

Comparing Public Discourse on Immigration in Scandinavia: Some Background Notes and Preliminary Results

Abstract: This article briefly presents the SCANPUB project, devoted to the comparative study of public discourse on immigration in Scandinavia from 1970 to 2016, from which this issue of *Javnost/The Public* stem. Its emphasis is on a discussion of the terms “nation” and “nationalism”, particularly the notion of “methodological nationalism” in relation to the project. SCANPUB is not least about how the public sphere in liberal democracies handles large, complex issues over time, and the article thus deals with relatively recent contributions to the theory of the public sphere, concluding with a turn toward deliberative systems theory. Some preliminary empirical results are reported and references are made to the other articles in this issue.

Key words: Migration, immigration, nation, nationalism, public sphere, deliberative systems, Scandinavia

Introduction

Migratory movements have over the last fifty years or so stood out as an increasingly important political and socio-cultural issue all over the so-called Western world. For anyone interested in how democracy functions, it is evidently of great importance to study how this system of government handles a major issue such as migration and the various challenges it represents. To the extent that the public sphere is a central element in any functioning liberal democracy, a study of the public sphere’s role in the formation of attitudes, opinions and decision-making is essential.

SCANPUB is a project designed to chart, describe, analyse, evaluate and compare public discourse on immigration in the three Scandinavian countries 1970-2016 and to explain observed differences, also with respect to the relations between public discourse and, on the one hand, immigration policies, and, on the other, the public’s attitudes and opinions. It starts from the general impression that the three Scandinavian countries – Denmark, Norway and Sweden – in spite of all of their similarities and close ties - have had strikingly different public discourses on the issue of immigration and have developed quite different political regimes in relevant policy areas. A systematic, longitudinal comparative study of public discourse on immigration in the three countries is, however, lacking, as is systematic normative evaluations of it. Furthermore, few systematic attempts at explaining similarities and differences have been made.

The differences between the Scandinavian countries with respect to immigration discourse and policies are interesting since the three countries in question normally are seen as so similar in many respects. In fact, as put by Pettersen and Østby (2013,76): “With so many political and social similarities between the Scandinavian countries, we are as close to an experimental situation as is possible in social sciences.” In other words, the comparative work to be conducted is one between very similar systems where the estimation of relations between independent and dependent variables is facilitated.

A prerequisite for such an endeavour is regarding these three nation-states as historically developed facts. To some, SCANPUB may be guilty of “methodological nationalism”.

According to Ulrich Beck (2007, 287), “methodological nationalism takes the following ideal premises for granted: it equates society with nation-state societies, and sees states and their governments as the cornerstones of a social sciences analysis.» While we do understand them as implicated in a variety of trans- and international dynamics, the three countries cannot in our project be treated only as “social constructs” in a sense that makes them appear somewhat haphazard or utterly artificial. We regard them as historically operative, factual entities – parts of the world; not, of course, isolated from it. What SCANPUB shows, however, is how important the nation-state still is, even at this stage of transnational cooperation and globalization, where international or even global conditions impact so directly and significantly on them. Moreover, the understandings of terms such as “nation” and “nationalism” are key topics of ongoing debates related to migration. While “the nation-state” was presumed more or less dead in much writing on political sociology a decade or two ago, it is by now clear that this diagnosis was premature: It won’t lie down.

This article argues in favour of this view, in two ways. Firstly, by presenting and discussing various prominent theories of nation, nation-states and nationalism more generally, not only recent ones but also key contributions dating back to the late 19th century. Secondly, by showing how our understanding of Scandinavian public spheres has to be informed by the specificities of the nation-states in which they are historically shaped. In a third and final part, differences between the public discourses on immigration in the three countries will be presented through a few preliminary results of our research. A key question is to which extent longer historical perspectives, spanning, say, a couple of centuries, are helpful when it comes to explaining the observed differences.

Globalization and the Nation-state

People influenced by the wave of sociological and cultural studies literature on cosmopolitanism and globalization in the 1990s and early 2000s, might find it old-fashioned or even reactionary to emphasise national and regional particularities. The nation-state was expected to lose political and cultural importance, and this also took on a normative dimension: It *should* no longer be regarded as important, not only for empirical reasons but also on ethical and political grounds.

