/13/1986) "Three out of four say 'No' to [receiving] more refugees" (*Berlingske Tidende* 9/14/1986), "Only few refugees are rejected at the border" (*Jyllands-Posten* 9/18/1986) "The government wants to close refugees' airport route" (*Jyllands-Posten* 9/20/1986), "Red Cross: refugee situation the worst ever" (BT 9/22/1986), "Refugee influx break all records" (*Jyllands-Posten*, 9/23/1986), "Record influx of refugees in September" (*Berlingske Tidende* 9/29/1986).

These stories were from national newspapers. I did not include local papers in the content analysis. There were more stories from local papers in my data sample than from national newspapers and they had a more direct influence on public perceptions of the issues as they often illustrated general information about numbers and problems with details from local contexts. These stories were often based on local sources and local police officers who not only provided concrete information such as numbers but also put the information into a perspective, often characterizing refugees as fakes and criminal elements. Refugees or their perspectives were hardly ever heard (in national press, I counted only 11 out of a total 903 stories in which the main protagonist was a refugee or immigrant) and insofar they did, they were allowed to tell about their own experiences but their story was mostly written from the perspective of the local and national sources.

A story from *Fyens Stiftstidende* (9/6/1986) is a good example of the local coverage. The story had the title: "The magic word is "asylum" ["asyl" in Danish] – the

four letters are better than all passes and papers" and was written completely from the perspective of an anonymous police officer. The officer explained that many of the Lebanese and Palestinian refugees actually were people who had already applied or received asylum in Germany but came to Denmark to have "milk and honey" [a Danish phrase for luxurious conditions). He said that "if a person can just pronounce the word "asylum," we are whipped to put the whole system at work ... Several times I had the experience that refugees who could not explain what they wanted would come back and say the word 'asylum' ... Politicians will not talk about this, and the police chiefs must not – or dare not. But the ordinary police officers ... do sometimes ask if there is not something completely wrong with the Danish refugee laws."

This is one of the many examples in which refugees were described as "convenience refugees" – a term coined to describe refugees as people seeking a better future rather than being persecuted – through a combination of vivid and vague formulations that create a credible account. In these descriptions, eyewitness accounts were used to give concrete details that describe what happened at the border but say little about the reasons for their entry to Denmark. If one takes a closer look at the story, there is no concrete detail that actually tells us that refugees had applied for or achieved asylum in Germany, or that they had come to Denmark to have better economic conditions. In this story, the only concrete evidence that the reporter was shown were passports that show the refugees had been in Germany prior to their arrival, nothing else. The credibility of the story relies on the ethos of the police officer, and his ethos is built through rhetorical moves that place him in the center of the events and enable him to draw conclusions.

This story is a good example of the distinction that was consistently made between "real refugees" and "convenience refugees" by the police and government agencies, implying that many of the refugees did not have a need for protection (Jensen 2000). The distinction was used by the government to promote restrictions while sustaining a humanitarian rhetoric. The Justice Minister Erik Ninn-Hansen argued, for instance, that there was a need to prevent young Iranians from coming to Denmark just because they were denied access to the university in Teheran (*Berlingske Tidende*, 1/16/1985).

The police not only fed the media with the numbers and information about escape routes, fake passports, "mafia" organizations and "convenience refugees" but also stories about petty criminality among refugees that normally would not find their way into the national media such as the story in *Jyllands-Posten* (9/7/1986) about a small group of refugees who found a way of using telephones in a hospital to call their relatives in Lebanon.

Similar to the period two years ago, the main sources for stories that were coded as "panic-creating stories" were the police, the government (including Ninn-Hansen) and government agencies, but we see one new and important player entering the field: the Danish Red Cross which only unwillingly was a part of the panic stories in 1984. Two years later, the Red Cross had become one of the important sources for the humanitarian argument for closing off the borders through its persistent description of the conditions as out of control. The leader of the Danish Red Cross Eigil Pedersen, for instance, described the situation as chaotic and called the governments' proposal for a temporary border closing for refugees as "timely" and necessary. According to Pedersen, the "existing open

border laws were "beautiful but naïve"" (*Jyllands-Posten*, 9/10/1986). In the story, the reporter only quoted Pedersen for the words "beautiful but naïve" but the journalist's description of the existing law as "open border laws" reflected the new elite consensus that the refugee situation was out of control and something had to be done. Another source for accommodation problems was the municipal authorities that were tasked with finding empty buildings to house the refugees in collaboration with the Red Cross. They, too, complained about the practical problems with accommodating the refugees and about having to take over the "burden" while other municipalities were not forced in the same way (because they did not have as many public buildings and housing projects).

This common sense that refugees had to be stopped from entering Denmark was clearly reflected in almost all stories in the [right wing] media. In September 1986, the national press was preoccupied with the crisis between Germany and Denmark over refugees. The Danish government had decided to expel refugees that had spent time in Germany or applied for asylum prior to the arrival at the Danish border. According to the newspaper stories, when the police began to enforce the rule, they found evidence that Germany was giving transit visa to refugees who wanted to come to Denmark. Although there were a few voices that warned that Germany's reaction was natural in the light of Denmark's unilateral decision to export the "refugee problem" to other countries, the coverage was characterized from a nationalist perspective that rarely questioned the information fed by the Danish police. The stories were all about West Germany undermining Denmark's refugee policy, which was tacitly taken as the standard by which West German actions were judged.

However, if one side of the story is the persistent negative focus on refugees, the other side is the polarization among newspapers. While the editorial line was in line with the news coverage for the right wing papers *Berlingske Tidende* and *Jyllands-Posten,* the situation was more complex for the liberal *Politiken* and the tabloids *BT* and *Ekstra Bladet.* To illustrate the complexity, I looked at the panic stories in these papers since there were stories promoted by the government and the police. The number of panic stories in the tabloids *BT* and *Ekstra Bladet* was not significant and there was no difference between the periods. When it comes to the biggest three daily national newspapers (*Politiken, Jyllands-Posten* and *Berlingske Tidende*), the polarization becomes clearer. Whereas the numbers of panic stories in each paper in 1984 is almost identical, in 1986 there is a clear difference between the liberal paper *Politiken* and the right wing *Jyllands-Posten* (table 3.2). For readers who have been following the controversy around Mohammed-drawings in 2006, the fact that *Jyllands-Posten* had the worst record of stories with a negative spot on refugees will not be a surprise.

**Table 3.2: Changes in the number of panic stories**

| Newspaper | 1984 | 1986 |
|---|---|---|
| Politiken | 10 | 6 |
| Berlingske T. | 11 | 19 |
| Jyllands-Posten | 13 | 27 |
| Ekstra Bladet | 1 | 1 |
| BT | 4 | 4 |

These numbers indicate that the media had become more reflexive towards the sources and their use of the media to promote their own agenda and perspectives. Right wing papers *Berlingske Tidend*e and *Jyllands-Posten* used the panic stories more deliberately while Politiken was promoting other types of stories that would balance the

overwhelmingly negative information flow about the refugees. To check the validity of this interpretation, I also looked at the deportation stories which are often about tragic consequences of restrictive laws and practices and thus more open to "positive" perspectives. Not surprisingly, *Politiken* had an overwhelmingly big share of these stories with most of them coded as "positive" whereas *Berlingske Tidende* and *Jyllands-Posten* had fewer of these stories and most of them being negative (table 3.3).

**Table 3.3: Positive stories**

| Newspaper | Total | Positive |
|---|---|---|
| Politiken | 29 | 25 |
| Berlingske T. | 6 | 2 |
| Jyllands-Posten | 12 | 4 |
| Ekstra Bladet | 4 | 4 |
| BT | 15 | 11 |

The only surprise in table 3 is the number of positive deportation stories in *BT*. Although *BT*'s editorial line was closer to that of *Berlingske Tidende* and *Jyllands-Posten*, deportations stories had a more positive focus than in these newspapers. I expect this to be related to the fact that *BT* is a tabloid newspaper that focuses on individual and sensational aspects of an issue. This was a period in which there were several stories on refugees ending in "unsafe" countries after having been rejected entry to Denmark according to the new laws, despite the government's promise that no refugee would be sent to a country from where he or she could end up in the country of origin. This may explain the similarity between *BT* and the other tabloid, *Ekstra Bladet*. *Ekstra Bladet*'s editorial line was the most government-critical of all newspapers included in my sample. *Ekstra Bladet* promotes itself as the voice of "the little man" against the elite, and in mid-80's, they had chosen to be the voice of refugees as another instance of the "little man."

This choice along with the tabloid character of the paper meant that the news stories were not written in an objective manner but took a clear stand. The subtitle of the story "Ninn wants to close off the borders" (*Ekstra Bladet*, 9/3/1986) read, for instance, "Stop for refugees even though we have space enough" criticizing Ninn-Hansen's call for a complete closing off the borders to refugees for a year to bring under control the accommodation situation and create better conditions for refugees. The story listed the locations of empty buildings to which the state and municipal authorities had access and implicated Ninn-Hansen and immigration authorities for lying. It also criticized the governments' attempt to represent refugees as people who came to Denmark to seek better conditions by pointing out that a refugee had to live for 2,300 DKK a month (less than $400). This is the newspaper that ten years later would attempt to create moral panic by claiming that a refugee family could receive up to $5,000 a month. By 1996, the definition of the "little man" had changed: in line with the nationalist/racist rhetoric, the "little man" was now the ordinary Dane whose concerns over immigration were ignored by the cultural and political elite. The principal of advocacy journalism defending the "little man" did not have to change, the ontological basis on which the "little man" was defined changed from a more class-based to ethnic one. The "little man" later became the "ordinary" Dane.

The intensity of the debate could also be seen in the letters to the editor. From September to November 1986, there were 213 letters to the editor about immigration compared to a total of 22 letters in four months period in 1984. Also here, we see a polarization in the tone of letters to the editor. Whereas 81.8% readers were negative and only 13.1% positive towards refugees in 1984, 31.3% of the readers had become positive

by 1986 contra 59.8% negative. The polarization was also reflected in opinion polls that showed that Danes' attitudes towards immigrants had become more positive from 1984 to 1985. Bent Østergaard, a frequent commentator on immigration, explained the attitude change with the dominant humanitarian attitude among the opinion-making elite (the media and the politicians) who spoke with one voice against "petite racism" ("Danish refugee policy," *Berlingske Tidende*, 9/12/1986).

As Østergaard's comments indicate, the kind of polarization among the political elite (as reflected in the news coverage) was essentially different than the polarization among ordinary people as it was expressed in letters to the editor. Elite disagreement took as its starting point – at least in its rhetoric – the humanitarian perspective; the disagreement was more about the perceived dilemma between Denmark's moral responsibility and its capability to take care of the responsibility. The negative and positive sides among letter writers did not have such a common basis. While even the most skeptical of politicians justified their proposals for restrictive policies with humanitarian arguments (i.e., it is for the sake of refugees that we have to restrict access to asylum), humanitarian arguments were not the primary resource for the opponents of the Danish refugee policy among the readers. The common element in both kinds of discourse was the immense sense of panic.

## Letters to the Editor: The Distance between the Elite and the "People"

There were two important themes that emerged in the letters to the editor: the economic burden question and the political elite's insensitivity to the concerns of the

people. These themes are organized around a number of concrete arguments that can, at an analytical level, be rather incoherent but, in their local contexts, have the function of supporting the main argument.

To give an example, the first theme (economic burden) could be supported in one letter with arguments about providing housing to the BZ-youth (anarchist oriented youth who occupied empty buildings – BZ sounds as "occupy") although in another letter and context, BZ's would be described as a threat to the cohesiveness of Danish society. Some letters would call for a stop to refugees by repeating Ninn-Hansen's argument about not being able to create humanitarian conditions for refugees; others would accuse the government for discriminating against Danes in favor of refugees as expressed in this letter: "while we can be proud of our refugee policy, can we also be proud of the way we treat our elderly, [who] have through their work and taxes contributed to society and now when they need help, we fail them [because we use the resources for refugees]?" ("Racists?" *Kristeligt Dagblad*, 9/11/1986). The arguments were often supported with factual information from the media. The repeated information that refugees cost the Danish state millions of Danish Crowns was used, in readers' letters, to argue that Danes were being discriminated against while the refugees were receiving unlimited resources.

These complaints have to be understood in their historical context, where the right-wing, neo-liberal government was trying to dismantle the welfare state regardless of the arrival of the refugees. Denmark is one of countries with the highest tax payments in the world – about 50% of income with progressive tax percentages at higher income layers. Despite the high taxes, social benefits and unemployment payments were being reduced, wages were frozen, job security was being undermined through the concepts of

"restructuring," and "optimization" and the labor unions who attempted to challenge these policies were under severe attack – all in the name of making Denmark more competitive in an increasingly globalized world. There was also a general ideological push for a shift from the leftist position that unemployment and poverty were the result of the unjust capitalist system that could not generate enough work for everybody to the (neo)liberal idea that unemployment was a question of incentives: the high levels of unemployment and welfare payments did not provide incentives enough for people to look for jobs.[51] The workers' party, Social Democrats, had already tacitly accepted many of these neo-liberal arguments and did not resist the dismantling of the welfare state. There was, in this sense, a true crisis of representation because the new political consensus about the unavoidability of neo-liberal policies was not responsive to the 'people's anxieties about their future (job security, pensions, health care system etc). The image that unlimited resources were being channeled to the refugees while people who had contributed to the nation's wealth through their taxes were denied access became a powerful discursive moment around which an opposition to the political elite was voiced.

I have pointed out earlier that the figures for extra funding were inflated by collapsing all the funds allocated to the reception of refugees into one single category, although most of the money was actually used towards Danish institutions, the police and social workers. The inflated figures were a useful tool in Ninn-Hansen's overall

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[51] Also this argument has been transformed from being a neo-liberal argument to an argument for an ethnicized politics: the Liberal/Conservative government since 2001 uses this argument to cut immigrants from the realm of welfare system with the argument that they need an incentive to find work and "integrate," ignoring completely that discrimination is one of the reasons that immigrants are 3½ times more unemployed than Danes. The incentive argument is now rarely used as a general principal towards the unemployed.

rhetorical strategy to create the sense that immigration had become uncontrollable in order to pressure the opposition parties on whose votes the government depended to change the immigration laws. But arguments and ideas are not related to one another through a universal logic. Once they are introduced to discourse, they take on a life of their own. The only logical connection that brings them together is the articulatory logic. This is the basis of the heterogeneity of the social. The flexibility with which the same elements of discourse can be used for different and at times contradictory ends is why hegemony is never given state of discourse and has to be constantly fought for. Moral panics are useful a moment of discourse to maintain the balance of power or introduce more coercion into the equilibrium (e.g. more restrictive laws), but they cannot be controlled. They open up for fundamentally different – counter-hegemonic – articulations of the social that threaten the stability of the hegemonic system itself. This is what happened in the fall of 1986 in Denmark that fundamentally transformed the ontology of the social and the political representation system in which the right-left distinction is rendered weak and often irrelevant in relation to the central political questions. This is what Politiken was pointing to when it described the victory of the Liberal/Conservative coalition government in 2001 as non-victory because it could not follow its own right-wing policies (e.g. "welfare reform") in the face of the racist populism with a strong welfarist emphasis that had taken over the government.

One might expect the argument that Danes should have priority to resources because of their (past) contributions to be a solid enough premise, but this was not the case. The burden theme was often linked to the distinction between real and convenience refugees that police officers and Ninn-Hansen introduced. Letters that described refugees

as an economic burden often also described them as "convenience refugees" who only came to Denmark to share wealth that they had not contributed to. There were several readers who would rather support "real" refugees in Afghanistan or Africa than the ones that had enough money to come to Europe. I read these attempts to qualify the argument about the priority of Danes as an indication of the readers' orientation towards the elite discourse that repeatedly emphasized Denmark's moral responsibilities and humanitarian principles. Danishness was often invoked to promote a humanitarian perspective as if it was a substantial part of the Danish character. Rather than directly challenging the moral responsibility perspective, the arguments were often mobilized to describe the refugees as people who did not need protection.

It would seem that although readers' distinction of us/them (wealth creators/wealth stealers) progressively used the discourse of Danes/alien immigrants, this distinction had not yet become the culturalized construction that it would later become.

Race, religion, culture and identity were not prominent categories although they appeared in letters as rhetorical resources (i.e., Iranian refugees could both be described as Muslims with fanatic ideas and as secular people who escaped from Islamic fundamentalism and deserved support). Out of a total of 214 letters, I counted a total of 14 where culture was the main explanatory frame. A year later, the number was 29 out of 215, and in 2001 it had risen to 53 out of 149. On the other hand, this specific constellation of categories of aliens, Danes and welfare opened up for a (re)articulation of social identities on the basis of culture rather than class, which made possible to discuss the discussion of welfare and wealth as a matter of ethnic access.

If social identities are constructed in an antagonistic manner, the antagonistic identity of "the Danish people" would need a political target: the political and cultural elite of the country (see the previous chapter). The resources for such an articulation were present in the second theme that was frequently expressed in the letters to the editor between 1984 and 1986.

The second prominent theme in the letters to the editor in this period was the explicit critique of the political elite who were accused of channeling the resources to the refugees. This criticism was supported by the accusation that the political elite were deaf to the voice of people. The criticism was mostly directed at the centrist parties, the Social Democrats, the intelligentsia and the Danish Refugee Council, although the criticism was often generalized to refer to all politicians and intellectuals under the umbrella of "Upper-Denmark." In this sense, letters to the editor in *Aktuelt* – the only party affiliated newspaper in Denmark published by the labor unions – were interesting.[52] While the paper's editorial line was in accordance with Social Democrats' humanitarian refugee policy, the readers who were mostly workers and unemployed[53] – they made up the "working class" – did not agree with the papers' line. When the Queen scolded Danes for being intolerant towards foreigners, a reader wrote: "a right-wing oriented, high class lady who patronized people. I am an old working class woman and I see a lot of young Danes who wander around without job, education, housing and even a hope for a future.

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[52] The paper was not included in the content analysis, but I included other national and local papers in my qualitative analysis to have a better sense of the discourse of the time. Examples here are taken from Bent Jensen (2000)

[53] "Unemployed" is not a general category of people without employment but a particular category of people who are considered as being temporarily out of work. They are entitled to maintain their membership of labor unions and of unemployment funds through which they receive so-called "unemployment insurance" during the unemployment period.

Are they not a kind of refugees?" (1/6/1985). Another wrote: "You hear that an Iranian

refugee cost 100,000 DKK, that is, more than the double of a retiree whom nobody cares

about, whose teeth fall out of the mouth. The authorities are about to make us racists in

Schlüter's [Conservative Prime Minister] Denmark" (1/8/1985).

It is difficult to say whether reader's letters actually reflect public sentiment or

whether they are a part of a more or less organized movement by the populist right to

influence public discourse. In *Aktuelt*'s case, they can be said to reflect "genuine"

concerns among working class people because they simultaneously expressed dislike of

the right wing parties in power. The discrepancy between *Aktuelt*'s editorial line and

readers' letters was, in this sense, a good indicator of the crisis of representation for the

working class people who felt that their "interests" were not represented within the

political system. Here, I am not talking about a given set of interests that can objectively

be described and attributed to a "working class" defined by their place in economic

(production) relations but about a working class organized by labor unions and whose

political interests had traditionally been represented by the Social Democratic party. In

these letters, there was this anxiety that the extreme right was able to re-articulate into a

populist movement. These anxieties could have been re-articulated into a different type of

populist movement organized around different demands. The letters expressed anxieties

in a fragmented and episodic way drawing on various arguments and there was a need for

a radical vision that could articulate these concerns into a new social formation with a

promise to restore order and fill the gap. That vision came from the extreme right, which

replaced the traditional link between the "people" and the "workers" by an appeal to the

ordinary Dane whose ontic content was the same ("worker") but whose ontology was different.

## Turning Point: Right-wing Intervention

The populist right's intervention came in the form of a newspaper ad in *Jyllands-Posten*, "No, not a single dime!" It was paid by the right-wing columnist in the same paper*,* Rev. Søren Krarup who called upon Danes to boycott a refugee donation collection (Refugee 86) organized by the Danish Refugee Council. The donations were to be sent to refugee camps around the world and had nothing to do with the Danish Refugee Policy. But his boycott was not against refugees, he said, he sympathized with their plight; it was against the Refugee Council "which had established itself as a state in the state." It "forced the parliament to pass laws and terrorized public debate." The Refugee Council wanted to prevent Danes from speaking out about real problems: "If we have an uncontrolled and unconstrained mass migration of Mohammedan and Oriental refugees, then we cannot be here ourselves – in any case not in naturalness and peace." With the help of few politicians, they "acted as an occupation power in a foreign country." Maintaining Denmark as a national state was the primary concern: "Can Copenhagen be a Danish city in 50 years? Can Danes continue to be a people when there is no longer a common language, history and religion? Or is it a fate such as Lebanon's that awaits us – torn apart by wars between incompatible minority groups?" Instead, he urged Danes to donate their money to Afghanistan Committee "who did not step on their own to show their goodness towards aliens. Here, we can both close our doors and open our wallets." A week later he published a new ad in the same newspaper repeating his

harsh attacks on the Danish Refugee Council and the political elite in general and calling

for turning the boycott of the "Refugee 86" into a popular protest against the refugee

policy.