The scholarly tradition known as cultural studies was, for instance, in the 1990s much preoccupied with “glocalisation”, a term that highlighted the reduced importance and possible withering-away of the nation state and national identity with it. Stuart Hall once described the phenomenon as follows:

One of the things which happens when the nation-state begins to weaken, becoming less convincing and less powerful, is that the response seems to go in two ways simultaneously. It goes above the nation-state and it goes below it. It goes global and local in the same moment. Global and local are the two faces of the same movement from one epoch of globalization, the one which has been dominated by the nation-state, the national economies, the national cultural identities, to something new.

(Hall 1997, 26f)

Glocalization was for Hall a new phase of globalization. In the previous phase – by which he appears to mean, with his British background, the classic imperialist system as manifest in the British Empire – that the nation state was at the centre of the world system. But then the

Empire was dismantled and a new form of globalization was taking over. The nation-state would lose its previously central position since three forces operate above and across national borderlines: First, the economy becomes increasingly transnational and global through the role of multinational corporations and world-wide financial trading 24/7. Second, international organizations like the UN, NATO and the EU increasingly take over functions that used to belong to the nation-state. Thirdly, ecological issues are international and basically global - anything from pollution to climate change do not respect national borders at all. But all of this would at the same time give a new importance to the local or regional level, especially when it comes to the formation of identity. One cannot expect most people to identify themselves simply as “world citizens” and most people’s everyday lives are spent in some local or regional community to a great extent.

What is particularly interesting in this context, is what Hall said about a change in the character of national identity in this phase of transition:

All I want to say about that is, that when the era of nation-states in globalization begins to decline, one can see a regression to a very defensive and highly dangerous form of national identity which is driven by a very aggressive form of racism.
(Hall 1997, 26)

Did Hall foresee the recent wave of more or less extreme right-wing nationalism over most of the Western world? It seems he correctly saw a potential for a return to aggressive and perhaps racist nationalism in the current phase of globalization. But it appears he was more preoccupied with the positive potential of the new phase – possibilities for a blooming of lots of new sorts of identities and voices that had been suppressed in the age of the nation-state.

Hall is here representative of a much broader tendency in much scholarly work and related non-academic writing in the 1980s and 90s that was very critical of the nation-state, regarding it as passé and reactionary, implicitly racist or at least xenophobic. This is where the connection with the issue of immigration is: When nationalism now seems to have come back with a vengeance after about three decades, is it *only* the defensive and “highly dangerous” version that Hall talked about we see?

Current nationalism may well be defensive and some of it even highly dangerous. But this is not all there is to say about it. Nationalism is also, historically as well as today, tied to democracy, both as a form of government and as a way of life, a culture. This is important to keep in mind when trying to understand the increased support that right-wing, nationalist, anti-immigration parties are getting these days: Some of the reasons might not simply be deplorably reactionary, they might also have to do with forms of a democratic deficit in the current state of affairs.

In the following, I will first look into the historical links between modern democracy, represented by the complex phenomenon known as “the public sphere”, and the nation-state. The public sphere is so central to democracy because it is where the twin freedoms of information and expression are exercised and it is through public discourse the public, i.e. the people, is supposed to influence political decision-making.

Nation, Democracy and the Public Sphere

The development of a public sphere in Western Europe was intimately linked to the growth of the first modern mass media, print media such as books, newspapers, journals, pamphlets and so on. It was also linked to the growth of the modern market economy, capitalism, which Jürgen Habermas in *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* refers to as the historical “engine” that drove the process. The young bourgeoisie had both certain important common interests and resources that made them capable of challenging the monarchic state power of that day and age. The historian Benedict Anderson, on the other hand, combined these phenomena in his term “print capitalism” in his classic book, *Imagined Communities* (Anderson [1983] 1991). He argued print capitalism was the driving force behind the establishment of the nation as an “imagined” but very real community.