Some contextualization may be helpful here. The former chairman of the Danish

Refugee Council, Hans Gammeltoft Hansen, was the voice of the minority group in the

extra-parliamentary commission that prepared the new immigration law proposal in 1983.

The government objected to the minority's proposals but gave in to the press from the

centrist parties that constituted the government's parliamentary basis.[54] The parliament,

then, adopted the minority's proposals with a broad consensus.

I will provide an extensive analysis of Krarup's strategy in the next chapter. Here,

I will discuss it briefly in terms of its effects. His strategy was simple but effective. His

move created a great controversy and as the principal part of the controversy, he gained

immediate access to discourse. His call for the boycott of Refugee 86 was an effective

tool for his showdown with the immigration laws and a head-on collision with what he

called Upper-Denmark (the political and cultural elite).

It was not so much Krarup's views about immigration that made him

controversial. After all, this was not his debut in the debate. He had been arguing against

the refugee laws in his columns in *Jyllands-Posten* and he was already known for his

uncompromising language against his opponents. But his columns were just another

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[54] In Denmark, there is a tradition for coalition governments that do not have parliamentary majority but are in power with the support of the centrist parties who are not included in the cabinet. Because they are not included in the cabinet, these parties sometimes align themselves with the opposition on single issues, forcing the government to reach a broader consensus with opposition parties. The immigration law of 1983 was one of these issues, and the government accepted the recommendations by the parliamentary majority and voted for the law despite it had objections against the law proposal.

voice in a larger sea of voices with no specific priority in terms of access to discourse. It was his choice of medium and the target of the boycott that made him controversial. Through this controversial ad in which he claimed to be speaking on behalf of a silenced Danish people, he immediately gained a privileged access to discourse – an access he did not have through his columns that were regarded as reflections of his subjective, individual thoughts. Apparently, he targeted at a "harmless," uncontroversial humanitarian donation campaign and this made him look "insane." The entire political and cultural establishment pulled together in a common front against him but in effect this made him into one of the principal participants in a public controversy that he created. His timing was also crucial: his showdown came at the peak of the moral panic when there was an unpronounced consensus among the politicians and in the media that the refugee situation was out of control and opposition parties were signaling their willingness to enforce drastic measures to stop the "flow" of refugees.

The effects of his intervention were immediate. He gained almost unlimited access to the debate. The only national television channel that existed at that moment (DR) invited him to a live debate in prime time with the chairman of the Refugee Council where he had access to the entire nation with his arguments. I tried to make sense of his access to discourse in terms of numbers but the numbers, as I coded them, do not do justice to his influence because of limitations with content analysis. According to my statistics, he was the main source for "only" 12.7% of the stories on Refugee 86. The problem is that the stories on Refugee 86 were not only about Krarup's call for boycott but included many types of stories such as how many volunteers had registered as collectors. These stories do not have Krarup as the source or the subject of the story, but

even a story about the number of volunteers would implicitly be about Krarup's boycott campaign in the sense that the number of volunteers was taken to be indicative of the success of the boycott campaign. Content analysis cannot register this kind of contextual information. The following example may illustrate the problems with recording the intensity of Krarup's influence on discourse through a content analysis: After Krarup's call for boycott, Uffe Elleman Jensen, the then Foreign Minister and the leader of the Liberal Party (that was in power in coalition with the Conservative Party) had signed up as a collector to show solidarity with the humanitarian principles of the Refugee 86 donation campaign. There were several stories about him volunteering as well as reportages by journalists who followed him on his route but none of these stories would be coded as if they were about Krarup or have Krarup as source.

As my last example might indicate, the entire political elite rallied against Krarup's boycott. They had no other choice: Krarup's attacks were not limited to the Refugee Council but targeted at the entire political establishment which he accused of "treason" for having passed the new immigration law. Furthermore, the fact that the donations had nothing to do with the political debate about the immigration law made it impossible for any part of the political or cultural elite to support the boycott even if they agreed with his views about the immigration laws and policies, which few politicians and right-wing newspapers actually did. The donation campaign, on the other hand, was treated purely a non-political, humanitarian issue on which there should be no controversy.

The interesting twist in this narrative is that some of these people who used sharpest language against him aligned themselves with him just a few years later. In less

than four years, Krarup became a columnist in *Ekstra Bladet*, which called him "Apostle of Hate." Only a decade later, Thorkild Simonsen "admitted" that Krarup was drawing attention to "real problems" and was appointed as Interior Minister by Social Democrats to carry out severe restrictions on immigration.

In short, the anti-Muslim, nationalist statements by Krarup "were interpreted by majority parties, by the Left, by the press, and by much of the Danish intelligentsia as manifestations of xenophobia and racism, if not pure pathology. The laments of the Right about the "threat to Danishness" were seen as incoherent articulations by individuals who were uninformed, manipulated, "racist" or simply "crazy" (Sampson 1995: 59).

The power of this kind of interventions in discourse lies as much in their timing as their radical vision in answering some of the most pressing questions around political representation. While the media's response to Krarup's boycott campaign was fierce, they continued bringing daily stories about the "inflow" of refugees. The day after the infamous ad, *Jyllands-Posten* wrote: "The pressure on asylum centers has grown so alarming during the last 24 hours that Red Cross describe the situation the worst ever" (9/22/1986). *Berlingske Tidende* again brought the panic onto the front page: "Record: 1,700 refugees this month" (9/23/1986). According to another story in the same newspaper, Red Cross had lost 15,000 members who had resigned as a protest against refugees in 1986 (9/22/1986). A meeting between Ninn-Hansen and Danish Red Cross was reported with headline, "Crisis-meeting: no more place for refugees" (*Jyllands-Posten* 9/29/1986). The government and opposition were negotiating about new changes to refugee laws, even though the Social Democrats had reservations about imposing serious restrictions on the right to access to apply for asylum. Krarup was, in other words,

the right man at the right time in the right place to use the moral panic not to just promote restrictions to immigration laws but to articulate the panic and anxieties into a nationalist populist movement. In Atkinson's (1984) words, "at least one important feature of exceptional public speaking ... is the ability to say something at just the right time to just the right audience in just the right place" (Atkinson 1984: 122). At first, the mainstream right-wing forces were scared of his intervention and felt trapped in their own rhetoric of "uncontrollable immigration" which now was being turned against themselves. But once this articulation was solid enough, other right-wing political forces within the mainstream of the political spectrum were able to benefit from it but benefiting from this articulation meant a fundamental transformation of their political identities and thus the entire political discourse (cf. the previous chapter).

The reaction from the political and cultural elite "proved" him right in his claim that there was an incommensurable gap between the political and cultural elite and the "people" and that the elite silenced the people. Although the ontological content of his "people" was different than from the old leftist populism, the ontic content of the people and the antagonism between the ruling elite and the people was the same. He never expressed any explicitly racist contempt for refugees but "merely" articulated a concern for the future of Denmark as a cohesive people.[55] For a long time, letters to the editor had expressed such frustrations about being described as "racist" as soon as they expressed concerns about resources being given away to foreigners without the people being asked.

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[55] To quote Stuart Hall (1998), in its many respectable forms racism doesn't recognize itself as such, this racism exists as a defense of "Englishness," of "Britishness," and of "Americanness." How could anybody object to "Americanness"?" (p. 297) or to paraphrase him, how could anybody object to expressing concerns about Denmark's future?

The media's and cultural elite's attacks and accusations of racism against him, without

engaging with his ontological definition of the people and their demands, worked to

bolster his argument that there was a need for a system change in Denmark. He became

the magnetic focal point that could pull together these criticisms and channel them into a

new kind of populist movement.

Laclau's description of George Wallace's populist electoral campaigns in 1960s

and 1970s in the US is applicable to Krarup's hegemonic intervention in the fall of 1986:

> The crisis of representation which is at the root of any populist, anti-
> institutional outburst was clearly in embryo in the demands of these
> people. Some kind of radical discourse had to emerge. Where was this
> discourse going to come from? Or – to put it differently – how could these
> demands cohere in an equivalential whole? The radical Left was not in a
> position to enter into this hegemonic competition ... This was exactly the
> political void that Wallace filled with his discourse – a mixture of racism
> and most of the old populist themes (he was even the first presidential
> candidate to present himself as a worker). He never really came close to
> winning the presidency – the vote he obtained, except in his enclaves in
> the South, was merely a protest vote – but his intervention had a lasting
> effect: it helped decisively to cement the articulation between popular
> identities and right-wing radicalism (Laclau 2005: 137).

Similar to the situation in the US, the Social Democrats and the radical left in

Denmark were too closely affiliated with the immigration law that was the target of

dissatisfactions with the systematic erosion of welfare society. The Social Democrats,

having blinded themselves with the inevitability of the neo-liberal ideology had moved

into the center with a new social-liberal identity and was not in position to articulate the

dissatisfactions into a popular movement against neo-liberalism. They were also trapped

by the dilemma between humanistic principles and the expressions of the ethnocentric

welfarism of their constituency. The radical left, too, was trapped by the dilemma of

being forced to choose between defending principal of humanism and international

solidarity or giving in into the tangled emotions of envy and indignation among workers.

They were also principal supporters of the immigration law that was blamed for the ills of

the society. The left wing was, in general, not a trustworthy alternative to the political

system that was slowly being associated with permissive immigration law. On the

contrary they were seen as a part of the very political system that had created "the

problem" in the first place. For these reasons they were not in the position to re-articulate

the boiling frustrations into a new, leftist populist movement based radical political

demands for a new type of society. There was a need for channeling the protest vote into

a new populist movement based on a clear articulation of social divisions but there was

no political force to undertake this task. This is the void that the radical vision of Rev.

Søren Krarup filled.

Krarup's ads offered more than a call for restrictions to the immigration laws. He

offered a radical vision of society colored by a particular ontology that was not explicitly

articulated in the letters to the editor. Although letters to the editor expressed a cynical

disgust with politicians who "wasted" their tax money on refugees rather than on Danish

retirees, unemployed, youth or health system, few actually articulated their concerns in

terms of culture and identity. Krarup's ads clearly drew on these feelings of envy and

indignation but articulated the nature of the problem as not one of economy but of

culture. It was the future of Danish nation and identity that was threatened by aliens,

"Mohammedan" intruders and it was the political elite that allowed the invasion of

Denmark because they cared more about their image in the eyes of international elite than

about Danish people. Danish people had a legitimate demand to keep Denmark Danish

and Christian. His radical vision was about the nature of the antagonism between social groups. It was no longer between the people (workers) and some kind of antagonistic camp (the regime, capitalist class, political elite) but between ordinary Danes (Under-Denmark, the silent majority) who were first and foremost Danes and Christian, and a political elite that was Danish in the name but cosmopolitan in essence.

## Culturalization of the Debate

The crucial element in Krarup's intervention was the articulation of the feelings of envy and indignation around the empty signifier, "Danishness," thereby changing the direction of arguments about immigration from being a question of economic burden to a question of national identity. In fact, it was not a change of direction in argumentation as it was the creation of new links between arguments. Krarup's definition of the refugees as a threat to the nation did not contradict with the widespread feelings that refugees were taking up resources from Danes. On the contrary, these two arguments became inseparably linked to one another. Welfare became articulated as a uniquely Danish phenomenon that was achieved through altruism and solidarity among Danes rather than among working class members. Thus, a threat to Danishness (homogeneity) was equaled to a threat to access to welfare. The intervention came at such a fragile moment of a moral panic and public resentment that it felt impossible to argue against the claim that Krarup was expressing what everybody else was suppressing. A tacit acceptance of the view that he represented the "silenced majority" functioned as a tacit acceptance of his argument that immigration posed a great danger to Danish culture and identity. The elite

emphasis on the distinction between refugees at home and refugees abroad helped cement this articulation.

Krarup's emphasis on culture had an immediate effect. Gaarde Madsen (2000) remarked that there was a sudden jump around 1986/1987 in the percentage of people who saw immigration as a threat to Danish identity but could not explain it because he had not done a detailed analysis of the media coverage in these years. However, I did an extensive analysis of the media coverage in this period and if we were to conclude on the basis the media coverage, the jump in public opinion would not make sense. I counted all kind of stories in which immigrants were described as a threat and did not find any significant fluctuation. In 1984, 4.8% of all stories described refugees and immigrants as a threat; it fell to 2.4% and 2.2% respectively for 1986 and 1987.

What is more significant is the fluctuation in the description of refugees as victims of oppression and torture: while in 1984, 19.6% of stories described refugees as victims of oppression and torture, it decreased to 12.2% in 1986 and 7.5% in 1987. At the same time, refugees were less likely to be described as economic and social burden in 1986 (5%) and 1987 (6%) than in 1984 when 16.9% of all stories described them as burden (see table 3.4). My suspicion is that these numbers indicate an increasing culturalization of the debate over three years. My count shows that stories written from a culturalist perspective constituted 1.1% in 1984 and 1.7% in 1986 of all stories whereas there is a jump to 13.1% in 1987 (table 1 in chapter 2). The percentages of culturalist frames in the letters to the editor are only slightly different for the same period: 9.1% in 1984, 3.7% in 1986 and 12.6% in 1987.

**Table 3.4: Description of refugees in the press**

| Description | 1984 | 1986 | 1987 | 2001 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Victims of oppression and torture | 19.6% | 12.2% | 7.5 | 3.9 |
| Economic and social burden | 16.9% | 5.0% | 6.0% | 3.6% |

If there can be drawn any conclusion from these numbers, it must be that the

media and the political and cultural establishment have followed the direction of readers'

letters rather than the other way around. But this is a conclusion that has to be qualified

and explained: my statistics also show that the number of readers who thought of the

refugees in cultural terms was not overwhelming and that the arguments made in the

letters to the editor were often episodic and fragmented. Rather, what was overwhelming

in the letters was the negative tone towards refugees. In 1984, 81.8% of all letters had

negative overtones and only 13.6% positive. In 1986, the negative letters decreased to

59.8% and positive letters increased to 31.3% only to become more negative again in

1987: 67.9% negative versus 26% positive (table 3.5).

**Table 3.5: Tone in letters to the editor**

| Tone in letters to the editor | 1984 | 1986 | 1987 | 2001 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Positive | 13.6% | 31.3% | 26.0% | 27.5% |
| Negative | 81.8% | 59.8% | 67.9% | 61.1% |

The relative increase in the positive numbers in 1986 has to do with the big

controversy around Krarup's boycott of the Refugee 86 donation campaign that created

an immediate polarization and mobilized a great number of readers to support the

donation campaign. However, this mobilization could not be translated into a popular

front against the nationalist right because the counter-strategy against Krarup's campaign

was based on the distinction between the refugee policy and donation campaign – a strategy that tacitly admitted that unpopularity of the existing refugee laws.

The intervention created a spiral where more and more readers' letters reflected a more coherent argument about national threat, where pollsters asked more questions about cultural differences, and where academics who had already been engaged in the production of knowledge about immigrants' culture and of explanations about immigrant-related social phenomena were now forced to orient themselves to the notion to ethnic homogeneity of Denmark (cf. the previous chapter) and mold their studies towards a racist antagonism. The net result less than a decade later was a total hegemony of culturalist discourse in all aspects of immigration debate but already a year after Krarup's intervention, discourse on immigration was focused on culture.

## A Year Later (1987): Collapse of Political Consensus and New Moral Panic

Although the increase in the numbers of incoming refugees was effectively stopped by the new restrictions adopted in October 1986,[56] immigration never disappeared from the public discourse after 1986. Thor A. Bak, the chairman of the Danish Refugee Council noted, already in September 1986, that "immigration policy ha[d] become the central question around which the future of Danish society [would] revolve" (*Berlingske Tidende*, 9/13/1987).

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[56] The new laws had turned out to be more restrictive than the politicians had expected: according to UNHCR, only 770 had entered Denmark by September 1987 ("Nordiske Spark til flygtninge" *Politiken* 9/17/87), whereas the government had expected the restriction would bring down the numbers at around 5,000. ("The limit is reached" *Jyllands-Posten*, 10/18/1987.)

Two important moments in 1987 seem to have been significant in keeping the focus on immigration and shifting it onto culture. The first is the parliamentary elections in September 1986 and the preceding period in which Social Democratic mayors entered the scene with spectacular statements about immigrants and their culture; the second is a deliberate attempt by Justice Minister Erik Ninn-Hansen to create a new moral panic around immigration with the intention of restricting the immigration laws even further.

The period after the last round of restrictions on refugee laws and the controversy around Krarup's boycott of Refugee donation campaign was characterized by a long period of silence about immigration policies among mainstream political forces. This silence can partly be explained with the wait-and-see attitude among political parties after the law changes were accepted in the parliament but there is another and more important reason for the silence. Krarup's intervention in 1986 had already convinced the mainstream political parties about the gap between the "people" and the political representation. The political mainstream became too scared of being accused of going against the people's wishes or of being racist.

The silence among the mainstream political forces did not mean silence in the immigration debate. On the contrary, the void was filled by the nationalist/racist right's persistent campaign against immigration with stories about misuse of Danish hospitality, criminality and the cultural problems (especially with religious difference). Immediately after the boycott campaign, Krarup formed a "Committee against Refugee Policy" and since refugee laws had already been tightened, their next target was refugees' right to bring their spouses to Denmark. As a UNHCR official, Søren Jessen-Petersen remarked in a chronicle, "silence or statements by politicians which can be interpreted as direct

consent [to xenophobic statements] run the risk of legitimizing attitudes towards

foreigners, attitudes that a democracy neither wants nor can survive" ("Nordic kick to

refugees," *Politiken* 9/17/1987). One of the frequent debaters, Jacques Blum argued that

racism was advancing thanks to the silence by the established parties that feared for

looking either too "refugee-friendly" or prejudiced ("Racism sneaks in," *Politiken*

9/27/1987).

Not surprisingly, Krarup's intervention had the most destabilizing implications for

the Social Democratic Party. Krarup's rhetoric targeted primarily the working class – the

constituency of Social Democrats, who complained about their resources being wasted on

foreigners and about not being heard by the political establishment. The Social

Democratic Party was seen as being responsible for the liberal immigration law and a

huge gap between working class and Social Democratic Party's humanitarian consensus

was created.

Furthermore, the working class who were the ontic basis of the "silent majority"

lived in parts of cities that had many housing projects where refugees and immigrants

moved into. These were the municipalities with Social Democratic mayors who soon

began complaining about being forced to take a big portion of the refugee burden while

other municipalities with fewer or no housing projects were released from the

responsibility. One of these mayors, Per Madsen of Ishøj, entered the debate in August

1987 with a sharp criticism of Muslim immigrants' lack of integration. He accused

Turkish immigrants of misusing the welfare system but the greatest problem, he

emphasized, was cultural: Turkish youth were still getting married with Turks in Turkey

and the numbers were increasing. The increasing numbers were, in this sense, described

as a cultural problem that was translated into economic burden. Madsen concretized his views later in the Danish Association's[57] member journal: "Muslims live at a middle-age stage with their disrespect for women and women's culture, which is unheard of in this country. They trade with women as if they were a cattle stock, and women are beaten and mistreated" (in Engelbreth-Larsen 2001: 180). The present leader of the Danish People's Party Pia Kjærsgaard would hardly express her views in a different manner. A decade later, Karen Jespersen who later became the face of Social Democrats in the immigration question, would say that politicians "should have listened to Per Madsen" (*BT* 10/22/99).

The snowball that Krarup had started was rolling. While the Social Democratic Party's leadership distanced itself from Madsen's statements, newspapers that had been critical of Krarup's populist rhetoric gave Madsen a very sympathetic consideration. *Vestkysten* wrote, for instance, that when Pia Kjærsgaard[58] showed up with "her incredible pandering to cheap, irresponsible views," it was important to denounce her, but one had to "discuss seriously the problem that the Ishøj's mayor raised ... It is given that if 14% of a municipality's population are immigrants from other countries and primarily with a completely different cultural background, it must create problems." The editorial concluded that immigrants had to stay back home if "they felt dirtied by any contact with Danish culture, Danish norms, and Danish tradition ... It is okay to tell them this. Hospitality, too, has its limits" (in Jensen 2000: 481). Surprisingly, Madsen's statements

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[57] Danish Association was formed in 1987 as a result of Krarup's successful mobilization of the extreme right against immigration policies. The executive committee for the Danish Association included closest allies of Krarup.
[58] Pia Kjærsgaard was then the spokesperson for the Progress Party that was the only explicitly anti-immigrant party. She is now the leader of Danish People's Party (DPP), and Krarup is one of the DPP's members of the parliament.

also received full support from *Ekstra Bladet*, the tabloid daily, which had called Krarup "the apostle of hate" ("The Little Turkey," editorial, 8/11/87). When Torkil Sørensen from the Refugee Council remarked the sharp change in the editorial line of the paper, the editors responded with a reference to "the limited capacity of people's hospitality" ("On the other hand" 10/24/87). The culturalization of the perceived problems was already evident in these statements.

It is difficult to know precisely what motivated Per Madsen to enter the debate with anti-immigrant statements – to use the increasingly legitimized hostility to force the government to allocate more resources to his municipality or to win back Social Democratic voters or a combination of both. In any case, Krarup's cultural framing of immigration and links to an antagonism between the political elite and Danish people provided a powerful battery of culturalist arguments against the official immigration policy. It became progressively normalized to speak of immigrants as a cultural category as opposed to a purportedly homogenous Danish culture, but the very content of Danish culture was determined through repetitive links.

Scholars familiar with Denmark often draw attention to the ease with which Danes refer to Danish culture, norms, and traditions as something everybody knows and has but, as I indicated in my discussion of the use of the terms Danishness in the previous chapter, these are often political and rhetorical resources used to advance particular policies and their meaning is determined in the specific, rhetorical context in which they are invoked. In this sense, the invocation of Danish culture, norms and traditions as opposed to some presumed immigrant culture, norms and traditions is an attempt to fix the meaning of these signifiers and is thus an ideological/hegemonic struggle. The

repeated use of Danish culture as opposed to say, a presumed woman-oppressive immigrant culture, created a readily available and almost commonsensical interpretation of Danish culture. It was as if Danishness signified gender equality and emancipation, which required ignoring the fact that gender equality was a demand of Danish feminists against the Danish cultural system of male domination.

I want to illustrate this point with the media coverage of an attack on Iranian refugees in July 1985. The attackers defended their violence with statements such as "they take our jobs and our girls" which became headlines (*Berlingske Tidende*, 7/28/1987). The entire political establishment condemned the attack. The foreign Minister and the then leader of the Liberal Party Uffe Elleman-Jensen called the attacks "a stain on Denmark's reputation." *Berlingske Tidende* condemned not only the attacks but also the racist campaigns that led to the violent attacks on refugees. Only Pia Kjærsgaard from the Progress Party stood outside the consensus. She described the attacks as an expresion of people's resentment agasinst the government's refugee policy. However, nobody noted what would normally be considered as male-chauvinistic character of the statement, let alone describe it as a part of Danish culture, not even Kjærsgaard who does not waste any opportunity to describe Muslim immigrants as male-chauvinistic and Danish culture as "woman progressive." I suspect that the feminists would recognize the male-chauvinism of the statement as a part of the dominant culture in Denmark, but once the articulation between Danish culture and gender equality was established and stabilized through repetitive links in public discourse, parts of the Danish feminist movement, too, were co-opted into the new hegemonic articulation of Danishness as the locus of egalitarian ideas (cf. the previous chapter).

In short, immigration discourse was, already in the fall of 1987, permeated by culturalist arguments and there was a new wave of anti-immigrant sentiments – this time from Social Democratic mayors – when the first elections were held one year after the big controversy of 1986 around Danish immigration policy. Although Social Democratic mayors raised their voice against immigration with culturalist arguments, there was an unspoken consensus among mainstream political parties including the Social Democratic leadership about not taking up immigration as a theme during election campaign due to fear of voter punishment. Polls showed a significant increase in support for the Progress Party, the only explicitly anti-immigrant party. It came, therefore, as a shock for all other parties when the leader of the Social Democratic Party, Anker Jørgensen, surprisingly proclaimed the day before the election that "Denmark is a small country and must not be run over by foreigners. Too many refugees will damage Denmark economically and culturally ... We have to maintain our value basis" (*Jyllands-Posten*, 9/6/1987). At the same time, the media revealed that a party commission had prepared a critical report about immigration but that the discussion of it was delayed until some time after the elections. The report prepared under the leadership of a local politician claimed that immigrants had "views, practices and phenomenon that are unacceptable for Social Democrats." The commission recommended making stricter demands of immigrants to adjust to Danish society and restricting immigrants' access to family reunion. The commission also reproduced Krarup's argument that the Refugee Council and the Danish Red Cross for acting without public control (that they acted as a state in state). These were the precise demands set forth by Krarup in his infamous ad-campaign and later through his "Committee against Refugee Policy."

The split between the local politicians and the party leadership within the Social Democratic Party had surfaced and it was difficult to see much difference between the statements by local Social Democrats and by Krarup except in tone. Local politicians' statements signified a shift in focus to culture as the main problem. They were also able to deliver what Krarup lacked: firsthand accounts of the purported cultural problems. Turks, for instance, kept marrying Turks even in second generation. With this move, the focus was definitively put on immigrants who had already been living in Denmark for at least two decades. It was no longer the "flow" of uncontrolled immigration by refugees that created a threat to Danish culture: the threat was already inside the country inverting what was once a peaceful, egalitarian, woman-friendly society. In practice, this meant that since the "flow" of refugees was effectively slowed down, the next target was the laws that granted immigrants right to reunification with their immediate family. The demand for restrictions on family reunification was supported with culturalist arguments that reinforced the antagonism between the Danish and "immigrant culture." As many commentators pointed out, Krarup had already won the war even if he was declared as the loser of a single battle – his boycott campaign against the donation campaign. He did not win by attracting a huge number of people into racist organizations but by defining the nature of the controversies around immigration and forcing mainstream parties to adopt his premises and his views.

It is under these circumstances the elections were held. The big winners of the elections were the two anti-immigrant parties: the Progress Party and self-proclaimed

left-wing party, Shared Path,[59] which had an explicit anti-immigrant election campaign.

Although the Progress Party attracted a number of the protest votes, it was not enough to

change the political landscape. The last minute statements by Anker Jørgensen, the leader

of the Social Democratic Party, had secured social democratic workers' votes. It was the

coalition parties, the Liberals and the Conservative, who were the big losers in terms of

voter support even though they managed to keep power with the support of center parties.

The Socialist Left (VS), an ardent supporter of liberal immigration laws, were pushed out

the parliament and was replaced by the anti-immigrant Shared Path[60].

The government parties expressed their frustrations about Anker Jørgensen's

statements. Prime Minister Poul Schlüter accused the Social Democratic leader of

breaching the consensus about not having an election campaign on immigration

(*Berlingske Tidende* 9/13/1987). Uffe Elleman-Jensen, the then leader of the Liberal

Party, too, criticized the Social Democrats for "scoring points by playing on the

insecurity which has been created by developments in the last years" but he also added

that "we have to be careful not to destroy the popular support for the Danish refugee

policy ... we have to be very careful that our social security systems are not used in a way

that can offend – and concretely it may be necessary to change the rules around the

access refugees have to bring their family and relatives" (*Jyllands-Posten*, 10/7/1987).

The political consensus about not making immigration into a political issue had thus

collapsed completely. The argument was that if the advance of racism was to be stopped,

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[59] Shared Path: (Fælles Kurs) was a Stalinist party whose leadership came from a left-wing trade union for sailors. They had resigned from the Communist Party which they did not find radical enough.
[60] The Left Socialists later formed an alliance with other small left-wing groups "Unity List" and entered the parliament again in 1990s. Having learnt their lessons, this time their election campaign was purely anti-European Union, speaking to the nationalist sentiments that had always been strong among Danes.

"people's concerns" had to be addressed (as was the case with the British arguments immediately after Powell's intervention). The fact that Social Democrats could prevent voters from fleeing by last minute statements against further immigration convinced the mainstream parties that "people" wanted more restrictions. The leader of the Conservative parliamentary group expressed it this way: "We wanted to create a balance in this case but people obviously still think that the law is too liberal" (*Jyllands-Posten*, 9/13/1987). Since the only indication for this interpretation was the success of anti-immigrant parties at the last elections, it was Krarup's articulation of the concerns of the "silent majority" that became the basis for the new focus on family reunification laws against which he had been campaigning since his successful entry to discourse in the fall of 1986.

## A New Moral Panic

The first important moment was, thus, the elections in which the political consensus broke down and the preceding period in which local Social Democrats entered the political discourse with anti-immigrant statements. The second important moment of discourse in 1987 was an attempt to create a new moral panic around immigration. The conditions were ripe for Justice Minister Erik Ninn-Hansen to begin a new campaign to curb immigration even further: Anker Jørgensen's statements during the elections had just broken down the last remnants of political consensus, and local Social Democratic politicians were complaining about immigrants and asking for further restrictions and there seemed to be a general, renewed anti-immigrant sentiment.

This time, Ninn-Hansen had unexpected allies across the political spectrum who coordinated efforts to create a new crisis around immigration. The opening salvo came from the Social Democratic mayor of Ishøj, Per Madsen, who published manipulated statistics about Turkish immigrants and their family reunification rates. According to the statistics based on 23 immigrants who lived in the municipality, one Turkish immigrant who had come to Denmark in 1970 had increased into a family of 23 in 1987. Including birth in the country, 23 became 371 in the same period. The problem according to the mayor was that immigrants did not integrate with Danes. Asking for restrictions to family reunion rights, the mayor sent the results to the Justice Minister who immediately declared that he would intervene with a lightning speed to put brakes on mass immigration ("Lightning intervention against mass immigration," *Jyllands-Posten*, 10/27/1987). Based on the report, the deputy mayor Leif Grundsøe concluded that there were 100,000 Turkish immigrants in Denmark and by year 2000 there would be half a million.

The statistics were covered extensively in the media and a new crisis emerged although there was recognition that this was a part of a deliberate attempt to benefit from the general anti-immigration sentiment that was constructed and sustained through polls and through continuous production of bad news about immigration by a number of anti-immigrant forces. *Politiken,* for instance, called these attempts "tricks" to avoid the promise that Denmark would continue to receive 5,000 refugees a year – a promise Ninn-Hansen made during the parliamentary debate in the fall of 1986 when the refugee laws were being tightened. The paper pointed out that the numbers of family members that refugees would bring to Denmark were inflated by collapsing the categories of refugees

and immigrants and called Ishøj's calculations "statistical manipulations to appeal to the inner swine of people, which is beyond any standards of decency." If the numbers were correct, there would have been 96,000 Turkish immigrants in Denmark instead of 22,000 (editorial, 11/1/987).  Also *Kristeligt Dagblad* called the inclusion of immigrants in family reunion debate "a scare propaganda without foundation in reality" but did not challenge the statistics as did *Politiken*. Rather, it was "the traditional, ethnic moral rules of marriage of the Turkish immigrants that inflated the numbers" (editorial, 10/21/1987). For *Kristeligt Dagblad,* it was the act of combining the numbers for immigrants' and refugees' family reunification that was questionable. Other national newspapers in my sample did not comment the statistics in their editorials but continued to cover the debate based on Ishøj's statistics. Local papers, on the other hand, took the numbers for granted and discussed "Denmark's very liberal rules for family reunion ha[d] led to a tremendous growth of the number of immigrants." (*Lolland-Falsters Folketidende*, 10/29/1987).

This is the power of statistics. Once a credible source such as a mayor publishes statistics, it has a news value for most newspapers, and statistics are difficult to challenge unless one has expertise to deconstruct it. Journalists usually do not see it as their task to deconstruct factual information from credible sources unless the numbers are challenged by other credible sources. But who are the credible sources? Some "immigrant-friendly" intellectuals and the Refugee Council did in fact challenge the numbers. However, they were so discredited during and after Krarup's populist intervention that they lost their authority as experts or credible sources and were now regarded as "interested parties." The Refugee Council's numbers, which showed that 100 refugees had brought "only" 16 family members to Denmark, was only published as a letter to the editor in *BT*

(11/5/1987). Ishøj's deputy mayor Grundsøe's numbers and projections were later denounced by the official statistical institute of Denmark but this was not covered substantially, either. It was also revealed – albeit in between lines of a feature story – that the report was indeed commissioned by Justice Minister Erik Ninn-Hansen who used it as a first hand testimony to the local problems related to immigration. The researcher who produced the numbers was a sociologist of culture known for his anti-immigrant views and who later became a politician from the Liberal Party. The Socialist People's Party pointed at the fact that until Ishøj's report came out, nobody really was discussing family reunion laws and that the report was a deliberate attempt to put the spotlight on immigration since the "flow" of refugees had now stopped. But although all of this information was available, the dots were never really connected in news stories. The criticisms and corrections did not receive much coverage and did not influence Ninn-Hansen's decision to include the report in his further work to restrict family reunion rights.

Ishøj's report was clearly a deliberate strategic intervention in discourse to create a new crisis that would enable the government to propose harsher restrictions on immigration. But the controversy that the report created did more than produce argumentative ammunition for the government's efforts – it put immigrants' culture on the discursive map as the most significant aspect of the debate. The debate was now spinning around culture as the benchmark for assessing arguments, and anti-racists were forced into a defensive position within the cultural paradigm.

A good example of defensive arguments is a feature story in *Politiken* about Ishøj's report ("Immigrants' many children is a myth" 11/1/1987). The reporter

interviewed Christian Horst, a sociologist of culture, who described the report as a manipulation of numbers and criticized the municipal authorities for collapsing different family categories into one single category and for using it to call for restrictions to family reunion rules. Engaging in a discussion of numbers meant also an engagement in culturalist arguments. Horst accused the municipal authorities of grossly manipulating the numbers and making it appear as if Turkish immigrant families have an average of 6 children whereas in fact only 11% of the Turkish population had 4 or more children. He then explained that immigrant women's birth rates slowly decreased the longer they lived in the new host country, which was also the case with the Turkish birth rates. The implication was that Denmark did not have to be nervous about the numbers of immigrants or their culture; their cultural patterns also begin resembling ours after a few years. Whatever the intentions behind the argument might be, it was responsive to the culturalist frame and thus helped maintain the spotlight on culture as the basic explanatory framework for social phenomena. In this sense essentialist and non-essentialist arguments often have the same function in the culturalization of the debate. Essentialist and non-essentialist arguments are often resources that are used flexibly to fit the demands of local arguments; they are not indicators of universal standpoints. While essentialist arguments may be used to signify cultural differences in positive or negative ways, non-essentialist arguments may be invoked for integrationist and assimilationist policies. As Asad (2000) argues, Islam has to be de-essentialized if it is to be Europeanized; but also essentialized "if a civilizational difference is to be postulated between them" and these can be the rhetorical moves of the same strategy in representing Islam (p. 7).

Scholars have generally been critical of essentialist notions of culture, but criticism in many critical works is limited to restrain from attributing ingrained cultural characteristics to a group of people who are described as being bounded by their culture. A non-essentialist approach is then understood as emphasizing the ever-changing, hybrid, and cosmopolitan character of culture and cultural identity by a web of influences from other cultures. The disagreement between essentialist and non-essentialist approaches is, thus, about the degree to which culture determines individual lives and the pace of its change. Yet, culture is maintained as a category for putative social identities and as such, it opens up a field of inquiry for researchers – essentialists and non-essentialists alike. To study an entity one has to know what that entity is. That is, the first step to study culture is to delimit, describe and construct the culture to be studied. Here, both approaches are similar in their categorization of social groups in cultural terms: they both identify and thus objectify cultures regardless of how the culture is described – whether as something influenced by other "cultures" or not. One of the "immigrant-friendly" researchers of the time, Ester Körmendi, urged municipal authorities to learn more about immigrants' cultural background to be better able to deal with them. Once why an immigrant behaves in a certain way is studied and mapped out, a proper behavior can be better "engineered." But since immigrants, as anybody else, behave in different ways in the same situations as well as in similar ways in different situations, culture would have to be constructed by experts who are given grants to study and construct such knowledges and by social workers' whose work depend on culturalization of immigrants. This is how the cultural focus – in its various variants – contributes to the ethnicization of social division.

But how could it be any different?

The power of the culturalist paradigm does not lie in its logical connections or the coherence of its explanatory framework but in its rhetorical ability to utilize the dialogic orientation of discourse. In this context, Bakhtin's notions of dialogism, heteroglossia, and centripetal/centrifugal forces of language offer useful insights. According to Bakhtin (1981), "…every extra-artistic prose discourse [...] cannot fail to be oriented toward the "already uttered," the "already known," the "common opinion" and so forth. The dialogic orientation of discourse is a phenomenon that is, of course, a property of *any* discourse" (p. 279). But the "already uttered," the "already known," or the "common opinion" are not once for all fixed elements of discourse; rather they are inherently heteroglot in nature, which means that their meaning can only be fixed in the very concrete context of utterance (in that place and at that time). But the essentially flexible (heteroglot) character of discourse does not mean that words and utterances exist as free floating elements of discourse with no predetermined meaning. Their meaning is determined in concrete contexts of utterances but those contexts are embedded in a matrix of forces (heteroglossia) in which two different (centrifugal and centripetal) forces struggle to pull the meaning in opposite directions. Centrifugal forces continuously attempt to disperse meaning away from the center while centripetal forces attempt to centralize and unify the language, that is, they have a homogenizing and hierarchicizing influence. "A unitary language is not something given [...] but is always in essence posited [...] – and at every moment of its linguistic life it is opposed to the realities of heteroglossia. But at the same time it makes its real presence felt as a force for overcoming this heteroglossia, imposing specific limits to it, guaranteeing a certain maximum of mutual understanding and crystallizing into a real, although still relative, unity [...]" (Bakhtin 1981: 270).

Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia is very similar to what Laclau and Mouffe call heterogeneity of the social (see chapter 1), which any systematic language (a hegemonic articulation) must always attempt to suppress by imposing specific limits to it; by making its own language into "common sense", i.e., the center towards which all other utterances are oriented.

The nationalist/racist hegemonic project became a "centripetal force" that redirects and orientates argumentation towards its own definitions, which quickly had become the "already uttered," the "already known," or the "common opinion." The nationalist/racist forces were, thus, able to force their opponents to accept the basic premise of their vision: an ontology of the social based on cultural differences. It is the ontological categories of the social that centralizes language by imposing specific (ontological) limits to it. "Mutual understanding" becomes possible only if we speak of the same objects and phenomena, and immigrants as a cultural category becomes this central object, or nodal point, that fixes meaning, however momentarily. Once this basic premise is accepted and stabilized, versions of reality that envision the social in different terms are rendered irrelevant and illegitimate and the kind of experts who are deemed to be authoritative about the controversies is determined by the ontological categories on which they have expertise. It is as simple as this: if we are discussing the cultural impact of immigrants on society, it is irrelevant to interview an expert who refuses the culture-based ontology and speaks of the problems as if they related to class struggles. Not only do hegemonic articulations render experts who may put a different perspective on social phenomena irrelevant (which in turn would mean that the nature of the social phenomena

gets transformed), they also produce their own kind of experts and credible immigrant sources who enter the arena.

Thus, once Islam and Muslim immigrants came into focus, it created a need for "knowledge" about Islam and immigrants, and soon there was a proliferation of experts who could explain Islam and Muslim immigrants to Danes. One of these experts who began to frequent the columns of Danish newspapers was Hussein Shahadeh who told Danes that "the Koran is the Muslims' holy book; a guideline in everyday obligations, and even the basis for the worldly laws ... Islam has a particularly firm hold of the ordinary Muslim and determines his entire everyday life in a much more detailed manner than the religion does from a Western point of view" ("Muslims in exile," *Jyllands-Posten* 11/12/1987). Two decades later, another immigrant/Muslim experts, Naser Khader, who enlightened Danes about the importance of religion in Muslims' lives in his book *Honor and Shame* became one of the most influential politicians in Denmark and is a MP for the most "immigrant-friendly" party in Denmark, the Radicals.

To summarize, the inclusion of immigrants in the debate over family reunions resulted in the complete culturalization of the immigration debate as the arguments became thoroughly cultural and framed by Krarup's articulation of the cultural antagonism between Muslims and the Danish nation.

## Cultural Hegemony

By the fall of 1987, culture as an explanatory framework had gained a hegemonic status for issues related to immigrants and immigration. As I pointed out, the number of stories from a culturalist perspective jumped from 1.1% in 1984 and 1.7% in 1986 to

13.1% in 1987. But these numbers, which include all types of stories and a wide range of aspects, cannot do justice to the impact of Krarup's intervention in discourse.

One of the most important consequences of Krarup's intervention in discourse was that the views that were considered to be extreme and that were expressed only in private settings were now brought out to the open in newspaper columns. A commentator in *Jyllands-Posten,* for instance, could not accept that "Islamic (sic!) foreign workers refuse to take orders from their female supervisors" ("Poul Meyer's hotchpotch," 9/21/87) although this had never been an issue for the decades since Muslim immigrants lived and worked in DK. According to another commentator in the same paper, "a Muslim neither can nor wants to adjust to Danish conditions (with the exception of using the welfare office). For a Muslim, religion is the law, and therefore he cannot be integrated in Danish society" ("Professor is on the wrong path" 9/21/1987). These kinds of statements, which only a couple years previously would be described as "racist" were accepted as legitimate views.

At the same time, commentaries and readers' letters seemed to have become more coherent in their linkages between arguments about economic burden, the gap between the elite and the people, concerns about the future of Danish national state and culture. For instance, a letter to the editor in *Berlingske Tidende* commented that immigration policy should be adjusted to the people not people to immigration policy and continued: "the ethnic [folkelige] unity has been the foundation for the wealth, peace and stability in Danish society" ("Arrogant attitude" 9/13/1987).

Another important consequence of Krarup's intervention was that Krarup became a legitimate, regular commentator and participant in the debate. He became one of the

poles of the debate with the result that public discourse became extremely responsive to his arguments and he gained the power to lay out premises for further discussion. These arguments, which were in the mid '80s still clearly recognized as right-wing populist articulations, became within a decade common place among politicians of all observances, including leading the Social Democrats. The leader of Social Democratic Party and Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen declared in late 1990s that it was unacceptable that Muslim immigrants held breaks to pray at workplaces even though it had never been taken up as a problem before by Danish employers or co-workers. Social Democratic Social Minister Karen Jespersen said it clearly: "to live in Denmark, you have to be Danish" (*Berlingske Tidende*, 7/14/1997).