This parallel between these two classics indicate just how closely related the two notions – public sphere and nation – are, historically and theoretically. They come together in our simple, classical understanding of what democracy is: A system of governance where the inhabitants of a certain territory decide for themselves how this territory is to be run. This is also a basic point in the more precise and therefore complex formulation Habermas once provided of the first principle of the public sphere: The bourgeois public sphere emerged as the basis for modern democracy, historically and in principle, in Western Europe, in the form of a *confrontation* between a government which controls a certain geographical area on the one hand and a collective of citizens openly discussing matters of common concern on the other. (Habermas [1962] 1989, 279)

In principle, citizens are to care about the common good, not their personal or private (e.g. economic) interests. They then have to imagine themselves as members of a community. Interestingly, there is a potential for this in the role of *homme* or *Mensch* in the sphere of intimacy where subjectivity is produced, not least through the practicing and enjoyment of the arts. The latter go on also in the cultural public sphere, which is linked to the sphere of intimacy (Habermas [1962]1989, 51).

This original model thus obviously suggests that the public sphere cannot function without an *experience of a considerable degree of community* between citizens. And this experience cannot be only intellectual. In order to work, a community must also be felt, e.g. also be based in emotions. Hence the importance of the cultural part of the public sphere for this purpose, whether consciously declared or not. The public sphere in the modern sense was born around the transition from the Enlightenment to Romanticism. This is well worth keeping in mind whenever there is talk of Reason as central to the notion of the public sphere: Reason, or rationality, would in reality include rather than exclude emotionality. There’s never been politics without passion, or “affect” as current terminology goes. Hence the emotionally engaging activities and cultural expressions of the cultural public sphere are very important to the “public use of reason” which is the purpose of the public sphere. The reflexive, never quite finished subjectivity developed should be one fit for civic and political participation. It will be shaped by and be aware of the cultural community that to a considerable extent is framed by the country’s borders. The cultural public sphere is where the nation and the national are defined and exemplified in a variety of cultural genres.

In order to place this line of thinking in its relation to the kind of cosmopolitanism Beck and Hall were proponents of, we will now have a closer look at a prominent critique of Habermas.

Habermas: Nationalist Bias?

Habermas stated in 1990: “Nation-state and democracy are twins born of the French Revolution” (Habermas [1990]1996, 493). This may sound suspicious to some supporters of the idea of the death of the nation-state. According to the political philosopher Nancy Fraser (2007), Habermas’ account of the public sphere in his classic *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* “tacitly” rested on “at least six social-theoretical presuppositions” which all took for granted what Fraser calls “the Westphalian framing of political space” (ibid.).

For her, a Westphalian-framed political space seems to equal “the nation-state”. She is, however, referring to the definitions of territorial states and their proper relations that spring from the Peace of Westphalia. This was actually a series of peace treaties signed in 1648, ending the Thirty Years’ War and the Eighty Years’ War between Spain and the Dutch Republic. The Peace of Westphalia is commonly seen as the basis for international relations as they have been understood and practiced until quite recently – such as the *sovereignty of states, their right to political self-determination and the principle of legal equality between states*. But in 1648 it was still 150 – 200 years before the idea of nationality and the nation-state had its breakthrough – so the treaty was about territorial states. However, the principles were there when nationalism developed with Romanticism from the late 18th century on and fit the emerging idea and system of constructed nation-states perfectly.

It thus seems as if Fraser blames Habermas for a kind of “bad” nationalist bias that makes his historical and theoretical view of the public sphere less useful for democratic theory in a globalized world increasingly marked by trans- and international structures and processes of power. However, the “tacit” presuppositions she lists are, basically, that in *Structural transformation* Habermas presumed there was a state which could govern a certain area; that those discussing in the public sphere lived in that area, and that the economy within the boundaries in question would be a central subject for debates. He also supposed – and found, historically, just as Benedict Anderson did 20 years later – that media and communication infrastructures were a basis for nation-wide debates and cultural dissemination and reckoned a shared language had to be there, out of pure necessity. Habermas also regarded literary fiction and public discourse about it as a key to the emergence of the bourgeois public sphere as such and for the kind of subjectivity that made individuals become citizens: Individuals but also parts of a bounded collective. Habermas was thus largely right on all accounts. Nation-states are still politically operative units along the lines suggested above, in spite of all the important modifications that have occurred. Why else would we have Brexit and a large number of other country-specific problematic issues to discuss?