A year after Krarup's campaign, the nationalist right seemed to have taken the lead in immigration discourse. In 1984 and 1986, negative comments and letters were oriented towards the humanitarian arguments that dominated the elite discourse. In 1987, positive and humanitarian comments were pushed into a defensive position. A letter in *Jyllands-Posten,* for instance, responded to Krarup's call for a defense of Danish culture and argued that the real threat was not Islam but rather the American culture that permeated "Danish culture" (10/15/1987). Another letter in the same paper found that "the claim that Danes risk to become a minority and that around year 2000 and that 10% of the population will be immigrants is wildly exaggerated" (9/23/87). These readers clearly felt that they had to respond to the increasingly negative claims about immigrants and they did so not by rejecting the premise that the issue is the threat against Danish culture but by downplaying the numbers and the threat that Muslim immigrants may pose. Their defense of immigrants was a tacit acceptance of the premise that immigrants

would be a threat if their number were higher, as if immigrants are a homogenous group of people who could be conceptualized in a dichotomic relationship with Danes as another homogenous group.

The magnetic power of the nationalist discourse to bend public discourse towards its definition of the nature of the problem was also evident in the comments and letters from Danish Refugee Council, who used to describe the oppression and prosecution from which refugees escape. By the fall of 1987, they too had slowly shifted their focus to culture as a response to the rapidly changing discursive environment in which culture and religion was emphasized as the locus of the "problem." Torkil Sørensen, a public relations officer with the Danish Refugee Council, had to argue that Iranian refugees escaped from Khomeini's [Islamist] regime and therefore would not be interested in the "Khomeinization" [islamization] of Denmark and that the Refugee Council in principle did not allocate housing to refugees in areas with many immigrants [to prevent concentration that enables immigrants to maintain their culture] ("Escaped from Khomeini," *Berlingske Tidende*, 9/13/1987).

The orientation towards the new culturalist antagonism was also clear in news and feature stories in which both sides of a controversy invoked cultural arguments to advance their agenda. To give an example, one of the Social Democratic municipalities with a concentration of immigrants wanted to close down a special kindergarten where immigrant children were placed while their mothers received Danish language instruction. According to the deputy mayor, "we bring together immigrant children and they do not learn Danish. We want them to come out among Danish children to learn Danish and get integrated in ordinary kindergartens." The teachers in the kindergarten, on

the other hand, protested the decision but did not challenge the basic assumption about what integration meant: "this is not Little Turkey or Pakistan. We function according to Danish norms and traditions." Also the representative for the Left Socialists (VS) criticized the decision to terminate the arrangement, for "the result will be that women have to stay at home and not learn Danish" ("Immigrant children have to learn Danish," *Politiken* 9/13.1987). The problem is, of course, no one really defined what Danish norms and traditions were and how kindergartens functioned according to these. "Danish norms and traditions" function as an empty signifier that only signifies the cultural divide. These statements do not reflect what the social workers and teachers actually might think were Danish norms and traditions; they rather indicate what they social workers and teacher believed would constitute the strongest argument against the mayor's decision to close down the project.

The "already known," the "common opinion" that the arguments are oriented towards is, in this sense, the assumption that Danish culture is the benchmark of successful integration. The disagreement is more about whether or not the project will contribute to or hinder the "integration" of immigrants. Both sides of the controversy appear as if they agree about the basic premise that Danish culture is to be protected as the absolute yardstick of social conduct without the need to specify what it entails. The statements by the Left Socialists' representative in the municipal council has strong feminist undertones in defending immigrant women, but her argument which is oriented towards the cultural dichotomy is, because of its location within the argumentative web, tinted by an Orientalist view of the "other" culture which is associated with keeping women at home. This was the argument used by the Social Democratic mayor Per

Madsen to restrict family reunions. The leftist/feminist argument for keeping the

kindergarten open for immigrant women's sake becomes, thus, stronger by appealing to

the Orientalist notion of the immigrant culture, but only because the Orientalist notion of

immigrants' culture had already become a powerful discursive resource that could be

treated as common sense. In a reflexive moment, the council member may even challenge

Orientalism as an ideology of the colonialist/imperialist enterprise, but in Danish

discursive context, it provides a rhetorical resource to "defend" a specific project deemed

good for immigrants.

The orientation towards the centripetal force of cultural ontology of the social was

evident in explicitly anti-racist statements. According to a news story in *Berlingske*

*Tidende*, the Teacher's Union wanted to participate more actively in immigration debate

to stop "immigrants and refugees from being made into scapegoats for all social

problems" (11/13/1987), but what this meant was that teachers had a responsibility to

teach immigrant children about having respect for Danish culture and about "what is

allowed in our country and how to navigate in the Danish system." That is, to stop racism

one must deal with the source of racism: the immigrants themselves. If immigrants learn

to respect Danish culture – again it is not explicated what Danish culture is and how they

are supposed to be taught about cultural respect – Danes' resentment towards them may

decrease. This has been one of the main argumentative strategies of the "liberal"

culturalism against racism: we do not need to panic; they will change and begin behaving

just like us. An "immigrant-friendly" commentary in *Politiken* was a typical exponent of

this argument: the commentator explored the earlier immigrations to Denmark and

explained that even though the immigrants kept their culture for a while, their cultural

characteristics had been erased over time. He concluded that, "integration takes time" and urged Danes to be patient and tolerant despite the fact that "apparently when there are problems in places such as Ishøj, it can have adverse consequences for both parts [Danes and immigrants] – and the [Danes'] good will." ("Tolerance is not dead in Denmark, well?" 11/11/1987). This argument has been repeated numerous times over the last two decades of immigration debate.

## 1987–Present: Successive Series of Moral Panics as a Way of Sustaining Hegemony

A few years later, researchers began to note that the extreme right had pushed its premises into the center of the debate. Gaasholt and Togeby (1995) wrote in 1995 that anti-immigrant forces "have won the struggle both for access to the media and for the way the issue is presented in the media" (p. 163). Steve Sampson (1995) noted that "Until a few years ago, anti-immigrant, anti-foreigner sentiment was considered to be the property of the Danish extreme Right [...] The anti-foreigner statements by these groups were interpreted [...] as manifestations of xenophobia or racism, if not pure pathology. The laments of the Right about "the threat to Danishness" were seen as incoherent articulations by individuals who were uninformed, manipulated, "racist" or simply "crazy."" However, the threat to Danishness now had become "an object of discourse" and taken the center state in political life and cultural debate. The best indication was "the Social Democratic congress' focus on the foreign workers and the few hundred family reunifications [which] demonstrated that foreigners, integration of foreigners and Danish culture are now primary concerns in Danish public life" (p. 59). Carl-Ulrik Schierup

(1993) criticized the culturalist bias in academic research for having provided ammunition to the culturalization of the field and subsequently cultural racism.

Once the focus shifted to the cultural background of immigrants, culture became an elastic concept that explains almost every social phenomenon that involves immigrants. Culture became a shorthand description that stands for a broader analysis of social life and social conflicts. As I noted earlier, the number of stories about immigrants and immigration written from a culturalist perspective had jumped from 1.7% to 13.1% within a year between 1986 and 1987. In 2001, 32.2% of all stories were written from a cultural perspective. This is almost one third of all stories in my sample about immigrants and immigration. Considering that the sample includes all kinds of stories from sport activities to small episodes of crime or violence, which could not be coded as having a culturalist perspective[61], one third of the sample is more impressive than it sounds.

The focus on immigrants' culture has been secured through a successive series of moral panics which have been periodically produced around issues such as immigrant criminality, immigrants' misuse of the social system, private schools for immigrant children, honor killings, forced marriages, immigrants' birth rates, headscarves, and gang rapes, which were all explained with immigrants' cultural and religious norms. As a result of these panics, the Social Democratic-led government tightened immigration laws 36 times between 1993 and 2001 ("Ali and the 36 restrictions," *Politiken*, 7/8/2001).

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[61] These stories – although they do not have explicit culturalist perspectives – would still be read in a discursive environment in which all social conflicts are explicitly or implicitly interpreted as a cultural conflict.

These moral panics produced not only a continuous barrage of legal restrictions on immigrants' rights but also kept the focus on immigrants as a cultural and social threat.

Hegemony is not a given state of affairs once it is achieved: social life is too heterogeneous to be neatly articulated into the antagonistic articulations. Every articulation leaves out a surplus of meaning that continuously threatens the stability of the hegemonic articulation. In other words, hegemony has to be continuously fought for; the antagonisms have to be continuously reproduced. Moral panics are strategic moments of discourse to keep the focus on immigration and reproduce immigrants as an antagonistic social category that threatens the cohesion (homogeneity) of society. Moral panics help turn single acts of deviance such as murder, rape or violence into symptomatic elements of a larger cultural pattern. A murder becomes, thus, more than a murder: it becomes an example of the general threat immigrants pose to peace and cohesion. This is achieved through a tautological move: murder is equated with immigrants' culture because it is committed by an immigrant and immigrant as a cultural-ontological category turns murder into an instance of "immigrant criminality;" and immigrants' culture in turn is used to explain murder as a cultural act as if the specific character of the murder already is an already existing phenomenon. The tautological move also contributes to the construction of antagonism: murder as "immigrant criminality" draws the boundaries of society and simultaneously keeps immigrants outside those boundaries as if boundaries were already there.

I want to discuss this with an example. In November 1996, the doorman of a discotheque was killed by a Palestinian teenager who was denied entry. This murder was discussed in an exclusively culturalist manner in the media as if murder would be natural

in Muslim cultures. One interviewee in *Ekstra Bladet* said, "I cannot tolerate their violence. Vikings do not carry guns and knifes. That is not part of our culture." (11/25/1996) This is not our culture." This is not to say that the journalists and commentators actually believe that murder is a socially and culturally accepted act in Muslim countries, but once murder is to be explained culturally, that reflexivity disappears from the horizon of discourse. Murders reproduce Muslim immigrant while the "Muslim immigrant" (Islam) explains murder. The normalized absurdity of cultural explanations becomes clearer when two identical acts are compared to one another. About a week after the murder by the Palestinian teenager, a Dane killed a person while firing into a discotheque, again because he was denied entry. This time, no reference was made to his cultural background or ethnicity. He was a "madman," a deviant; and it was an individual act of deviance (Diken 1998: 60).

Moral panics, then, are not merely rhetorical tactics that help the hegemonic forces to win the "silent majority" over to support increasing control but also "moments of discourse" that reproduce the antagonistic relationship between society and immigrants.

The frequency of the moral panics seemed to have increased substantially over the last two decades. When I was in Denmark for a two months period in the summer of 2001, I experienced the beginnings of two such moral panics: the first one was about the "explosion of the number of Muslim immigrants in Denmark," and the second one was about "gang rapes" which later that year became the most visible theme of the elections and that marked another turning point in the political landscape, with the Danish People's Party gaining direct influence on the government for the first time in history.

The first panic was about the number of Muslim immigrants and was created

solely by *JyllandsPosten*. In the middle of the summer period (7/15/2001) in which the

density of political news is relatively low, the paper published a prognosis which

forecasted that one third of the population would be "immigrants from less-developed

countries" (signified by a picture of a young woman with headscarf) and warned that

immigration would change Danish national identity. Some scientists protested that a

prognosis over the demographics that spans over a century could not be made in any

rational way, but others responded by taking numbers as the starting point of their

responses. The panic had the typical elements of a moral panic: it was created

deliberately by manipulating numbers; experts, politicians and institutional authorities

responded to the manipulated numbers in similar terms; and soon there were discussions

of new initiatives to prevent the prognosis from happening.

This was a deliberate act to create a new debate by *JyllandsPosten*: they had

asked economists from the Danish Statistical Institute to produce a population prognosis

for the newspaper for the next century. They published it in the midst of a non-news

period when the debate would not be drown among other news and the story was

published immediately before the publication of an official report that discussed the

values upon which the future of Denmark should be built (and an assessment of the actual

state of immigrants' integration into these values). There is an interesting twist here: the

report that was to be published was the result of a similar story published in the same

paper in the summer of 1999 by the same reporter based on another population prognosis,

which also forecast tremendous changes in the demography of Denmark ("Multi-

Denmark, 8/29/1999). That story was also illustrated with a veiled woman. The prognosis

was prepared by the demographer Poul Chr. Matthiessen who drew a picture of an imminent threat. Both Matthiessen and *JyllandsPosten* urged the Social Democratic Interior Minister Karen Jespersen to form a think tank to prepare a report on the future values of Denmark. The minister accepted the proposal and appointed a 5-person committee including Matthiessen. These connections were not mentioned in the media's coverage of the debate on demographic prognosis or the report. As Hallin (1989) suggest, journalists' concentration "on day-to-day events is a dulling of historical imagination." (p. 91).

*JyllandsPosten'*s story was part of a larger effort to create a new panic about immigration. The story and the publication of the report were followed by an intense debate on Danish values and the integration of immigrants. It was during this debate that new restrictions on family reunion rights were proposed (and later made into law by the new government that came to power in November 2001) and the idea that the social benefits that immigrants receive should be reduced to create incentives for immigrants to find jobs. Not surprisingly, the 5-person think tank concluded that Muslim immigrants were not integrated into society and they utilized much higher percentage of welfare payments. Unemployment was described as the result of immigrants' incompatible cultural values. The panic was used by *JyllandsPosten* to promote a new round of measures against Muslim immigrants. The day after the publication of think tank's report, the editorial referred to the report as an official testimony to the huge problems with Muslim immigrants and urged political parties to take the problems seriously and rethink immigration policies accordingly. According to the paper, Muslim immigrants who made up about 5% of the population used 38% of welfare payments. The problem was that

Muslim immigrants did not have any will to integrate harmoniously into Danish society but asked Denmark to adjust itself. Instead of adjusting, they came to Denmark having learnt phrases such as "demands," "rights," "welfare benefits," and were not willing to learn more than the phrase "sick day compensation" ("Dark prospects" 8/17/2001).

It was truly a circular process: the paper asked a demographer to prepare a prognosis and used it to call for that creation of a think tank that would map out Danish values and immigrants' problems with adjusting to those values. The demographer Poul Chr. Matthiessen became a member of the small think tank; and the think tank's report was used by the newspaper as a neutral expert testimony which then could be used to promote anti-(Muslim) immigrant measures. The entire political establishment took part in the process by discussing the premises laid out by *JyllandsPosten* and the think tank. Many of the values mentioned in the report were later formulated in an integration contract that immigrants are supposed to sign when applying for residency in Denmark (see the previous chapter).

The second moral panic I witnessed happened immediately after the first. This time, the focus was on "gang rapes" and the occasion was the conviction of four immigrant youths for gang-raping a White Danish girl. The conviction was covered extensively by the media, which took the opportunity to discuss Muslim sexual behavior, sexual knowledge, and sexual prejudices. It was slowly becoming an occasion for a new "law and order" campaign. The Social Democratic Justice Minister Frank Jensen did not waste the opportunity and gave *Politiken* an exclusive interview on the issue. Although the editors in *Politiken* were perfectly clear that this was an early start on the election

campaign[62], the interview was published on the front page and Jensen proposed harsher penalties in gang rape cases without mentioning immigrants but the message was clear – the Social Democrats wanted to be harsh on immigrants to restore law and order. This is the dilemma that Social Democrats have been trapped into: they follow the lead and compete on being harsher but are also constrained by the remnants of social democratic principle of not appearing explicitly racist. In this case, the rape panic was effectively utilized during the elections by the Liberal Party who chose a picture of the immigrant youths and their sisters with headscarves as election poster and mobilized its election campaign around a single slogan – "Time for change" (See the previous chapter).

The latest example of the moral panics is well known internationally: the cartoon crisis. It was again *JyllandsPosten* that decided that it was time to teach Muslims "to accept being ridiculed and insulted" (9/30/2005) because this was a part of the Danish culture of "freedom of expression." The tragic consequences of this provocation and the critique of Denmark by international organizations such as UN and European Council are well known. In domestic politics, the crisis led to a new set of proposals to tighten immigration laws, but what is more important is that the support for the Danish People's Party reached a record high level as the result of crisis, bringing the party very close to the Social Democrats (traditionally the biggest party), who now face the risk of being reduced to third place for the first time in its history. But this time, the crisis also revealed a greater political polarization within Danish society: the centrist Radicals (known as the

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[62] At the time of Minister's phone call, I was following the reporter who made the interview as a part of my ethnographic observations at major media outlets in Denmark during the summer of 2001. I witnessed the discussions among the editors.

most immigrant-friendly party) seemed to have secured increased support by voters, as did the Socialist People's Party (a party left of Social Democracy). These are the protest votes that represent the resentment against the total domination of racist paradigm in Danish public life. Total hegemony usually means great polarization in a society and sections of society channel their resentment towards parties that seem to be relatively further away from the hegemonic center. However, the Socialist People's Party's leader was one of the few supporters of JyllandsPosten in cartoon crisis and wrote that "Muslims have to put up with the fact that we think it as profane what they find holy" (*Politiken*, 3/19/2006). The most "immigrant-friendly" party, the centrist Radicals, is represented by Naser Khader ,whose authority is built upon educating Danes about Muslim immigrants and Islamic values. So much for the distance from the hegemonic center.

In other words, despite the fact that the Radicals and the Socialist People's Party are the only eligible parties that can attract protest votes against the racist hegemonic center, they nonetheless represent the relatively "positive" pole of the culturalist-racist hegemony rather than offering a counter-hegemonic vision. Therefore, it is pure illusion that the resentment against the blunt racism of the Danish political system can be channeled into a powerful political force for social change without a drastic rearticulation of the political/social imaginary. To paraphrase Laclau (2005), both the Radicals and the Socialist People's Party's visions are limited by the straightjacket of the racist hegemonic formation whose parameters – the ontology of the social based on mutually exclusive cultural categories – remain substantially unchanged (p. 138).

# CHAPTER 4
# RHETORIC OF THE HEGEMONIC INTERVENTION

Can a single man (or woman) have such a great impact on history that s/he causes it to change direction?

This question is loaded with certain assumptions about the nature of representation, which is centered on the question whether "leaders" shape, lead or represent crowds, mobs, constituencies, social classes or the "people"? Zaller (1992) begins his discussion of "who leads whom" with a tale about a nineteenth-century revolutionary who was sipping wine in a café when a crowd suddenly rushed past the street. "Mon Diéu!" he cries, "the people are on the move, I am their leader, I must follow them," and races out into the street to the head of the crowd (p. 268). The example suggests that the leaders may be leading but they might also be following.[63] My argument in this chapter is that leading and following may be one and the same process.

Although classical Marxist theory and liberal democratic theory seem to be on opposite sides on this question, it is my contention that they both share the same assumption about the relationship between the representative and the represented – that there is a collective interest/will to be represented and that there is someone to represent it. For classical Marxist theory, social classes are defined in terms of their

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[63] Zaller's argument is that the elite lead masses by shaping their opinions as expressed in opinion polls rather than vice versa.

"objective" interests and their leaders who represent these interests. In some versions of Marxist theory, members of oppressed social classes may not be aware of their own class interests or may be ideologically duped), but since their class interests are defined by relations of production, the task of the leadership of these social classes is to represent these objective interests. The debate in Marxist theory is about the strategies in the struggle against a given, universal enemy (the capitalist class and its power apparatus) rather than the nature of representation.

In democratic theory, on the other hand, in its different variants, representation is understood as the representation of the popular will, which is conceptualized either as the aggregation of different interests or a rational consensus reached through a deliberative process.[64] What distinguishes democratic theory from classical Marxism is the procedural aspects of representation rather than the nature of it. Both of them conceive the will of the people as something that exists prior to representation.

The discussion focuses, then, on how to represent the collective will. But what if we take the position that the collective will does not exist in the first place but comes into existence in the very process of representation that constitutes the "will" it represents? Since populist movements are generally mobilized around a leader, how do we then understand the influence of the leader on history?

In this chapter I will be discussing this question in the context of Søren Krarup's intervention in public discourse in September 1986. As I indicated in the

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[64] For Laclau (2005), proponents of aggregation include Schumpeter and Downs, while proponents for rational deliberative model include Habermas and Rawls (p. 164).

previous chapter, the impact of his intervention was both immediate and long-lasting.

In this chapter, I will be analyzing the immediate rhetorical strategies that catapulted

him into prominence and enabled him to define the terms on which immigration was

discussed (immediate impact) and the hegemonic articulation of the popular will

around the signifier, Danishness – an articulation that reached a relatively

stabilized/normalized status (long-term impact). It is this second aspect of his

hegemonic intervention that is at the heart of the debate about representation.

I would like to begin my discussion with a quote Krarup's own account of the

events around his boycott campaign. To recap, in the last days of September 1986, he

placed two consecutive ads in a right-wing newspaper (*Jyllands-Posten*) in which he

called upon Danes to boycott the donation campaign organized by the Danish

Refugee Council. It was, he claimed, a protest against the immigration policies that

the parliament adopted. The ad created an immediate controversy and the entire

establishment rallied against him. He writes about those days in a diary format that

was published as a book a year after the controversy:

> We have a sense that we are about to write a modest history of
> Denmark and chatter among ourselves about it. We do not need to
> reach the skies over it, but the Danish popular manifestation will not
> end without consequences. The existing fatal refugee law cannot
> survive the storm, something which the politicians are already about to
> understand. We also received news from Christiansborg [the
> parliament]. Politicians follow the commotion with attention and
> anxiety. "Will they form a party?" they ask in the corridors of
> Christiansborg. We have a sense that if we wanted, we could win
> several seats in the parliament. The same sense probably haunts the
> politicians – not only the [right wing] parties but also Social
> Democrats whose constituents are those from whom we largely hear
> [my translation] (quoted in Engelbreth Larsen 2001: 13).