Nations, Nationalisms and Ethnicity

In his 1983 classic *Nations and Nationalism*, Ernest Gellner defined ‘nationalism’ as “primarily a political principle that holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent” (1). Gellner tied, in a functionalist type of argument, nationalism to modernity and the sociological demands of industrial society, where a standardized culture in a given territory became necessary. There was a need for an educational system in order to produce the now necessary qualified labour but also in order to reduce communication problems and secure a rational organization of a society with an increasingly complex and technologically advanced economy.

This view is helpful when it comes to explaining the general breakthrough of the nation-state model at a certain time in history. But it fails to explain what can be seen as national movements in pre-industrial societies and it does not explain why people have lined up willing to die for these functional cultural constructions. It may well be that nationalism demands that the *demos*, i.e. the “people” that constitute the citizenry in democratic states should be the same as the *ethnos*, or, in Gellner’s terms, that the “political unit” should be the same as the “national unit”. But what *is* the “national unit”? What is a “nation”?

Gellner seems to have thought that the nation is the same as an ethnicity. The Greek word *ethnos* is indeed commonly translated as “nation” and so it is no wonder that these terms have been confused for decades. A spontaneous definition of a “nation” among most social scientists would be hard to distinguish from the definition of “ethnos”, “ethnicity” and “ethnic group” – basically understood as a large or smaller group of people who see themselves as having a common ancestry and a common culture – and is perceived as a distinct group also by others. The term is sometimes said to have been introduced to social science by Max Weber in 1922, when he defined it as “human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration; this belief must be important for group formation; furthermore it does not matter whether an objective blood relationship exists”. (Weber [1922] 1968) The latter sentence is important: Weber held that ethnicity is *künstlich*, i.e. artificial. The social sciences have ever since tended to stress the constructed nature of both ethnic groups and nations.

The Prague-born political scientist Karl Deutsch in his *Nationalism and Its Alternatives* (1969, xviii) said: “‘A nation’, so goes a rueful European saying, ‘is a group of persons united by a common error about their ancestry, and a common dislike of their neighbors.’» There may be something to this. But the word’s meaning is in fact not so easy to pin down. “Nation” might simply mean the same as “country”, i.e. a political and territorial unit with a certain set of borders. This says nothing of the composition of the population living within these borders. Other definitions tend to speak of some kind or degree of similarity or communality between the individual members of a population, such as one found at *Dictionary.com*: A nation is “a large body of people, associated with a particular territory, that is sufficiently conscious of its unity to seek or to possess a government peculiarly its own”. This is clearly a definition that, for instance, makes the evidently multi-ethnic USA and Canada nation-states. *The national may be an overarching politico-cultural construction, above differences between linguistic communities and ethnicities*. The US has lots of ethnicities but its one and only nationality is made from its history, its rituals e.g. in schools, its sports events, and its cultural industries.

A closer look will reveal that almost all older nation-states are actually multi-ethnic and have been so also before the migratory movements associated with globalization over the last few decades: from Spain to India, from China to Finland. This is what makes the Breton Ernest Renan’s lecture at the Sorbonne on the 11th of March 1882 important. The lecture, *Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?*, actually argued a view of what a nation is that still appears relevant.

Renan said the nation could not be based in race, since the “noblest nations” such as France, Spain, Italy and England, were also the most racially mixed. Neither could it be based in religion, since religion had long since become a matter of individual choice and hence an English or French person could be a catholic, a protestant, a Jew – or, one might now add, a Muslim. The nation cannot be based in language either, since so many nations have several

languages – language could at best be an “invitation” to form a union, it cannot force it. Geography cannot be decisive either: “Mountains don’t know how to carve out countries”. Instead, Renan suggested “the possession in common of a rich trove of memories” and an “actual consent, the desire to live together, the will to continue to value the undivided, shared heritage.” Renan also underlined that the ability to forget was as important to the making of a nation as the ability to remember, in France, for instance, the massacres on the Cathars in the 13th century and the slaughtering of Huguenots in the 16th century. He spoke of the nation as a result of a daily referendum – the choice to continue to live together must actually be made again and again, as when marriages go on, or as when we choose to go on living every day. Renan thus effectively undermines any position based in the rhetoric of *Blut und Boden*.