The book was written in diary format, which suggests that the thoughts expressed here are authentic to the time period. I am interested in the analytical/reflexive quality of the "diary." In this text, there is a clear conceptual distinction between the "we" he invokes and "Danish popular manifestation," although the latter is equated with the boycott campaign he himself had started. The concrete "we" he is writing about consists of a small group of people who organized the boycott campaign, as it is also indicated in his distinction between "we" and the "people" that "we" hear from.  The simultaneous distinction and equation between "we" and "people" has a rhetorical purpose: on the one hand, Krarup stages himself as the leader and starter of a popular movement, and at the same time he describes the movement, the manifestation of the popular will as something already there, prior to his leadership – a rhetorical move, which authenticates his leadership. He continues: "I included my phone number and address in the announcement, and now the storm has formed. We cannot do anything else than sit by the phone. [...] And it is purely thankful, yes, downright liberated people, we are speaking with. Some even cry in the telephone" (quoted in Engelbreth Larsen 2001: 13).

That is, he gave voice to people's thoughts and concerns that were already there but which they had difficulty expressing. What were these concerns and thought? I have quoted from both ads in the previous chapter but I would like to translate the first ad in its entirety from September 1, 1986, which I will be analyzing for its rhetoric later in this chapter:

> "On Sunday October 5, they the bell will ring on my door. The bell will also ring on your door. That Sunday, the bells will ring on all Danish doors, for it is a national donation day under the motto "Refugee 86."

If I am at home, I will answer the door myself. And I will kindly greet the nice collector who has pushed the ring button and I will do my best to make my tone lovely and my act polite, because I do not want to annoy the collector. The collectors are without doubt driven by the best intentions and motivations. The collectors should be received with friendliness. But I will tell them: No, not a dime!

It is not because I cannot afford to help. Neither is it because I am against helping refugees, who are, in my opinion, in one of the worst situations a human can face. But it is simply and solely because "Refugee 86" is for the benefit of the Danish Refugee Council.

And I will not support this organization with as little as a dime. On the contrary, I consider each dime to the Refugee Council as a dime to the ruin of the fatherland. This so-called aid work has in the last years established itself as a state within the state, which imposes it law in the parliament, terrorize public debate, drain the Treasury for millions, and act as a bailiff among [poor] peasants. Do you remember the case in Easter High Court? Do you remember how the chairman of the Refugee Council ordered the anxious villagers around? And do you remember when Mogens Glistrup [the leader of the only anti-immigrant party at the time] allowed himself to express his opinion, and the same chairman, Thor A. Bak, commented on it. "Coop him in!," he hissed in the press. And do you remember [what happened] in Ho? And in Blokhus? Each time it is the same scene: a dictatorial Refugee Council, which speaks to us as if to dogs, demands of our tax money, constantly requests more staff members and snaps its fingers at [do not care a damn about] our concerns.

For there is a real problem which the Refugee Council wants to forbid us Danes to speak about and utter publicly: if an uncontrolled and unconstrained mass migration of Mohammedan and Oriental refugees come through our borders, then we cannot be here ourselves – in any case not in naturalness and peace. What disaster the Danish Refugee Council has caused to Denmark's future is immeasurable and will not be forgotten. Is Copenhagen going to be a Danish city in 50 years? Can Danes continue to be a people when there is no longer a common language, history and religion? Or is it a fate such as Lebanon's that awaits us – torn apart by wars between incompatible minority groups? The Danish Refugee Council has tremendously damaged our fatherland with its proud and self-good pharisaism and its – by virtue of the "noble" purpose – unconstrained power over law-making and social life, and that politicians such as Bernhard Baunsgaard, Preben Wilhjelm and Ole Espersen have contributed [to the damage] does not lessen the Refugee Council's guilt. They have acted as an occupation

power in a foreign country. They have deliberately taken a position *against* the Danes who are concerned with good reason.

And now they beg for money in order to continue terrorizing us...

No, not a dime!

But that I will not support the Danish Refugee Council with as little as a dime does not mean that I will not help refugees, and the day after, on Monday, October 6, when the post office is open, I will send 100 kroner to the Danish Afghanistan Committee [....] There, the help work is done by people who do not trample on their own to demonstrate their great goodness towards aliens. Here, we can open both our doors and wallets. The Danish Refugee Council is not going to be endowed but to be put on its place.

It can happen on Sunday, October 5.

A week after this first newspaper ad, Krarup paid another ad in the same paper in which he repeated his accusations against the Refugee Council but also turned his harsh attacks against the entire political establishment: "We have also the chance to tell our politicians the simple truth. In 1983, they carried out an alien act, which has abolished our border. The door to Denmark is [now] wide open. And in the years after 1983, we have seen the result. In 1985, 10,000 asylum-seekers came. Will 50,000 come in 1986?" In this ad, he called for turning the boycott of the "Refugee 86" into a popular protest against the refugee policy.

I will be making a detailed analysis of the ads later in this chapter; for now I am only interested in answering the question about the relationship between "popular will" and the leader. A quick comparison of these two texts – the "diary" and the newspaper ad – will be useful for examining the relationship between the leader and the popular will.

In his published "diary," Krarup clearly portrays himself as a leader making history by giving voice to the popular will. His answer to the question, "whether a single man can have a great impact on history?" would in this sense be a clear "yes." But there are some complications if we take at face value his claim that he gave voice to the popular will. First, the manifestation of the Danish popular will came into expression only through his writings and actions: people did not pour into streets as in the old tale of the nineteenth-century revolution. The only venues in which the resentment against the immigration laws was expressed were opinion polls and letters to the editor. As I already discussed, opinion polls themselves created public opinion by asking questions about matters of controversy that was created elsewhere. It is true that they expressed resentment against receiving more refugees but the arguments and reasoning behind "yes" and "no" answers were absent from polls, which cannot accommodate the flexibility of people's reasoning. I argued in the previous chapter that the poll results should be understood in relation to the moral panic that was deliberately created by the police, the immigration authorities, the Red Cross and the Justice Minister. The media were full of stories that created an image of uncontrollable immigration in terms of physical, economic and social burden; a burden so heavy that it seemed impossible for society to lift, and about half of the "population" said "no" to further immigration when asked by pollsters. Can opinion polls, then, be used as an expression of a popular will, especially in the light of the fact that pollsters ask pre-formulated "yes" or "no" questions about an already existing controversy? Danish surveys "show," for instance, that Danes simultaneously express negative views about refugees while showing tolerance and expressing

willingness to help people in need (Gaasholt and Togeby 1995: 36). With this in mind, I argue that the opinion polls in 1986 showed little more than there was a majority against further immigration of refugees but what that majority meant otherwise was unclear.

In this sense, the letters to the editor are a better indication of what "people" think, aside from the question of the representativeness of the letters. They can better be analyzed for the arguments, orientations, and argumentative strategies to express resentments. And as I argued earlier, the letters were too heterogeneous to express a clear articulation of what the popular will was about. I have to repeat my analytical distinction here: it is not that readers did not use the terms such as "popular will," "we, the people," "we, Danes" and so on; they did use them often, but we need to keep an analytical distinction between the abstract meaning of the these categories (insofar we assume that there is an abstract meaning – these abstract meanings would still be colored by particular theoretical approaches) and the function of these terms in actual discourse and the general category they are used to describe. I argued earlier that the letters to the editor until Krarup's intervention were highly responsive to the humanitarian framework in which the question of refugees was debated. Danishness was often invoked as an argument in this context either to promote tolerance as the main characteristic of Danish culture, or as a category of people that created the welfare system through their taxes. The latter associated an ethnic category with the notion of "people" but this association was more of a possible trait than a logical and necessary equation. The resentment against the politicians was also articulated in different directions: for some, it was the politicians from left and center parties; for

Social Democrats, it was the right-wing government; for others it was a vague and abstract class of politicians that was the target. Furthermore, Krarup's intervention in discourse clearly galvanized the "humanists" who produced a counter-wave of "positive" letters to the editor which increased substantively the number of pro-refugee letters in this period.

My point here is that it is difficult to identify and locate a clear articulation of a unified popular will with clear and well-defined demands and targets. As Zaller (1992) would argue, the polls and letters were responses to the elite discourse – the panic that was in the making – rather than an expression of an organized movement that could be described as the manifestation of the popular will. It had to be first articulated as popular will by an articulating force, and this is exactly what Krarup did through his ads and subsequent actions. The popular manifestation against immigration laws which according to Krarup's "diary" threatened the political elite came into existence through his own intervention in discourse. This is not to say that he manipulated or misrepresented the popular will as the classical theories of representation would explain: it was his representation that was the very premise for the constitution of the popular will. In Laclau's words, "the popular symbol or identity, being a surface of inscription, does not *passively express* what is inscribed in it, but actually *constitutes* what it expresses through the very process of its expression. In other words: the popular subject position does not simply *express* a unity of demands constituted outside and before itself, but is the decisive moment in establishing that unity (Laclau 2005: 99).

In a more concrete manner, it means that the future of national identity was one among other concerns which did not have a necessary and logical relationship with concerns about not getting a fair deal in the allocation of resources or with the resentment against the neo-liberal economic policies of the right-wing government. They were not always articulated together; on the contrary, they were often flexibly and creatively woven with arguments about human treatment of refugees and with different suggestions to the solution of the problems.

Krarup's intervention articulated all of these different arguments, concerns and demands as instances of popular will into a chain of equivalence whose unity was established through the single link in the chain: the concern about the future of Danish national identity. In other words, that particular link in the chain came to condense the other links into a totality and represented that totality in the name of Danish nation. The naming of the equivalential chain as the "Danish people" was what held together the chain. The antagonism between Danish people and its adversaries (the political elite and the alien intruders) operated as a key which made the disintegration of the nation – and the inevitability of national recovery – intelligible. This articulation promised a solution to all problems of "society" by overcoming the chaos and reinstating order. It was no longer a question of getting rid of the right-wing government and its neo-liberal policies but re-instating the unity of the Danish nation which would prevent wasting resources on "aliens" who did not belong. The intervention itself was the decisive moment in establishing that unity. This is the significance of his intervention which explains his decisive impact on the direction of "history."

However, there is one more question to be asked: if similar ideas already were expressed prior to his intervention (even by himself in his columns in Jyllands-Posten) and "popular will" was also invoked in discourse prior to his ad campaign, why was it that his articulation gained ground at this juncture of history? Or in other words, what was it that catapulted him to prominence?

Part of the answer is the extent of the moral panic that was created around refugees as I discussed in the previous chapter. In a situation of radical disorder, some kind of order is needed, and the moral panic that the right wing government (especially the then Justice Minister Erik Ninn-Hansen) created led to a deeper crisis of representation (e.g. hegemonic crisis), which did not seem easy to resolve within the existing system of political representation. In times of a generalized disorder, there is a need for a more radical vision to represent and restore order, and he promised just that: to restore the order by reinstating Denmark to its "original state." The dislocation would be resolved; the gap would be filled, and order would be restored by removing from power the political elite who had "opened up Denmark's borders to aliens." It was the timing of the intervention and the choice of target that gave him an audibility that he could not have through his columns. Underlying structural economic and social tensions would probably have remained intractable problems with or without him, but the way in which they would be resolved was not predestined. However, a successful hegemonic intervention does not mean that the "leader" who articulates the "popular will" becomes the actual ruler. Laclau (2005) gives the example of Mandela who did hold together ANC with all its different parts but was in jail.

The other part of the answer to the question, "what catapulted Krarup into prominence?" should be answered by looking at his rhetorical strategies. Krarup succeeded in getting access to discourse and in becoming a central figure in the debate on immigration through well-executed rhetorical strategies. I will now turn to my analysis of these strategies but first, a short biography.

## Krarup: The Son of a Resistance Fighter

Søren Krarup was born in December 1937. His father was a priest who was involved in the resistance movement against the Nazi occupation of Denmark during WWII. During his campaign against the Danish immigration policy in 1986, Krarup described his father's involvement in the resistance against the German occupation as formative years in his life. He described his own campaign as the new resistance movement against the political and intellectual elite whose actions he described as "the acts of a foreign occupation power."

His father also had a formative influence on young Krarup. He was an important figure in a religious movement that mobilized around the journal, *Tidehverv* (Epoch), which argued against the humanist turn in religion. Under the influence of his father, Søren Krarup studied theology and became a priest and the co-editor of *Tidehverv* in 1965. For *Tidehverv,* it is evangelism that comes first, and evangelism is what defines the Danish nation. The main enemy is humanism and all forms of idealism which try to take an issue with "injustice." Injustice, according to Krarup, is God's reality and the reality cannot be changed through the political and the social. Justice will be taken care of by God; this is not in the hands of human beings and does not belong to this world. The Christian commandment "Love thy

neighbor" is impossible and against human nature. Christianity is not a sentimental

religion and humanism makes it look sentimental and passionate (Engelbreth Larsen

2001:15). Since evangelism comes first as the defining element of the Danish culture,

the task of the state power and democratic system is to protect it. If there is a conflict

between the state power and evangelism, one should take a stand against power.

Krarup has always been critical of the power that political parties have gained

because their power has grown at the expense of "the people." The treasonous

immigration and European Union policies are the result of the political parties'

dominion.

Krarup's entry into the political and cultural debate was not new. His first

book was published in 1960 and since then he had been a sharp voice in public

debate, notorious for his pointed and provocative language. He once summarized the

essence of the *Tidehverv* movement in these words: "God is everything, I am nothing,

and you are an idiot!" He was called a discussion-butcher with whom it is a spiritual

hara-kiri to engage (*Berlingske Tidende*, 9/27/1986).

As this short summary of Krarup's views shows, his powerful entrance into

the political scene in late 1986 was not a coincidence. In his books, columns and

commentaries, he had been castigating "society" with his sharp language and views

about welfare system, youth movement, women's movement (which he called "lady

cause"),[65] the right to chastise children (he called it self-defense), democratism (his

word), and European Common Market (he was vehemently against European

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[65] It is ironic how his ideas about the threat to Danish culture by the alien cultures are now adopted by some members of the feminist movement against whom he raged.

integration). He had also been raging against all the other permissives whom he considered as his mortal enemies: political parties, human rights ideologists, psychologists, pedagogues (educators), and social workers (often mentioned as "[society-]managers"). As his standpoints in these cases indicate, he was considered as right-wing extremist even before his infamous campaign (*Politiken,* 9/25/1986, *Berlingske Tidende*, 9/27/1986).

He was already well-known figure in public debate with his provocative language, but as only one voice among others clearly defined by his extremist views; his appeal was limited to the religious and intellectual audiences and had little appeal to "ordinary people." What catapulted him into such a prominence in public debate was the combination of the hegemonic crisis and his rhetorical skills to cut through at the right time, at the right place with the right "speech."

*Berlingske Tidende's* portrait of him (9/271986) described the situation immediately before the newspaper ads as one in which Danes "were routinely about to fish up their wallets to buy some good conscience from the Refugee 86' collectors. Until the infamous ad, the greatest concern was if the collector would ring the door bell in the middle of Marilyn Monroe movie on TV." Suddenly, there was this man who claimed that the Refugee Council was terrorizing the Danish people; and it was about to turn Denmark into Lebanon; and the Danes were in danger of annihilation as a people, and it was altogether the fault of the politicians who let it happen. An avalanche of complaints was given the same day to the church, the Bishop, and the Church Minister. The day after, he was reported to the police for racism.

## Rhetorical strategies

Four interrelated rhetorical strategies appear to be at work in Krarup's ads: 1) being the right man at the right place at the right moment with the right kind of rhetoric to so as to propel himself into the center of the public debate; 2) the construction of silent majority through the claims about censorship by the Refugee Council; 3) the staging of himself through this construction, into the role of an organic intellectual who speaks up on their behalf, represents their concerns and tells the truth; 4) through this representation, forcing the opponents to accept his three basic premises as the starting point of the discussion: first that alien/Muslim immigrants pose a real threat to Danish nation; second that Danes were worried about the future of their nation; and third that there was a gap between the people and the political parties who are insensitive to the people's worries. Once these basic premises were accepted by opponents, the path to articulate a counter-hegemonic social formation was charted.

1) Creating controversy as a way of entering discourse as a central figure

It is difficult to know if he targeted Refugee 86 deliberately so as to create the greatest possible controversy – something that he could not do in his columns.[66] It became immediately clear that it was the right choice of target, if controversy was what he wanted. Not only did he rage against an organization that was relatively non-political (its primary function was to aid refugees *after* they had achieved refugee status), the organization also had nothing to do with the increase in the number of

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[66] He indicates in his "diary" that he was completely aware of it but it may have been rewritten retrospectively

asylum-seekers. Moreover, the Refugee Council was constituted with the participation of a number of humanitarian organizations and thus represented the consensual, non-politicized nature of the humanitarian approach. As important is the humanitarian nature of the Refugee 86 donation campaign: the collected money was for refugees abroad, which made it purely a humanitarian collection with no ties to refugee policies in Denmark. He was thus challenging the very humanitarian self-image of Denmark; it seemed inevitable that it would create a feeling of animosity against him.

However, there seems to be a more psychological explanation too. Reactions to the moral panic were already reflected in polls, in letters to the editor and in commentaries. There was a feeling that the political representation system was out of sync with public opinion, which was useful for pressurizing the parliament to tighten laws. But panics can also have destabilizing effects on the political system. When Krarup began his boycott campaign, there was already a palpable fear that resentment against refugees might translate into the boycott of a humanitarian, non-political event. *Jyllands-Posten* reported the day before the infamous ad that, "Refugee debate may harm the collection" (9/20/1986). The leader of the Refugee 86 campaign, Finn Slumstrup, expressed uneasiness about the possible effects that the resentment against refugees might have on the donation campaign and emphasized the difference between refugee policies and refugee donation campaign (*Kristeligt Dagblad*, 9/22.1986, *Politiken*, 9/21/1986).

The effectiveness of the rhetorical strategy of creating controversy became evident immediately after the publication of the ad. Media coverage was extensive,

although it was not favorable to Krarup. He received an incredible amount of attention and space to promote his arguments. When he published his first ad, the xenophobic nature of it was clear to many ordinary Danes who did not like its racist tone and who subsequently mobilized against him. The mobilization was evident by the substantial increase in the number of positive letters to the editor in this period (positive towards refugees), pulling down the percentage of negative letters from 81.8% in 1984 to 59.8% in 1986, which also indicates the polarization of public debate. The positive letters to the editor, newspaper editorials and commentaries described the ads as an appeal to "the inner swine" of the people, implying that Krarup's campaign had racist tones. The reaction by the intellectual and political elite was fierce and contemptuous: the tabloid, *Ekstra Bladet* called him "Black Søren" and "the apostle of hate"; an editorial in the paper described its reactions to Krarup as "vomiting feelings;" *BT*'s headline was "Rev. Krarup is on a crusade against refugees." The intellectual daily, *Information* titled its editorial in a similar manner, "Krarup's crusade," in which he was described as being possessed by an evil spirit. *Politiken*'s portrait of him had the title, "The dangerous priest." The mayor of Århus, the second largest city in Denmark, Thorkild Simonsen described the campaign "petty racism." Paul Hammerich, a well-known writer, described Krarup's "silent majority" as a "comic book team."

Krarup's campaign brought together organizations and individuals from wide range of the political, economic and social spectrum. The Confederation of Labor Unions (LA) and Danish Employers Association (DA) supported, in a common declaration, Refugee 86 and paid for whole-page ads in seven daily newspapers over

three days to show their support. The Industry Council and the Association for Municipalities also put counter-ads in newspapers. Many churches (Lutheran, Catholic, Baptists, Methodists) published alternative announcements in which they declared support for the donation campaign. 350 well-known writers and actors condemned Krarup's call for boycott and offered to perform free of charge in support of Refugee 86. Every newspaper urged people to sign up as volunteers and give donations and the government donated seven millions crowns. Never in Danish history was there a mobilization of this multitude for a single case. Against them was a lone priest: Søren Krarup.

The attacks did not scare Krarup; rather, as his biography indicates, he thrived on controversy. Neither did the accusations of racism bother him. On the contrary, he cleverly used these accusations as a part of his counter-attack. First of all, he had never said that he was against supporting refugees; he had actually encouraged people to send their money to Danish-Afghanistan Committee. He was not against refugees but the Refugee Council – the organization that "terrorized" the Danish people. He sued the mayor of Århus for calling his campaign "petite racism" not because he is sensitive or revengeful but because it was a principal case through which "I once for all would like to have the loathsome and terrorist term of abuse, "racism" banished from public debate as a tool to bring to heel and to bully the other part" ("Report from the battleground," *Jyllands-Posten,* 10/4/1986,). In other words, racism was, in his view, a tool in the hands of the authoritarian elite who used it to suppress people's expression of dissent or concern.

In this way, the attacks and accusations of racism against Krarup had the reverse effect: they not only put him into the role of martyr but also proved his point that anybody who expressed dissent against the political and cultural establishment would be bullied. That he himself was a bully in debates where he took part was beside the point. This was his rhetorical strategy of polarizing society - galvanizing resentment against immigration policy and channeling it into a general dissent against the political establishment. The attacks also helped establish him as the daring spokesperson for people whose views were suppressed. Most importantly, the controversy that he created became a controversy about Krarup himself, which made him the principal part of it and paved the path for his forceful entry to the discourse as a central figure. Ironically, almost all of the newspaper stories against him had excerpts from the ad in order to explain the reactions against it, thereby further disseminating his messages. Very few people had actually seen the ads, but the entire population in Denmark quickly came to know what the ads were saying through media repetition.

2) Construction of the Danish people through the silent majority

The controversy that his intervention created was crucial for the constitution of the popular will or the "Danish people," which is otherwise an empty category with no determinate meaning. Culture or the social is too heterogeneous to be fixed into a single category of "Danishness" or "Danish people." In order to fix – however temporarily – the meaning of a social formation such as the "Danish people," it is necessary to think about society as two irreducible camps structured around two incompatible sets of values. If one could move from one camp to the other (e.g. from

immigrant camp to Danish camp), the relationship between the two camps would be differential, that is, they would be parts of the same differential system with no particular antagonistic relationship. In other words, there needs to be a constitutive antagonism or a radical frontier between two social formations whose demands and values exclude one another's. A radical frontier implies a broken space, a gap in the harmonious continuity of the social. "There is a fullness of the community which is missing. This is decisive: the construction of the 'people' will be the attempt to give a name to that absent fullness" (Laclau 2005: 85).

The fierce fulmination by the political and cultural elite was turned around and was used to construct this broken space by Krarup, who described the resentment against immigration laws as the will of the Danish people, which could not be expressed due to the heavy-handed suppression by the Danish Refugee Council and their collaborators within the political and cultural establishment, who ruled in Denmark without listening to the people. The unity of the Danish people could no longer be sustained because of the open borders, which allowed culturally alien immigrants to "flood" Denmark, putting its existence as a national state in jeopardy. This is the notion of "absent fullness."

Antagonism was not only the result of the gap between the people and the elite with their "immigrant friends" and the people as he claimed; he actively antagonized the relationship through his rhetoric. His ads were not a simple expression of protest; it was the beginning of a resistance movement against the elite who "acted as an occupation army in a foreign country" by allowing "Mohammedan" refugees invade Denmark. That was exactly what had happened during WWII – "the

entire people united in a newly awaken but immemorial love to which the Germans were about to take from us" (*Jyllands-Posten*, 10/4/1986). The analogy to the resistance movement during WWII helped construct the antagonistic relationship between the good and the evil, between the people and the elite who let invasion happen.

The resistance movement against Nazi Germany, however, is idealized history writing. It was a myth created as part of the national healing process in the post-war period. It was well-known that the official line of the Danish government was to collaborate with Nazis during the occupation and the authorities sent Danish communists and Jews to Nazi concentration camps. The number of "resistance fighters" was relatively small; and after the war ended, there were instances of people beating up Danes who had worked for Germans or had slept with German soldiers, which indicates that Danish people were not united against German occupiers. It is only after the war that this small number of resistance fighters was made to signify the "entire" Danish people. Krarup uses this version of the history written by the winners as a rhetorical resource to re-construct Danish people through the metonym of resistance movement. The reference to the resistance movement renders political differences more than mere differences which, if it were, could be included within the differential system of the same social formation: it antagonizes the people to the elite "who act as an occupying power;" it creates an incommensurable gap between the people and the elite.

The real evil here is, of course, not the elite: they are the treasonous promoters of the subversive forces. They are not the ones who take away that "which people

have an immemorial love;" the real evil is the invader. As Krarup puts it in the first ad, the dominant elite's [the spirit of which was embodied in the Refugee Council] sin is to forbid "us Danes" to discuss the "real problem," which is the "uncontrolled and unconstrained mass immigration of Mohammedan and Oriental refugees."

This theme is well-known from Hollywood movies and is often invoked to unite "people" against the unknown enemy. The alien enemy, in these movies, is unknown because it rarely exposes its real face. Instead, the alien enemy takes over our bodies; they invade us from within and become indistinguishable; they just look and like us despite fundamental, genetically identifiable differences. In *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), for example, aliens come to the earth in the form of a plant that grows to become an exact copy of a human being. Once a pod person is fully grown and integrated into society, he/she works secretly to spread more pods to take over. This theme has been repeated many times: we have no choice but to unite against the alien invaders whose sole purpose is to annihilate "us."

The metaphor of the alien invader is a powerful tool in constructing "us" without having to define what "we" are. "We" becomes a phantasmatic construction that remains an empty space; "we" merely signifies "our" unbridgeable difference from the "aliens." The metaphor also allows for the emptiness of the opposite camp; we do not need racist designations to know what they are; we do not need to describe them as inferior to us. On the contrary, their superiority/inferiority is ambiguous since they have the capability of annihilating us and our culture. What is important is the incompatible nature of "us" and "them." This rhetorical move allows Krarup to avoid the racist epithets that his "followers" normally use to describe immigrants.

In other words, what defines "us" is the very frontier between them and us; the incompatibility of our natures. The social formations on both sides are thus produced through the frontier and the two camps come into existence as a result of this hegemonic articulation. If the relationship between the two camps is not articulated in antagonistic terms, the refugees could not be constructed as "invaders." For example, they could be conceived as social groups whose specific needs and demands could be fulfilled through their integration into the differential system of the expansive welfare system as was the political discourse about immigration in 1960s and 1970s (see chapter 2).

3) Staging himself as organic intellectual

Krarup's presentation of himself as the spokesman for the "silent majority" or "ordinary Danes" has sometimes been misinterpreted as if he were a "man of people," a person who experiences the same kind of problems as they. If it were the case, he would not be granted access to the mainstream discourse with the same force but would be relegated to the readers' columns. On the contrary, he situates himself as an "organic intellectual" at the same level as those he targets. "Organic intellectual" is a Gramscian-Marxist concept and designates the thinking and organizing element of a particular fundamental social class. These organic intellectuals are distinguished by their function in directing the ideas and aspirations of their class (Gramsci 1971: 3). His concept of organic intellectual should be understood as opposed to "traditional" intellectuals whose position in the interstices of society has a certain above-classes aura about it and conceals an attachment to a historical class formation. However, Krarup is not a Marxist and his organic attachment or allegiance is not to a social

class but the naturally Christian, antagonism-free, and culturally exclusive "Danish people." Although Gramsci broke away from classical Marxist distinctions between base and superstructure and shifted the focus from economy to politics, culture and ideology as the terrain on which power relations are produced and sustained, he retained a grain of essentialism: class was seen as an essential social structure, determined by its place in the economic relations and independent of political articulation – the identity of a social class was defined by its objective interests. If we followed Gramsci, we would have to describe Krarup as an "organic intellectual" who belongs to a social formation called "Danish people" which exists prior to his articulation. As my discussion throughout this chapter would indicate, the very formation of Danish people is part of the same process in which Krarup's positions himself as an "organic intellectual." This means that my use of "organic intellectual" is different from Gramsci's in the sense that he presents himself as one through the construction of the "silent majority" rather than belonging to the "silent majority" as if it already existed.

This positioning has two rhetorical advantages for Krarup. Firstly, this move grants him a supreme function based on his intellectual ability to diagnose the invisible but threatening "evil" which for the "ordinary" people is masked by their "immediate problems." Secondly, he displays a deep sensitivity to "public opinion" to which politicians normally are expected to conform but in this case merely shrugged their shoulders. This strategy allows him to distance himself from the vernacular discourse of the "ordinary" people, which is not regarded as acceptable in mainstream discourse. Indeed, the only time he says anything about refugees is when he

expressed deep sympathy for their fate. Through this, he was granted access to mainstream discourse as the tacitly accepted "intellectual representative" who was able to put into words the "thoughts and concerns" of the silent majority. It becomes thus a rhetorical tool that allows him to construct the silent majority. Presenting oneself as the representative of public opinion or the silent majority is one of the most useful devices in political persuasion.

His positioning of himself as the "organic intellectual" was a double move that not only allowed him to represent the "silent majority" but also let him present other elites as isolated from the realities of ordinary Danes and as people who care more about their image than know what is going on. The evil character of the political and cultural elite has more to do with their ignorance and self-obsession than knowingly wanting to destroy the country. They are arrogant in their "noble" naiveté: they think that speaking is the cause of the problem, and they think the evil can be prevented by silence. This is a typical right-wing discourse on immigration, race and ethnicity: the "pro-tolerant" liberals are naïve, their arguments may sound noble but do not address the problems of reality. Hence, their naiveté makes them dangerous (van Dijk 1991, 1993).

I argued that his positioning himself as the "organic intellectual" distanced him from the vernacular and at times racist utterances of "ordinary" Danes, and granted him access to mainstream discourse. But there is another side of it too. His intervention had also the effect of legitimizing those racist utterances. In the second ad, he wrote: "If [...] [someone showed] consideration for Danes who live in this country, the Refugee Council shouted with indignation and called it "racism." Just

look at Thor A. Bak's [the Chairman of the Council] statement about the government's plans to put the brakes on: 'It is a step back for democracy.' [...] Now we have the chance to tell the Danish Refugee Council that with democracy comes respect for the people whose life and country is at stake." In his version, racism was not an issue but an accusatory tool in the hands of the elite to bully people whose concerns were real. It was not shameful to express those concerns; on the contrary, suppressing the discussion about those concerns was a shameful, dangerous and treasonous act.

In both ads, the thread is the suppression of free discussion, of expression of people's real concerns and that the nature of people's concerns is not made into an issue. In other words, Krarup does not engage in a discussion about the existence of the silent majority and the nature of its concerns but presents it as the reality and basis for further discussion, as a basic premise of the argumentation. This seemingly small skid in formulation has in fact a greater rhetorical effect: any discourse about reality is at the same time an attempt to undermine alternative claims about reality, or in Mercer's words, "the struggle for hegemony at the level of discourse begins with the struggle to render 'unthinkable' the versions of reality put forward by one's opponents" (Mercer 1990: 206). One of the most effective ways of dealing with potential alternatives is to force one's definition of the reality as the basis for the argument. This is a well-known rhetorical move. People constantly pull a discussion in directions that allow them to define and redefine the situation. In short, this argumentative strategy allows Krarup to define the basic "problem" as the suppression of free debate rather than the nature of the silent majority and its

concerns; those are treated as given a priori and as a "common-place" that makes his own rendition of the situation appear non-ideological and factual (Billig 1988). If the opponents do not intervene at this level of the argumentation but argue about other aspects based on the taken-for-granted definition of the issue, half of the battle is already won. In this case, not only did the opponents avoid challenging Krarup about his definition of reality, they also seemed to tacitly accept the claim that people's concerns were not listened to.

How could they? The government had already been pressing the debate in the same direction to create a moral panic with the result that opinion polls were indicating the unpopularity of immigration laws. Krarup's intervention caught them by surprise and pushed them into a defensive position.

I would like to explain briefly my notion of rhetorical analysis here. When I say this particular rhetorical strategy has an effect, I do not read rhetorical effects out of a particular text: the (meaning) effect of a text is not embedded in the text itself but in its interaction with other texts and utterances. It is possible to analyze rhetorical moves that present a particular version of reality as the reality itself, but any rendition of reality is fragile once put forward and it does not necessarily have an influence outside the boundaries of the text. As I discussed in the previous chapter in relation to Bakhtin's notion of language, I take discourse to be inherently responsive to other utterances in text or speech. The effects of Krarup's rhetorical strategies can thus be read in the reactions to his intervention to which I will now turn.

4) Forcing the opponents to accept his premises

If the fierce reaction to Krarup's ad campaign had the crucial effect of granting him access to discourse and proving that anybody who spoke against the current immigration policy would be bullied, another effect was to force his opponents to discuss the issue as he defined it: that the people had legitimate concerns about the future of Danish nation and these concerns were not addressed by the political and cultural elite who were more concerned about losing face internationally than about Denmark's future.

Very few opponents engaged in discussing Krarup's premises. Instead, they challenged him on what they thought was the weakest link in his argumentation: that Refugee 86 was not about Danish refugee policy and that the money would go to refugees abroad, not to refugees who come to Denmark. This counter-strategy is understandable given the fact that there was already an explicit fear that the debate on refugees might have a negative effect on the Refugee 86 aid campaign. The reactions against Krarup's intervention were generally oriented towards making sure that the connection between Refugee 86 and Danish refugee policy was not made.

It is difficult to know if this was a carefully designed strategy by Krarup but nevertheless, the net effect could not be more desirable for him. In the effort to secure donations for Refugee 86, the entire establishment admitted his claims as starting point for debate. For example, Thor A. Bak, the chairman of the Refugee Council admitted in an interview the day after Krarup's first ad, that "it is probably correct that people are not happy about the refugee influx to Denmark, but then they should be much more willing to contribute to refugee help [Refugee 86] whose task is to help refugees out in the world" (*Berlingske Tidende*, 9/22/1986) Gitte Wedersøe, the

secretary for Refugee 86, was clearer in her message: "We do not support people in Denmark. Danes who are fed up with refugees should be even more motivated to support Refugee 86. For the better the conditions are for refugees in their homeland, the fewer will have to come here" (*BT*, 9/22/1986). Mimi Stilling Jacobsen, the leader of the Centre Democrats – a centrist political party that provided with parliamentary support for the right-wing government – also argued against the linkage between refugee laws and Refugee 86: "Also those who are in deep disagreement with Denmark's existing refugee laws [...] can therefore safely contribute" (*Ekstra Bladet*, 9/26/1986). *Berlingske Tidende* ensured its readers that money collection for refugees was not a referendum on Danish immigration laws: "On the contrary, the government has with its proposal which will probably be supported by Social Democrats [...] already made it clear how the immigration law is going to be tightened. The collection today will not have any influence on the [...] new law which is going to limit the number of refugees [who come] to Denmark" (10/5/1986). *Ekstra Bladet*'s editorial carved it out: "it is a good trick to support the collection because those who through voluntary Danish donations achieve a reasonable existence at a far away place will hardly come to Denmark!" (9/30/1986).

A counter-ad by priests, nuns and members of congregations also attacked Krarup for being indecent, demagogical and incorrect. One of the priests behind the counter-ad, Filip Riisager, accused Krarup's ad of being untruthful because of the connection it made between donations and the Danish refugee laws: "The money from the collection is going to help refugees all over the world" (*Berlingske Tidende*, 9/28/1986). Krarup must have been thankful for these reactions. His plan was

working: he had never said that the collection and the laws were connected. On the contrary, he made it clear several times that his criticism was against the Refugee Council who organized the collection and that this was a chance for the "Danish people" to tell the Refugee Council and the politicians what they think about the refugee laws. Although they seemed to have the upper hand in terms of mobilization, Krarup's opponents were in fact pushed into a corner. The only viable, short-term strategy for securing support for the collection seemed to depend on the distinction between Refugee 86 and the Danish refugee laws. The sentiment was that since Krarup practically made Refugee 86 into a referendum about the legitimacy of political representation by claiming an unbridgeable gap between the rulers and the ruled, the collection campaign had become too important to fail. In this sense, it did not matter whether there was a logical connection between Refugee 86 and refugee laws: Krarup made the connection and if the collection campaign failed, it would be understood as a confirmation of what he had been claiming – that the "silent majority" was vehemently against the current refugee policies and the political elite who was responsible for the "uncontrollable mass immigration." A failure would deepen the hegemonic crisis and the opponents did not seem to have many alternatives that could enable them to come out of this situation with their authority intact.

The government felt squeezed between the people's demand for stopping further immigration of refugees and Denmark's international obligations; and they were also taken aback by Krarup's intervention, which turned the moral panic that they themselves had created into a hegemonic crisis. Social Democrats were even in

worse shape and were squeezed between their allegiance to the "working class" whose resentment against refugees was about to dissolve the traditional articulation between humanitarian and "liberal" values and Social Democratic welfarism.

The opponents were – because they were aware of the importance of the success of the collection and how a failure would be taken – forced to do what they were trying to avoid: accepting Refugee 86 as the battle ground for Krarup's crusade against immigration policies by mobilizing the entire establishment to make the collection a success. Making Refugee 86 successful became the only criterion of victory. But in the long-term, this strategy was what granted Krarup an enormous influence on discourse: for tactical reasons, they had just admitted every single one of his premises.

But the opponents went further than granting Krarup the Refugee 86 as the battleground for his hegemonic struggle. To win the immediate battle, they also accepted his claims about the alien/Muslim threat to Danish nation. The priests' counter-ad was a typical example of this rhetorical move: "Contribute so that refugees can have a homestead in countries and cultures they are familiar with." Clearly, the invocation of culture here has a rhetorical purpose; it was a response to what the priests thought were people's concerns, but they seemed to have tacitly accepted Krarup's articulation of those concerns as being primarily cultural in essence. In this local argumentative context, culture provided a powerful argument against Krarup's call for boycott but the cultural argument also had the side effect of pushing the debate into the terrain of culture and ethnicity, turning refugees into what Krarup has been claiming they are – culturally alien people who do not belong in Denmark.

However, the arguments against Krarup were not purely cultural; they were also elaborated and supported with humanitarian arguments. The priests did not only say "let us help refugees to stay where they culturally belong;" the contribution itself was presented as a humanitarian gesture and refugees as people who are entitled to protection and care wherever they are. But argumentation – especially when written – is organized hierarchically, which in the argumentative web assigns particular propositions places in relation to one another. In this case, humanitarian arguments were hierarchically subordinated to the overall culturally premised argument – let us contribute to the Refugee 86 if we do not want the refugees come to Denmark.

The logic is this: the Refugee 86 had to be a success if a deep hegemonic crisis is to be avoided. To make it successful, political and cultural elites had to cut the connection between refugee laws and refugee 86. This logic begins with the supposition that there is a strong resentment against refugee laws, which can easily be translated into a racist populist movement against the system. Once this logic is accepted, then the arguments are oriented towards it: "you may not want the aliens here but then you better donate money to keep them away." A writer, Thorkild Hansen, made it clear on behalf of the opponents: "they [refugees] are not like us, they come from another world where they have another culture, and maybe another skin color than us, and their numbers increase and increase." Hansen described the situation as a new "mass migration" and noted that mass migrations were always followed by wars and chaos and concluded: "We do not need to help because we are so good. We can content ourselves with helping because it is in our damn interest" (*Politiken*, 10/5/1986).

Keeping the refugees away had thus become one of the most powerful arguments for the opponents' tactical move to stop Krarup from turning the boycott into a referendum about Denmark's refugee policy. The opponents generally did not reflect on this rhetorical trap. I have only seen one single commentary in my data sample that reflected on the problem of this distinction between Refugee 86 and refugee laws. An editorial in *Politiken* pointed to the defensive nature of the distinction and asked: "it [the distinction] is a fact but the horrifying afterthought is: why is it so important to emphasize this fact? Naturally to avoid hurting the collection. If this is the answer, it is an alarming surrender to racism; an indirect acknowledgment that it [racism] has a firmer grip on [the Danish population] than it is comfortable to admit openly" (*Politiken*, 10/3/1986). The editorial argued that the political consensus about tightening refugee laws also was "to surrender to racism."

I suggest that agreeing to battle on the terrain of culture has yet another implication. The argument that it is better to help people where they are was also a tacit acceptance of the proposition that they were "convenience refugees" who traveled to Europe only to escape poor living conditions. As *Ekstra Bladet* put it, "those who through voluntary Danish money achieve a reasonable existence a far away place will hardly come to Denmark." The problem for many of the refugees who escaped to a nearby country was that they are often not welcomed by host countries that provide minimal protection. As I have discussed in the previous chapter, one of the strategies for the right wing to argue against receiving refugees was to turn them into immigrants who traveled for economic reasons rather than people who were prosecuted and who were in need of protection. This discursive turn

was noted by the UNHCR representative in the Nordic countries (see chapter 2).

Krarup's intervention and the only "viable" reaction to it (as the opponents saw it)

forced them accept many of the propositions that hitherto could be identified as part

of a racist discourse.

## The Day-After "Reverberations"

The short-term success of Krarup's opponents was measured by the number of

volunteers and the amount of money donated. According to these criteria, the

collection was a huge success – mayors of several cities and politicians from both

sides of the political spectrum volunteered as collectors, including the foreign

minister and the then leader of the Liberal Party, Uffe Elleman-Jensen. More and

more volunteers registered as collectors as the deadline drew close. The Danish

public television, the only TV-channel of the time, transmitted a gala evening during

which the audience could call in with their contributions. The campaign was stripped

of all political connotations and was presented as a solely humanitarian event that had

nothing to do with debates on refugees.

The day after the collection day, the entire media declared the collected

amount as a blow to Krarup although it was not yet certain how much was actually

collected. *Jyllands-Posten* (where Krarup had a column), for example, declared the

collection day to be a great success. According to *Berlingske Tidende*, "Denmark's

big silent majority snapped their fingers at Krarup" (10/6/1986). The Refugee

Council's information officer said that the boycott campaign actually had a positive

effect on the collection. The newspapers and the electronic media covered the

collection day and the results extensively. A mixed sense of victory and relief

dominated the media: the battle was won and Krarup was defeated.[67] However, it was also time to take people's concern seriously. The day after the collection was declared a success, the government presented its new law proposal which introduced severe restrictions to legal rights to seek asylum in Denmark and closed many avenues through which refugees could exercise this right in Denmark.