Nationality as Althusser’ian Ideology and Bourdieu’ian *Habitus*

A different, important perspective can be tied, in part, to Louis Althusser’s theory of ideology (Althusser [1970]1971). While most references to this theory in literary or cinema studies were to the idea of how ideology hails the subject, fewer noted the point that ideology impacts on our lives not least through its existence in the forms of material structures and more or less ritual practices that are prescribed by these structures. This idea is related to that of *habitus* in Bourdieu’s thinking (Bourdieu 1984:170), or, simply, *habit* in everyday language. Habits are formed around the various more or less unavoidable elements in our everyday lives, whether it concerns the architecture of classrooms, formed by certain ideas about pedagogical relations, school curricula we are forced to be acquainted with or the nature of radio and television broadcasting which have followed people in particular rhythms throughout every day, week, season and year. To the extent that a nation-state has had these elements, its citizens will share a repertoire of cultural references – connotations – that are not shared by people from other nation-states. (Cf Gripsrud 2002) Any person who has lived abroad for an extended period will have abundant personal experience here. I have elsewhere (Gripsrud 2002) defined “culture” as a “web of connotations”.

The cultural repertoires of habits and webs of connotations provided by national institutions provide shared experiences that may last a lifetime and have considerable emotional power. This is part of what provides coherence and trust in a society, as well as an engagement in the political processes concerning the future of the national community. Because of the power inherent in it, the national can also be mobilized in support of aggressive purposes, whether it is about waging wars or about kicking out recently arrived immigrants. But this *chauvinism* is not something that necessarily follow whether from the nation or from the relatively innocent nationalism sometimes referred to as *patriotism*. A reasonable view of nationalism presupposes a sharp distinction between the two.

Civic Culture and Constitutional Patriotism

One might think of non-aggressive nationalism or patriotism as related to the notion of *civic culture*, which was introduced in political science in the early 1960s by Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba (1963). In a comparative study of different democratic states, one central result was the idea that a “civic culture” is a culture that encourages political involvement. Pride in at least some aspects of one's nation is one of the characteristics of such a culture. Some degree of patriotism means that there is an emotional investment in elections: They are about

the future of something one really cares about. There is furthermore a general valuing of participation in local government, in political parties – disagreement is tolerated - and in various civic and voluntary associations – all of which indicates the existence of a community which is not just a matter fact but also of affect. People who share these characteristics of a civic culture also tend to share a considerable degree of trust in each other and an expectation of fair treatment by government authorities. They also tend to be self-confident as to their competence for participating in politics and they are able to talk freely and frequently about politics with anyone.

These features of civic culture, are close to the defining features of what has been called civic nationalism or, sometimes, liberal nationalism. It defines the nation as an association of people with equal political rights and allegiance to similar political procedures. According to the principles of civic nationalism the nation is not based on common ethnic ancestry, but is a political entity, whose core is not ethnicity but rather the elements identified by Ernest Renan – and shared rituals, habits and webs of connotations with sometimes great emotional power.

In France the term "nation" was used to signify all citizens of the territorial state «France» and a contract between these citizens and the state: The nation was to be sovereign. This political term was, however, accompanied by *la patrie*, the fatherland. This duality problematizes Habermas' claim that the French revolution changed the meaning of «nation» from a pre-political to a political one by replacing the original meaning of a commonality of origins (*natio* = birth) with the sense of a democratic political community.

It is the latter understanding Habermas ([1990] 1996) wants to retain when ridding the notion of citizenship of its connections to a sense of a broader cultural community. He imagines a *Verfassungspatriotismus*, a «constitutional patriotism», where a love for a democratic constitution is what remains after «dissolving the semantic links between citizenship and national identity». The historical background for his thinking at the time was the fall of the «iron curtain», the increasing integration of the European Union and "the tremendous tide of immigration from the poor regions of the East and South, with which Europe will be increasingly confronted in the coming years» (491f). This process "exacerbates the conflict between universalistic principles of constitutional democracy, on the one hand, and the particularistic claims to preserve the integrity of established forms of life, on the other" (492). He wants to hold on to what he calls (a shared) «political culture», i.e. the procedures and practices of liberal democracies and a demand that all citizens are assimilated in it. But otherwise anyone, including all newcomers, can hold on to and cultivate their own cultures – seemingly without limits (513f). This form of multiculturalism is thus based in a dividing line between political culture and all other forms of culture. But reality is, as already the notion of civic culture indicates, far messier.