However, Krarup's long-term success cannot be understood solely in terms of this law proposal and the barrage of restrictions that followed it since the right-wing government had already been pressing for restrictions. Rather, Krarup's achievement was his ability to turn the moral panic into a hegemonic crisis and through this crisis, force his opponents to accept his basic claim that there was a unbridgeable gap between the people and the political/cultural elite and that the essence of this gap was people's concern for the future of Denmark that was about to be invaded by alien, Muslim immigrants. Once this premise was accepted, the point of no return was reached. In previous chapters, I argued that the long-term effect of his hegemonic intervention was that the articulation of an antagonism between the Danish people and the Muslim immigrant has moved into the center of public discourse and become the normalized view of social divisions, pushing the entire political spectrum to the right.

The significance of Krarup's intervention lies, then, in his redefinition of the ontology of the social around culturalized-ethnicized identity categories. Once social divisions are envisioned in cultural-ethnic terms, public discourse became centered on

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[67] A few days later, it became clear that the projected amount of money was not collected despite the intense campaign to support the collection. There were also several comments and letters to the editor from collectors who described people's reception of them as hostile or at best cold.

cultural arguments. It does not mean that culture or religion were not part of earlier discourse but they were not the defining elements of social divisions, that is, they were not "nodal points." The cultural-ethnic antagonism placed an emphasis on cultural elements while other elements are pushed to the background (but never erased). All social questions become oriented towards the dividing line that functions as a magnetic focal point, which in turn organizes the arguments along the dividing line into the two sides of the division.

In short, it was Krarup's intervention that cemented the culturalization of the immigration debate. While the political establishment and intelligentsia tacitly admitted Krarup's claim that the "silent majority" was concerned about the future of Danish culture, even those who argued against the claim that immigrants posed a cultural threat confirmed the centrality of culture by accepting the battle on the cultural ground. A group of students and a lecturer at the University of Copenhagen published a commentary in *Politiken* immediately after the Refugee 86 (10/11/1986) where they challenged the idea that immigration was a threat to Danish culture. The writers commended that "the refugee-threat to Danish culture can hardly be taken seriously. This is probably the reason why we the Danish ethnographers did not make ourselves conspicuous in what is considered to be a serious public debate on the issue. What we have is not at all a threat but a meeting of difference." According to the writers, it was not Danish culture but Denmark's borders that were threatened. Culture, was not a fragile thing that could easily be broken; it was an ever-changing enterprise that constantly combined elements from other cultures; it reflected

Denmark's integration in the world. Refugees did not threaten "our culture" but "our self-image." It was "us, not the refugees, who created xenophobia."

The first thing to notice in this commentary, which draws upon anthropological arguments, is the contradiction in its argumentation. If Danish culture is an ever-changing combination of foreign (different) elements, why do we speak of the meeting with "difference" as if this is a new phenomenon? I read the contradiction as the result of writers' orientation to different rhetorical concerns in their argumentation. The argument about the ever-changing character of Danish culture is meant to addresses the notion of Danish homogeneity while the part in which they describe the meeting with refugees as a meeting with difference functions as a refutation of the nationalist claim that refugees are a threat to Danish culture. Whatever the intentions of the writers were, both their admission that "difference" was a new phenomenon and their refutation of nationalist claims confirmed the centrality of culture in the debate. This is how successful hegemonic interventions work: they force their opponents to discuss the issue on the premises that they lay out, and the most important basic premise that Krarup laid out was to fold the debate around the cultural-religious ontological categories which forced the debate into a cultural-religious vein. Krarup's intervention and the following controversy forced his opponents to 1) give him immediate and unlimited access to discourse; 2) grant him the authority to construct the silent majority, 3) stage himself as an organic intellectual who represented the silent majority, 4) and consequently to admit that the silent majority was concerned about the future of Danish culture by not engaging in

the debate what the resentment was about, thereby molding all responses towards his claim about cultural threat, even when his critics challenged him.

The crucial difference between what Krarup claimed and what the "silent majority" said – if we were to accept the definition for a moment – was the nature of the blame: most of the letters to the editor blamed refugees for economic problems; Krarup, on the other hand, barely mentioned the economic problems. Rather, he redefined the entire political terrain by organizing the resentments into a racist populist resistance against the hegemonic center. A clarification is necessary here: I am not promoting the scapegoat explanation for the emergence of racism in Denmark. The scapegoat model takes the ontological boundaries between Danish people and immigrants for granted. Rather, it was the articulation of the resentment into an antagonism that has produced the racist effects that characterize contemporary Denmark. Krarup was one of the key factors that pushed the entire political spectrum to the right through the question of immigration. Krarup did not make racism respectable; he transformed the moral threshold of legitimacy itself. His significance lies in his radically new vision of Danish society that answered but also transformed some of the most pressing questions around political representation.

## A Similar Case: Powellism in the UK

It may be difficult to imagine that one man can have such a great and long-lasting influence on public discourse but there are several examples of this kind of interventions – Enoch Powell in Britain, George Wallace in the US, Pauline Hanson in Australia, Haider in Austria and Jean-Marie Le Pen in France. Although they all draw on similar rhetorical resources to articulate nationalist/racist views with their

construction of "the people" or "the silent majority," it is Powell's intervention in British discourse in late 1960s that I would like to discuss. Krarup's ad campaign shows many similarities to Enoch Powell's infamous "Rivers of Blood" speech on April 10, 1968 in terms of immediate context, content, style and effects.

According to Mercer (1990), "in the drama of its form as an exemplary rhetorical performance in political discourse, Powell's speech was a major event in its own right" (p. 5). The immediate context for Powell's speech was very similar to Krarup's ads. In 1967, the government in the newly independent former colony, Kenya, passed a law which gave British passport holders a two years period to choose between British or Kenyan citizenship as a part of its Kenyanization policy, and after which non-Kenyans would not have right to work and live in the country. This presented the British Asians with a dilemma that soon became a dilemma for the British government too. Already by September the same year, 8443 Asians had entered Britain. In the beginning, the Labour government chose to be silent, while the right wing Conservatives started to draw attention to potential mass immigration and demanded tighter restrictions. Even though the number of potential Kenya Asian immigrants was 66,000, the number was blown up to millions in the media. Sir Cyril Osborne of the Conservative Party predicted that if it went on like this, there would be more blacks than whites in seventy years' time. There was, in other words, a moral panic around immigration. In February 1968 the bipartisan consensus collapsed. The Conservative Shadow Cabinet issued a public declaration demanding restrictions. The Labour government did more: it introduced a law proposal that limited the right of entry only to the "British passport holders who had substantial connections with the

UK by virtue of birth, or their father's or grandfather's birth, in the UK" (Hiro 1992: 214).

The second event that set the stage for his speech was Labour's proposal on a new Race Relations Act to extend the anti-discrimination legislation of the 1965 Act. A huge gap between the working class and Labour's social democratic consensus was created and a crisis of authority emerged. As Mercer (1990) puts it, "it is here in the context, timing and staging of the speech that Powell not only grasps the contradictions, but posits himself as an element of the contradiction and elevates this element to a principle of knowledge and therefore of action" (p. 276).

It was under these conditions that Powell delivered his "Rivers of Blood" speech. The combination of the crisis of authority and the panic of the 'silent majority,' who felt their way of life was threatened, was the source of reaction and authoritarianism. His speech was designed and staged to gain maximum media coverage. He succeeded in forcing both the Conservative and the Labour Party to conform to the "public opinion" he engineered. When the Conservative government later passed a new law which, Hiro (1992) argues, was unnecessary (if the intention was to reduce the number of immigrants into Britain, they could do so with the already existing legislation), the reason for it as stated by the Prime Minister Edward Heath was to still "the fears of our people" (p. 252).

In his speech, Powell took up the projected immigration from Kenya and amplified the demand for restrictions on Kenyan Asians entry to Britain. But there were no major distinctions between what he and the other conservative politicians said. The distinctiveness of his speeches was his rhetorical vision: he identified

himself with his constituents and spoke as the representative of the people (the silent majority) against the entire political elite who held monopoly on channels of communication. Like Krarup, he spoke of the betrayal by the political elite, of the prospect of racial confrontations ahead and of the demise of the British nation.

The speech had immediate impact. Chanting "the only White man in there," thousands of dockers marched to the parliament in protest of the decision by the Conservative Party leader Edward Heath who had sacked Powell from his position in the Shadow Cabinet (Schwarz 1996). For the first time, people freely discussed immigration everywhere, in buses, pubs and work canteens. And the shift in public opinion made it easy to pass the Race Relations Bill that imposed severe restrictions on immigration. The long-term effects of Powell's intervention are well-recognized in Britain: working class' detachment from the Labour Party and support for Thatcher's two decade long neo-liberal, racist hegemony.

However, although Krarup's and Powell's rhetoric and views are extremely similar (to the point it is difficult to see any difference except in their historical references), their views have been adopted in mainstream discourse in different configurations. Firstly, the historical context for Powell's intervention was different: the British bipartisan consensus was based on two component elements which, on the one hand, introduced a system of immigration controls, while, on the other hand, creating a system of equal opportunities for those who were already in the country. In other words, state intervention linked immigration control to a policy of racial equality – a distinction that has been maintained even after Powell's intervention and under Thatcher's decades-long rule leading to an established multi-culturalist system.

In Denmark, on the other hand, racism has never been acknowledged as a problem, multi-culturalism has never been accepted as an alternative, and there has never been an articulated immigration policy. Insofar as an immigration policy has been formulated by the Social Democratic government in 1990s, it was based on the idea that the problems with immigrants (including their exclusion from the job market, housing, education and other social recourses) were due to their problematic cultural background. The state intervention targeted, therefore, the transformation of immigrants' culture as soon as possible.

A second difference was the articulation of the White Brits' concerns and racist sentiments with the Thatcherite neo-liberal project of dismantling of the welfare system. Popular support for Thatcher's project is generally explained by the fact that she succeeded in mobilizing resistance to the bureaucratic character of the hegemonic consensus. The British antagonism was constructed between two poles: "the 'people', which includes all those who defend the traditional values and freedom of enterprise [which connoted the defence of inequalities of sex and race]; and their adversaries: the state and all the subversives (feminists, blacks, young people and permissives of every type)" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985/2001: 170).

In Denmark, however, people's concerns were expressed in terms of access to welfare at a time when the Conservative and coalition government were trying to dismantle the social welfare system. The resentment by the Danish "silent majority" against the refugee policy and the political system was often articulated around the allocation of the resources (access to welfare benefits), which at the beginning, was useful for the neo-liberal government insofar it could be translated into a support for

stricter immigration laws and diverting attention from their neo-liberal policies. However, the resentment against immigrants has never really been translated into support for dismantling the welfare state precisely because the immigration debate kept the question of access to welfare in focus.[68] The ethnicization of the political discourse meant that there was an articulation between welfarism, gender equality and sexual freedom (e.g. for gays) and Danish culture as parts of the same totality. Instead, as I discussed in the last sections of chapter 2, the Progress Party – the traditional anti-immigration party which was an ardent supporter of European Union and against all forms of welfarism – was replaced by the DPP which kept the new anti-immigration rhetoric but articulated it with European Union skepticism and a traditional welfare program as we know it from traditional social democratic parties. The traditional neo-liberal party of Denmark, the Liberal Party, was also transformed into a social-liberal party with emphasis on culture as the terrain of the struggle for Denmark's future (see chapter 2).

## Hegemony as Normality

In the previous chapter, I discussed how Krarup's intervention opened the way for a successive series of moral panics through which immigrants and their culture were kept in focus as the main problem for Danish "society." I also argued that the importance of Krarup's intervention was not so much the introduction of racist views into public discourse – they were there already – but the transformation of the moral threshold of legitimacy itself. In 1986, Krarup did not utter anything negative about

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[68] It has to be added that the Right-wing government managed to pass a number of "reforms" which eroded the welfare system and increased social/economic inequalities.

refugees and their culture. They were just culturally incompatible aliens who did not belong in Denmark. Two decades later, in 2006, however, racist utterances have become so normalized that Krarup himself does not restrain from making racist statements about Muslims. He was reported to the police for his statement that "Muslim men use a particular form of sadistic and brutal violence against their children," but the police did not find anything racist about the statement and refused to follow up on the report.[69] What interests me here is not so much the discussion about whether this kind of statements should be repressed; I am more interested in how the anecdote indicates that racist views have become normalized and are no longer recognized as racist. The racist views are by and large treated as generalized statements about a factual group defined in cultural/religious terms. The factuality of these statements is related to the very demarcation of Muslim immigrants as a subversive force for Danish society. As I discussed in chapter 2, the subversive nature of the immigrant (Muslim) culture is no longer a particular view that belongs to right-wing extremism but "factual knowledge" that permeates Danish society.

As my analysis indicates, Krarup's intervention had a legitimizing effect for racist views, not so much by repeating them in the huge amount of space he was granted in discourse but rather by turning the term into a repressive, "terrorist" tool in the hands of the elite. The articulation of the natural alien-ness of Muslim immigrant was a direct response to the humanitarian approach that characterized the political elite. This claim achieved a normalized, legitimate status to the extent that Krarup –

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[69] His statement is ironic in the light of his earlier writings in which he protested against laws that prohibited corporal punishment of children by parents. He defended the right to inflict corporal punishment.

and later other forces – redefined popular discourse on immigrants and rendered pro-tolerant, multi-culturalist discourses as irrelevant to the facts of everyday life, that is, for the solution of "immense" problems with immigrants.

What was missing in the reactions against Krarup was a discussion about the nature of the "people's concerns" and subsequently about what racism was. Rather, racism was insinuated by terms such as "the inner swine" and "petite racism," without really engaging with the logic of antagonism between Danish people and immigrants. The lack of engagement with these issues contributed to a growing sense that "ordinary" Danes were not being heard by politicians. But most importantly, the lack of confrontation with the logic of racist antagonism forced the entire establishment to tacitly accept the new racist vision for Danish society as one that is divided between Danes as the homogenous group versus alien immigrants. The acceptance of this vision was the beginning of a deep identity crisis for Social Democrats who hitherto had been representing "working class" interests by adopting these interests into the differential system of the welfare state. Once the members of the "working class" began to see their interests in maintaining the welfare state as being tied to the unity of Danish nation as opposed to immigrants who threatened it, rather than to the unity of working class as opposed to capitalists and their neo-liberal representatives who were dismantling the welfare society, the detachment of the working class from their "organic" representatives, in a Gramscian sense, was set in motion. The Social Democrats' response to the new situation was to pull even more back from engagement with Krarup's antagonism until some sections within the party gave in

and explicitly turned into the racist lane in the fall of 1987 (see my discussion in chapter 3).

## Do Hegemonic Crises Need to be Resolved by Hegemonic Interventions?

The relevant question for this last section is: what if Krarup had not intervened? Or if his intervention had not received the attention to the extent it did? Would the social tensions, anxieties, diffuse fears and the crisis of representation around immigration policies lead to the same outcome of a racist hegemony regardless of Søren Krarup's intervention in discourse in the fall of 1986?

If we consider the fact that many European societies have experienced similar discursive changes that pushed immigration, ethnicity, and national identity into the center of public discourse, the answer would be a careful "yes." However, in almost all of the European countries with this kind of hegemonic shift, we see a similar figure who, with a similar rhetoric, had been capable of articulating a racist antagonism as the main dividing line in society and to re-orientate other types of antagonisms to this divide. They have also had success in channeling protest votes into parties with nationalist/racist programs (e.g. Haider in Austria, Pim Fortuyn in The Netherlands, and Le Pen in France). This, in turn, indicates the generic quality of the nationalist/racist populist leaders and movements that obtain nutrition from the same sense of chaos and disorder. Populist leaders enter the scene in times of hegemonic crisis where there is a gap between the political representation system and large sections of society.

If the starting point is that the direction of the solution to a hegemonic crisis is not predestined but depends on how the gap is filled, it is safe to say that anxieties about immigration did not have to lead to nationalist/racist hegemony but could be articulated into new kind of social formations that included immigrants as part of the "people" and society. Or alternatively, immigrants could have been integrated into a differential system of the expansive social state rather than being put into an antagonistic relationship with the state. In Britain, for example, despite the similarities between Enoch Powell's rhetoric and intervention in the UK and Krarup's in Denmark, the long-lasting effects have been different because there has been made a distinction between further immigration and the rights of immigrants who were already in the country. The distinction meant that the immigrants who were already in the country were integrated into the differential system of the expansive social state that emphasized group rights and plights.

What we have here is, on the one hand, a unique intervention that changed the direction of argument in public discourse with long lasting effects, and on the other, the generic character of it that drew upon the same kind of discursive/rhetorical resources and strategies. However, we have something more: a more or less globalized world, in which the social formations in individual countries orient themselves to international discourses. The antagonism between "Danishness" and Muslim immigrant corresponds to a global antagonism between the West and Islam. It was no coincidence that the Mohammed cartoons in Denmark started worldwide protests and clashes. The class antagonisms of the previous periods did also correspond to the worldwide divide between communist and capitalist blocks. This is

not to say international divides come before domestic divides or vice versa, but that discursive resources for new ontologies are readily available for nationalist populist movements and these movements in turn add to the global antagonism. However, there is no natural law that links nationalism with racism against Islam and Muslim immigrant. The nationalist-populist movements in Latin America have successfully articulated nationalist sentiments with anti-imperialist ideas and gained popular support but racism has not been articulated as a part of nationalism (at least domestically). It is the unique interplay between the generic and international character of discursive resources and the unique circumstances of the individual countries that shape the political articulations. The uniqueness of Danish racist formation – the total hegemony it has achieved – is only comparable to a very few countries in Europe.

# CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this dissertation can be summed in a single sentence: the entire political discourse in Denmark (and in many parts of Europe) has moved to the right through the debate on immigration during the last two decades. The rise of right-wing populist parties is a clear testimony to this conclusion. Their victory is much wider and deeper than their electoral success might indicate. They have succeeded in making immigration, culture and religion the central issues for all the mainstream parties' appeal to voters. The move to the right has been facilitated by the culturalization of discourse on immigration which, in turn, has moved into the center of political discourse. It means that social division is basically envisioned in ethnic and cultural terms, and the redistribution of resources is now discussed as a matter of ethnic and cultural differences rather than class formations. The left/right distinction is replaced by a cultural distinction between religious dogmatism and traditionalism on the one side (Muslim immigrants), and secularism and emancipation (Danish nation) on the other.

The ethnicization of discourse makes it possible to imagine society as an organic entity whose internal unity is threatened by an external "other" – the Muslim immigrant. The creation of a Danish people as a cohesive unity implies the establishment of an unbridgeable difference between Danish people and Muslim immigrants. This "other" – the Muslim immigrant – is, of course, not a given entity prior to the establishment of the difference: the category of Muslim immigrants is the result of the same articulation that draws the lines around "society" excluding Muslim immigrants from the collectivity.

Once society is envisioned as an organic unity, the traditional oppositions between workers and capitalists, environmentalists and profit-driven corporations, animal rights activists and "meat industries," and women and dominant male culture, are pushed into background; a new set of oppositions between workers and immigrant parasites, environmentalists and immigrants' disrespect of environment[70], animal rights activists and barbaric Muslim slaughter practices, women and oppressive Muslim culture take the stage. The diverse voices once united against the capitalist system that was once considered to be the root of all problems become muted and their achievements are slowly presented as the result of the homogeneity of Danish society. In the ethnicized discursive environment, it becomes difficult to sustain left/wing distinction. The distinction traditionally refers to opposing attitudes with respect to social redistribution, but once society is envisioned as an organic unity, the basis for left/right distinction is lost and the various demands are channeled into a common struggle directed against the threat to the cohesive unity of society – Muslim immigrants. To be clear, I am not talking about this vision being shared by all members of political parties, social movements or individuals; this is clearly the vision of right-wing populist movements. What makes their vision hegemonic is the fact that all other players are forced to (re)define their positions between the two poles of the culturalized/ethnicized ontological order. They are continuously forced to position themselves with respect to the issues pressed onto the political agenda. These

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[70] For example, when they do not sort out their garbage into different piles: organic, recyclables, batteries and normal waste.

issues are articulated on the basis of the cultural ontology of the social which has slowly become taken for granted.

To give an example: when discussing the future of welfare state, think tanks, neo-liberal economists, and employer organizations constantly push the number of immigrants, their high unemployment rates and their share in receiving the welfare benefits and services on to the agenda as one of the basic problems for the future of a sustainable welfare system. In August 2001, a think tank appointed by the Social Democratic minister of internal affairs, Karen Jespersen, pointed out, for instance, as one of the biggest problems that 38 percent of welfare payments go to 5 percent of the population (Muslim immigrants) and argued that this was an indication of unsuccessful integration. The right-wing *Jyllands-Posten* jumped into the debate accusing Muslim immigrants of lacking the will and ability to integrate into Danish society and instead wanting to turn Denmark to a place under Afghanistan-like conditions that belong to middle-ages (the editorial, 8/17/2001).

Clearly, *Jyllands-Posten*'s views were controversial and do not reflect the consensus. But this was a controversy about the tone and generalizations, not the substance. Nobody really opposed or could oppose the statistics that showed the incredible burden immigration from Muslim countries put on "society." The conclusion chapter is not the place to engage in a new round of analysis. Briefly, those statistics – as any statistics – were constitutive of the group they claim to inform about. They include, for example, second or third generation immigrants whose status as immigrants is only culturally defined. Access to the social happens, then, through the cultural. And statistics say nothing about the role discrimination plays in higher

unemployment rates among immigrants. Typical of Danish discourse, the role of discrimination was not included in the report, and the following discussion on the integration of immigrants was centered on a set of values that "they" are supposed to learn in order to function in Danish society with few exceptions.