While Habermas ties his idea of a purely constitutional patriotism to the French notion of *nation*, without mentioning the accompaniment of *la patrie*, it is worth noting that Ernest Renan did not *reject* that geography, a shared language, shared customs, shared history and religion were of importance in the formation of a nation. He only held that none of these factors are decisive. And if we take a closer look at the French notion of a nation, we find the following:

But if nationhood is constituted by political unity, it is centrally *expressed* in the striving for cultural unity. Political inclusion has ideally entailed cultural assimilation, for ethnic peripheries and immigrants alike; the universalist theory and practice of citizenship has depended on confidence in the assimilatory workings of school, army and centralized administration.

(Brubaker 1990, 386)

In order for immigrants to be accepted as French by other French, a considerable degree of cultural integration is required. As put by Williams (2001,146): "In these terms, birth and residence in principle defined citizenship, although in fact cultural assimilation granted it". This implies that the difference traditionally pointed out between Germany's citizenship policies and those of France is less clear cut than often imagined. In the course of the 1990s, as it became clear that «guest workers» (*Gastarbeitern*) were not leaving and as other immigrant groups were growing, it became clear to German politicians that some changes in the hitherto quite strict *Blut und Boden*-related principles had to be made. Thus, a «rhetorical convergence» (Brubaker 1990, 387; Williams 2001,146) took place between the German and the French policies. Still, differences between the two countries remained, and both Brubaker and Williams explain this with the fact that both practices *have long and solid roots in the specific histories of the two*: Nationality in this historical sense is in other words still politically operative.

Summarizing the above, one can imagine an understandable and acceptable nationalism as a form of patriotism which is a highly useful element in a civic culture beneficial to a functioning democracy. It does depend to some degree on a shared national culture, constructed and produced by a variety of social and cultural institutions, forming central elements in people's national identities, but not necessarily tied to a specific ethnic group. The latter may well hold true even when a particular ethnic group originally formed some key elements in it. Several such elements may be adopted by other ethnicities arriving without wiping out their ethnic specificities. This is at least the case in countries where basic liberal freedoms such as the freedoms of expression and information, the freedom of religion and the freedom of association are maintained. In a liberal democracy, one might imagine this leading to a greater plurality of cultural forms and identities both among the original inhabitants and the newcomers, on the basis of liberal, democratic principles and under a cultural umbrella made up of a broadly shared web of connotations and key values.

This implies more generous, inclusive conceptions of national identities. Identity means "sameness" or homogeneity in relation to something or someone else. But we are not even identical with ourselves: As first Robert Louis Stevenson demonstrated in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and later, for instance, Sigmund Freud and Pierre Bourdieu has shown, we are composed of layers and elements acquired throughout our lifetime that may point in different directions. Consequently, any idea or ideology that tries to turn one layer or element in our complex identities into *the* defining feature of our subjectivity, is deeply suspect, whether it is about nationality, gender, soccer teams, musical forms or whatever. In other words, I may well be a Norwegian or a Slovenian, but this does not prevent me from also being and feeling like a European, a cosmopolitan, a global citizen (and e.g. a soccer fan, a music-lover etc.).

Chauvinism and "ethno-nationalism" are inadequate and dangerous in today's world. A pluralistically founded nationalism in the form of patriotism, is not. The latter makes the public sphere and democracy thrive.

Scandinavia's Internal Relations and Nationalisms

Fredrik Barth ([1969]1998) influentially argued, on the basis of extensive field-work, that ethnicities are not closed off to one another, are not finite in their memberships, but open, forever changing through their relationships with other ethnicities and through the continuing series of changes of all sorts that we call history. It is clear, Barth says, "that boundaries

persist despite a flow of personnel across them [...], so “ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of social interaction and acceptance but are quite to the contrary often the very foundations on which embracing social systems are built” (9-10). Scandinavian history and e.g. phenomena such as national stereotypes may well serve as illustrations of these ideas. The three originally very ethnically homogenous countries are in certain ways culturally distinct, and (some of) their specificities are likely reasons why their responses to immigration over the last few decades have been different.