Once immigrants are treated as a taken-for-granted unit of social division, this classification system constrains political discourse about the future of welfare society. The redistribution of resources becomes a question of ethnic difference rather than a general question about how wealth is produced and distributed in society. This is what I mean by the opening statement that the entire political spectrum has moved to the right through the debate on immigration. A new racist hegemony on the basis of cultural distinctions that excludes immigrants from collectivity has been constructed.

Ethnicity and culture are, surely, not new inventions. Neither is the invocation of them in immigration discourse. What is new is the shifting emphasis and new linkages between social problems and ontological categories of the social. There is now an immense focus on culture, ethnicity and religion as defining features of social groups and as the explanatory background for their behavior while other aspects are pushed into the background as insignificant. Once the emphasis is on culture and religion, the "natural" bonds between immigrant workers and Danish workers as class comrades with common interests are cut, and the cultural emphasis makes it possible to explain immigrant workers' unemployment as a unique phenomenon caused by their lack of integration rather than by the capitalist system's inability to provide jobs for all. When unemployment is explained with immigrants' lack of will to participate rather than discrimination or the structural problems of capitalism, the proposals

begin focusing on creating incentives for immigrants to look for jobs. Since immigrants' lack of participation is related to their cultural background, it becomes possible to reduce the welfare benefits solely for them as happened in Denmark. Because the laws and international conventions do not allow for explicit discrimination between Danes and immigrants, the reduction of payments for immigrants is facilitated through a new category of welfare benefits: integration benefits. This is why I call the new system of social redistribution a racist hegemony. The ethnicized political discourse makes it possible to claim/represent society as an organic (ethnically homogeneous) community whose unity is threatened by the alien immigrant, and this replaces the old left/right distinction.

The reduction of welfare benefits and other welfare services has been a long, awaited dream for employers who have been arguing that high levels of unemployment payments and welfare benefits did not create enough incentives for people to look for jobs and that welfare benefits and services are a drain on state funds. Their wish has not been completely fulfilled yet, but with the reduction of welfare payments to immigrants, they have made a remarkable dent in the welfare system. Ironically, they have succeeded in making the incentive argument accepted by large sections of society through the ethnicization of the political discourse (by distinguishing between immigrants and Danes in terms of how much they are motivated to find jobs, e.g. work ethic argument). This distinction simultaneously forced the neo-liberals to accept the maintenance of the welfare system – for Danes – as the consensual center turning them into social-liberals and further blurring the lines between left and right.

However, it is unfair to attribute the blurring of the line between left and right solely to the ethnicization of the political discourse. Rather, it is blurring of the political frontiers that paved the path to the ethnicization of the political discourse and the following slide of the entire political spectrum to the right. As Mouffe (2005) argues, "when political frontiers become blurred, disaffection with political parties sets in and one witnesses the growth of other types of collective identities, around nationalist, religious or ethnic forms of identification" (p. 30). However, the kind of collective identities that can be pushed to the forefront are not given; they have to be constructed actively through hegemonic interventions that emphasize certain kind of differences as fundamental for defining society, culture or nation. The new type of hegemony in Denmark (and in a number of other European countries) has been constructed around nationalist/racist forms of identification as the result of the hegemonic intervention in mid-80s by the nationalist/racist right. They capitalized on the frustrations of the voters whose concerns (primarily the erosion of the welfare system, the increasing levels of unemployment and poverty) could not be expressed within the established political system. This was a time of social upheaval with a series of cutbacks in welfare services and unemployment benefits, a serious assault on labor unions by the neo-liberal government on the one side, and protest demonstrations and strikes on the other. This created a fertile ground for what Gramsci called a hegemonic crisis – crisis of representation.

However, whether a crisis occurs out of this kind of situation and how the crisis is resolved are not determined prior to a hegemonic intervention. When "people" do not feel their demands are being even partially met, a gap occurs between

the political representation system and large sections of "society" who cannot recognize their "interests" in the existing consensus. The frustrated feelings do not need to be articulated in terms of a particular gap; the nature of the gap has to be articulated by the intervening force. In the case of Denmark (and some other European countries), the time of social upheaval coincided with a sudden increase in the number of refugees coming in from different parts of the world experiencing violent conflicts and war, but a substantial number of the refugees were from the Middle-East (Iran, Iraq and Lebanon) with Muslim background. The Conservative Justice Minister and his allies in the police and the media put an immense focus on the number of incoming refugees in order to force the parliament to impose restrictions in immigration laws. The two small parties in the coalition government, the Radicals and the Christian People's Party, acted together with the Social Democratic opposition that refused to tighten the newly liberalized immigration laws, which made it impossible for the Conservative/Liberal alliance to gather majority for restrictions in the parliament. The strategy of the Justice Minister and right wing forces in the police and the media was to create a moral panic around the numbers of refugees who were portrayed as a huge, unbearable burden on the welfare state, in order to create a negative public opinion and to put pressure on the opposition. The Muslim background of the immigrants was only one of the issues primarily expressed in some commentaries and letters to the editor.

The discursive environment was thus ripe for a powerful populist hegemonic intervention. The nationalist/racist right used the panic atmosphere to mobilize the simmering dissatisfactions with the political parties around a nationalist collective

identification by pointing at the political elite as the main enemy. They articulated the main conflict in society as one between the evil, cosmopolitan political and cultural elite and "Danish people" whose concerns were claimed to be silenced. The political and cultural elite were not evil because they exploited society: they were evil because they opened Denmark's borders and let the alien immigrants pour in and exploit society with the long term consequence of destroying the Danish nation. The political and cultural elite were accused of being more interested in sustaining their humanitarian image internationally than in listening to Danes' worries.

In a panic environment in which refugees were already pointed to as one of the main problems that society faced, it was easy to demonize them as the biggest threat to the solidarity of the community that had built up the welfare state. However, the collectivity which created the welfare system was not articulated as the working class but as the Danish people. The interests of working class were rearticulated as the interests of Danish nation excluding the establishment whose interests were presented as cosmopolitan rather than national. It was a strategic move that constructed the "Danish people" in cultural terms as if the collectivity had always existed as an organic unity whose existence was now threatened by the presence of alien immigrants. They promised to fill the gap by reinstating Denmark to its original state as a homogeneous, cohesive unity. The biggest obstacle to this project was the cosmopolitan political and cultural elite.

According to the populist leaders, the Social Democrats and other left wing parties were particularly guilty because they were the ones who opened the borders; other parties were complicit in that crime because they compromised. Once the

people's main concern was articulated in terms of maintaining the Danish nation as a cohesive unity, the workers' demands became Danes' demands, and those demands could not easily be represented by the Social Democratic Party, which had already moved to the centre and left behind an adversary politics against the neo-liberal policies. The other leftist parties were trapped by the dilemma between humanistic and anti-racist principles and the expressions of ethno-centric welfarism of the working class. In this dilemmatic situation, the only adversary politics they were able to pursue was to insist on their traditional humanitarian refugee and immigration policy, and they lost their legitimacy to represent the working "class interests," which were now expressed in nationalist terms. This is probably why we have seen  large sections of working class voters moving from left to extreme right in a relatively short time span not only in Denmark but all over Europe with similar political trajectories but specific chronologies and actors.

The response from traditional, mainstream parties has been to incorporate populist demands into their political programs in order to appeal to the voters, thus mainstreaming the populist right's demands even if the movements' leaders have generally been kept at distance from power with few exceptions (Denmark and Austria).

The simultaneous rise of right-wing populist movements in Europe indicates that the hegemonic intervention in Denmark shares many features with other European countries as well as far away countries such the US (George Wallace) and Australia (Pauline Hanson). As I demonstrated in chapter 3 through my analysis of Enoch's Powell's intervention and its long-lasting influence on British politics, the

historical conditions for their emergence as well as their populist and often nationalist/racist rhetoric show striking similarities. The growth of populist movements has taken place, as Mouffe (2005) also points out, in circumstances where the differences between the mainstream parties are much less significant than before, which often indicates a crisis of representation.

In Austria, for example, there had long been a consensus at the center of the political spectrum through a coalition between the conservative People's Party (ÖVP) and the Socialist Party (SPÖ).[71] They controlled the political, economic, social and cultural life through the 'Proporz system' that allowed them to share important posts in institutions and nationalized industries between them. This 'grand coalition' created the ideal terrain for Jörg Heider's skilful transformation of the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) into a protest party by mobilizing the growing dissatisfactions among people against the governing elite. He articulated a frontier between all the good Austrians, hard workers and defenders of national values on the one side, and the parties in power, the trade unions, bureaucrats, immigrants, left-wing intellectuals and artists who were accused of silencing the majority. His populist strategy catapulted his party into second place in the elections in 1999 with 27 percent of the votes. Since then, the FPÖ has lost most of its popular support, and Mouffe explains the erosion of the support with the party's participation in government.

The success of the Vlaams Blok (VB) in Belgium has a similar trajectory: the party is strong in Antwerp where a coalition between Socialists and Christain

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[71] This section on the growth of Right wing populist movements in Europe is based on Mouffe's account of the mentioned countries (Mouffe 2005: 66-69).

Democrats has had a monopoly on political power for decades. The Vlaam Blook also

presents itself as an anti-establishment party against the corrupt elites through the

debate on immigration as the basic issue. The VB has been gaining the strength

steadily, becoming the second biggest party in Flanders in the 2004 European

elections.

The case of France and the success of the nationalist/racist Jean Marie Le Pen

is a well-known story. Le Pen was able to present himself and his National Front as

the only alternative to the dominant political system. His success came, Mouffe

argues, when Mitterand's Socialist Party began to move to the political center in the

1980s abandoning all pretence at offering an alternative to the existing hegemonic

order. When left-wing abandoned the the camp of social division, Laclau (2005)

argues, "the camp was occupied by signifiers of the Right. The ontological need to

express social division was stronger than its ontic attachment to a left-wing discourse,

which, anyway, did not attempt to build it up any longer. This was translated into a

considerable movement of former Communist voters to the National Front" (p. 88).

With the slide of left-wing votes to the Right, Le Pen's electoral success was secured

in the presidential elections in 2002 when he eliminated the Socialist candidate Lionel

Jospin from the second round.

Mouffe (2005) explains the success of right wing populist parties and

movements in Europe with the erasure of the political distinctions after Social

Democratic parties have, under the pretence of modernizing, moved to the right,

redefining themselves as center-left. The demands of a growing number of popular

sectors have been left out of the political agenda and they could, in the face of the

new neo-liberal consensus, be articulated through a populist discourse by skilful demagogues.

Although I agree with the main thrust of her argument, the role of immigration in this process seems to be substantially downplayed in her account. It is well-known that in all of the three cases she accounts for, immigration has been the core theme around which a collective identity based on nationalist/racist values could be constructed (see Reisigl and Wodak (2001) for Austria, Walgrave and De Swert (2004) for Belgium, and Benson (1999) for an analysis of the populist movements and/or their rhetoric on immigration). In her argument about the dangers of erasing the political distinctions, Mouffe seems to take the nature of popular demands for granted when she writes that "the success of right-wing populist parties comes from the fact that they articulate, albeit in a very problematic way, real democratic demands which are not taken into account by traditional parties" (Mouffe 2005: 71).

However, the crisis of representation – a hegemonic crisis – is not an automatic outcome of consensus politics. Consensus politics on neo-liberal policies that erodes social and economic rights is probably a basic condition for the emergence of a feeling among large sections of the population that their concerns are not taken into account by the established political system. However, those feelings have to be articulated as an unbridgeable gap between the political establishment and the "people" through an intervention in discourse around particular issues. If a new collective identity is to be constructed around nationalist themes, it is not enough to point at the evil elite as the main enemy. The nationalist themes have to be defined and since they cannot be defined positively, they have to be defined negatively with

immigration as their negation. In all of the examined cases, the evil character of the political establishment is articulated in terms of their lax attitudes towards immigration (and the EU) which are presented as the real threats to the unity of the nation.

Immigration is also a central tool in the construction of the evil political and cultural elite, for once immigration has been pointed out as the major cause for the ills of society, the political establishment becomes trapped between humanitarian principles and international conventions on the one side, and ethno-centric expressions of the economic, social and political demands. The typical reaction from the traditional parties as well as trade unions, employer organizations, left-wing intellectuals and artists, and immigrant organizations has been to accuse the populist parties of racism instead of engaging with a real discussion of how people's "concerns" should be articulated within an adversarial political system as distinct political positions. This reaction confirmed the populist claim that people's concerns were silenced by force, further contributing to the construction of a "we" the people, and "they" the elite. The very rejection of the debate and the cordoning off of populist movements helped the latter to present the establishment as the evil enemy. In other words, the blurring of the right/left distinction was used as a political strategy by the populist movements through the question of immigration. The elite could easily be represented as more immigrant-friendly and cosmopolitan minded than caring about their "own" people.

With an argument to stop the advance of right-wing populism, the established parties have slowly adopted the nationalist/racist demands into their own programs in

order to sustain their appeal to the voters with the result that the

ethnicized/culturalized debate has moved into the center of political discourse,

mainstreaming the nationalist/racist vision of society as divided between nation and

the alien other. This move has, as I argued at the beginning of the conclusion, pushed

the entire political spectrum to the right constructing a new type of hegemony based

on cultural distinctions.

The new hegemony is based on an ethnicized/culturalized ontology of the

social. However, another central point in this dissertation is that the ontological

distinctions of the social are not based any ontic content prior to the hegemonic

articulations of what social distinctions are about. The ontic content of an ontological

category cannot be apprehended as positivity through language: the social is thereby

too heterogeneous to be captured in representation. My analysis of actual discourse

illustrates this point: it is impossible to sustain consistent descriptions of the

categories of Danes and immigrants. If there was a clearly identifiable ontic content

for these categories, it would be possible to reproduce them in individual acts of

signification but as we have seen, the descriptions of the categories constantly shift

from moment to moment. What seems to be stable is the ease with which people refer

to the distinction between "we" (Danes) and "they" (immigrants) regardless of the

content with which the categories are filled in each concrete context. It means that the

categories are basically apprehended negatively in relation to one another rather than

to any purported real content beyond the discursive description. The implication is,

then, that the meaning of the categories is fixed by emptying them of content: we treat

these categories as common sense; as if we all understand what they refer to without

specifying them. Indeed, these categories, if specified, would immediately be open to different interpretations. That is, the ontology of the social is accessed through empty signifiers that can only be conceptualized through some significant discursive elements (parts) as if those partial elements stand for the category itself. The empty character of the categories, on the other hand, enables the ontological distinctions to appear stable. It is the divide between the social categories that renders meaningful any conception of the social rather than the social units themselves. Social divisions are, in other words, envisioned through empty signifiers that only signify the presence of categories rather than the categories themselves.

However, hegemonic interventions do not produce the ontology of the social once and for all as stable entities. If social division is not constantly addressed in a certain "we" and "they" relation (i.e., Danes understood as opposed to immigrants regardless of the context), the distinction would in time become insignificant in the face of all other antagonisms that are pushed onto the agenda by various social and political actors. Hegemony, in other words, is not given once it is constructed: it has to be struggled for through a constant focus on immigrants which reproduces them again and again in ontological terms as an antagonistic force. The (re)production of immigrants as a threatening force can only be maintained through a focus on cultural issues and themes that are considered as anti-society. In many parts of Europe, systematic cycles of moral panics are created around issues such as honor killings, gang rapes, traditional animal slaughter, violence, female genital mutilation, forced marriages and the headscarf (as a signifier of women oppression). Moral panics keep the focus alive and produce the immigrants as a cultural category through these

partial cultural elements that are related to one another as parts of the same totality, which, in turn, can be comprehended in an incommensurable opposition to Danish culture. Each of these partial elements signifies an opposite value to Danishness: for example, the headscarf signifies oppression of women as opposed to women's emancipation in Danish culture. These issues and themes produce the antagonistic divide between Muslim (immigrant) and Danish culture, and the orientation towards these issues disperses various social and political actors along the antagonistic divide, often with insolvable tensions and fractions within social movements such as feminists and gays.

Needless to say, none of these issues are unique or essential to immigrant or Muslim culture. But it has become so common place – even in academic circles – to discuss them as serious problems which "society" faces that it is imperative to point out the obvious: there is no society which unambiguously condones rape, violence or murder even if the latter is committed in the name of "honor." In her unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Andreassen (2005) demonstrates that the majority of wife-beaters are Danish men. Danish men rape more than immigrants and also participate in gang rapes but these acts are covered – if covered at all – as acts of individual men rather than as reflections of Danish culture. The reasons for women's practice of wearing a headscarf are much more complex than the impression created in discourse: many young immigrant women complicate the picture by insisting that headscarf gives them freedom to do many things that they otherwise would not be able to do. There are huge differences in relation to "forced or arranged marriages" among different national groups according to interviews with young immigrant women, and the

problem does not seem to be as wide-spread as the impression created by the immense focus in the media. According to the United Nations Population Fund, female genital mutilation is practiced in Sub-Saharan Africa by Animists, Christians and Muslims alike, as well as by Ethiopian Jews, sometimes in collusion with individual representatives of the faiths. For instance, the US State Department report on FGM reveals that some Coptic Christian priests "refuse to baptize girls who have not undergone one of the procedures" (Lalami 2006).

The obvious point is that none of these particular values or issues are related to one another as parts of the same culture; they signify Muslim culture as little – or as much – as Christian or Danish culture. In many senses, they do not even exist as social phenomena, e.g. forced marriages, gang rapes or honor killings. Various acts and motivations are put together into these categories as individual acts of the same phenomenon, but what makes them appear as the same phenomenon is usually the discursive act of naming them under the same umbrella term rather than any essential resemblance. Moreover, when used in conjunction with the ontological category of immigrants, these phenomena gain a further specific cultural meaning and become the cornerstones in the construction of immigrant culture.

What is missing from this dissertation and should certainly be examined as a substantial part of further investigation of nationalist/racist hegemonic projects is the way in which these issues are constructed as particularities of Muslim culture [Said 1978]. In chapter 1 and 2, I discussed how immigrant criminality was produced as a specific phenomenon that signified immigrant culture and how these phenomena in turn produced the culturalized ontological category of immigrants as an incompatible

social force that threatened the organic unity of "society." However, since the production of these phenomena seems to be one of the basic strategies of producing immigrant culture, and through culture, new types of social division, it is an important task to analyze the production of such phenomena in discourse.

Clearly, the production of immigrant culture and immigrants as an antagonistic force happens through the media coverage of immigrants, where their acts are generally signified in accordance with the hegemonic articulation. Since the media are not a homogeneous institution with a collective will and common strategies, there is much to study in terms of the media's role in the construction and reproduction of hegemony. For example, if we assume that most of the journalists do not belong to the populist right and may personally be disgusted by their rhetoric, one may have to ask why and how the populist visions became more audible than others in the media? To be sure, the role of the media cannot be clearly separated from public discourse, but since the journalists and the media are significant actors in public discourse as well as transmitters of others' views and visions, the ways in which journalistic routines, news conventions and professional ideologies make them more susceptible to certain kind of articulations rather than others can be studied productively.

My final conclusive remarks are about the implication of this study in terms of counter strategies against the nationalist/racist right. I wrote that hegemonic projects have to be kept alive through a constant struggle to sustain the commonsensical nature of categories and this happens through a constant focus on immigrants as an antagonistic category of the social. If the focus blurs and immigrants become

insignificant in terms of defining society, other actors fill the void with their demands and arguments. If those social and political actors belong to another ontological order than the hegemonic one, then, we can talk about counter-hegemonic projects which all attempt to construct their own hegemony.

This understanding of the political has implications for how we imagine political debate: some see the political as a space of free discussion and public deliberation; others see it as a space of power struggles and conflict. My approach to political discourse as a terrain on which the ontology of the social is produced through hegemonic struggles clearly places me in the second camp. As my discussion of human discourse and argumentation hopefully demonstrates, the achievement of consensus on political issues is only possible if those issues are defined within the hegemonic order: we can only achieve a consensus on the same ontological order where we accept the vision of social division as articulated by the hegemonic forces. If a public debate is centered on what to do about immigrant criminality, the positions that can be taken in that debate is already constrained by the straitjacket of the already accepted ontological order. A "rational" debate on this issue becomes only possible as a dialogue among the limited range of positions that can be taken within the framework of the hegemonic articulation. A position that rejects the existence of a "immigrant criminality" as a specific phenomenon would immediately be considered illegitimate or at best irrelevant, as my discussion in chapter 2 of the media coverage of this issue illustrated. Rationality is then contingent upon the basic premise for the debate: if the basic premise is the cultural ontology of the social, then the possible

avenues for reasoning would be constrained by that ontology. It means that we cannot speak of a universal rationality that can be applied generally to public discussion.

In this sense, the hegemony approach forecloses any possibility of a final reconciliation or any kind of rational consensus. Political struggle is about social redistribution, and political positions are, in this sense, opposing attitudes with respect to how to redistribute resources. Reproducing a left/right opposition – regardless of its particular content – is what is at stake. If the political is not about achieving a final reconciliation but constructing a new type of hegemony, then the strategy or ideal for a future world should be the re-ontologization of the social.

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