The three countries have been closely related and intertwined in a variety of ways since Viking times, politically so through various unions (and wars!) since the 14th century. Sweden has been independent since the 16th century, and the same applies to Denmark. Norway, independent in medieval times, was then a part of Denmark for roughly 400 years until 1814. The present map was established when Denmark after supporting Napoleon had to give up its rule over Norway, which then entered into a union with Sweden. In the transitional phase, however, a national assembly gathered in April and May of 1814 where a Constitution inspired by American and French forerunners was signed after 5 weeks on the 17th of May. The union with Sweden thus came to consist, largely, of a shared king and a common foreign policy mostly controlled by Sweden. Nevertheless, this means Norway is the youngest of the three nation-states, fully “reborn” as such as late as 1905.

In line with developments elsewhere in Europe, the 19th century was marked by cultural and political efforts to develop national cultures drawing not least on German national romanticist ideas. This was particularly the case in Denmark and Norway. In Denmark, this tendency was strengthened by defeat in the war with Germany over the southern part of Jutland in 1864, where 1/3 of its territory was lost and so a view of the country as small and vulnerable took hold. Nationalism there was to a considerable degree also marked by the work of the theologian N.F.S. Grundtvig, whose mix of religion, *folkelighed* (“folksiness”) and nationalism also influenced Norway and, less so, Sweden. Toward the turn of the century, the situation in Sweden was, on the other hand, marked by social and not least political cleavage between a right-wing, upper class interest in constructing a backward-looking national identity and a liberal and left-wing vision of Sweden simply as the most modern, advanced country in the world (Sejersted 2013, 25). This became the official and dominant idea in Sweden. According e.g. to a leading Swedish social democrat in 2002, Mona Sahlin, immigrants are lucky to have a culture, she could not think of any Swedish culture outside of certain “silly” phenomena such as Midsummer’s Eve and some songs.¹ While Sweden remained neutral during WW2, Denmark and Norway were both attacked and occupied by Nazi Germany. There are thus evidently historical reasons why open nationalism has been more prominent in Denmark and Norway than in Sweden

The three countries went through democratization processes at somewhat different paces and in somewhat different forms. Norway’s 1814 Constitution was by far the most democratic for decades. The country had no nobility and the social structure was generally clearly more egalitarian than those of Sweden and Denmark. Reforms in local government in the 1830s further increased popular influence and voting rules were much more generous than in the neighbouring countries. The modern principle of parliamentarism (the government’s legitimacy to be based in a majority in parliament) was introduced in 1884. Universal suffrage was granted to men in 1898 and women in 1913. Denmark discarded absolutist monarchy with its 1849 Constitution and introduced universal suffrage for both men and women in 1915. Sweden finally replaced its medieval national assembly based on representatives of nobility, clergy, bourgeoisie and farmers with a bicameral parliamentary

institution in 1866. Only the Second Chamber was directly elected, the First Chamber was elected by city and county councillors. The modern parliamentary principle was not introduced until 1917, over 30 years after Norway. Universal suffrage for both women and men was introduced in 1919.

The social and economic conditions were also quite different in the three countries. Sweden had roughly double the number of inhabitants. In 1900 it was about 5 million, while Denmark had about 2,5 and Norway about 2,2. All three had very high numbers of emigrants to, mostly, North America, with Norway sending the by far highest proportion of its inhabitants overseas. The rise of industrial capitalism took place in all three countries in the second half of the 19th and the first decades of the 20th but was marked by important topographic and other natural differences in addition to the social ones. Sweden had minerals and vast forests, with a highly productive agricultural sector in the southern part marked by a high number of very large farms. Importantly, its financial resources were solid and much more concentrated than in the neighbouring countries, making for a rapid growth in advanced industries with many factories each employing thousands of people in the late 19th century. Denmark had few natural resources but a highly productive agricultural sector and very good topographical conditions for the construction of infrastructure such as roads and railways. Mountainous Norway also had forests and some minerals as well as significant fisheries, but a very difficult topography for transport by land. International shipping early on became a major economic activity.

The fact that Swedish industry operated relatively undisturbed during the war gave Sweden a head start in the post-war years. This was a key reason why Sweden started recruiting labour abroad much earlier than the other two countries – if we disregard the import of Polish and German workers to Danish agriculture in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. While most immigrant workers to begin with came from Finland, Swedish industry also actively recruited labour from Southern Europe already in the 1950s. Consequently, modern Swedish immigration history is considerably longer than that of its neighbours, and immigrants' share of the population in Sweden has been the largest in Scandinavia for much over half a century.

The three languages were and are mutually understandable, with common roots in Old Norse. Norway's 1814 Constitution stated that all laws should be written in Norwegian, but this was stated in pure Danish. Written Norwegian was not distinct from written Danish until a linguistic reform in 1907. While gradually "norwegianized" (in line with the spoken Norwegian of the educated classes) became the dominant form, Parliament decided in 1885 that the New Norse language, constructed in the mid-19th century on the basis of the country's rural dialects, was legally on a par with Dano-Norwegian. This has had many consequences, most important of which is an internationally quite unique acceptance for the use of dialects in all sorts of public discourse. The literary public spheres of the three countries were intimately connected in several ways, especially the Danish and the Norwegian, since most leading Norwegian authors continued to publish with Danish publishers throughout the 19th century. The three countries all had Lutheran churches firmly tied to the states/governments, and thus had fairly similar public religious lives. Their school systems were early on developed so that most inhabitants were literate early on in the 19th century. In 1905, an overwhelming majority voted in a plebiscite to re-install monarchy in Norway, and since then the three countries have all been constitutional monarchies with a very limited political role to play – one exception being the New Year's speeches to the population through major mass media, cf. Kjeldsen's article in this issue. Norway and Sweden have had an ethnic minority mainly located in their northernmost regions, the Sami people, and small national minorities

such as Roma as well. But largely, all three countries have been ethnically very homogenous until post-WW2 immigration started.

Striking similarities in the growth and composition of civil society are to a considerable extent tied to the shared linguistic and religious conditions. Religious and social movements such as temperance and other idealistic associations, professional organizations and trade unions developed in all three countries, especially in the last half of the 19th century. This is a key reason for similarities in later political developments: The three Scandinavian peoples were to a very high degree *organized* – members of one or several nation-wide organizations. Most of these organizations formed public sub-spheres with their own print media, their own meeting places or buildings, their own specific rituals and festivities – but were at the same time also tied to the general public sphere through representatives in the parliamentary assemblies and national media.

Particularly important was the development of strong socialist/social-democratic labour movements. In parliamentary politics they reached government power first in Sweden, when the Social Democrats participated in a coalition government as early as 1917. In Denmark the social democrats were in government in coalitions or alone most of the time from 1922 on. In Norway, after a couple of weeks in government in 1928, the social democrats were in government for decades from 1935 on.² Especially noteworthy here is the long stretch of more or less continuous single-party social-democratic governments from the 1930s on to the 60s or 70s in all three countries. This is when their welfare states were created, with a social-democratic leadership but with considerable cross-party support. The same goes for their public service broadcasting monopolies, which contributed significantly to the formation of relatively homogenous national cultural identities. In all three countries governments also installed quite ambitious cultural policies, supporting a wide variety of national institutions and practitioners of the various arts. The population as a whole has, in principle, been invited to take part in and benefit from academically produced knowledge as well as artistic expressions.

All of these factors have contributed to the fact that Scandinavia has enjoyed high quality government (cf. e.g. Rothstein, Teorell [2008]) and public institutions over centuries: Levels of corruption have, according to international rankings, been exceptionally low, and, correspondingly, levels of social trust exceptionally high. Such features marks Scandinavia as a region and form part of an explanation for anything from relatively peaceful social relations, low crime rates and general organizational, socio-economic efficiency.

Significant changes have, however, occurred since the early 1990s: A political turn to the right has left its marks on the welfare systems of both Sweden and Denmark, albeit somewhat differently: Sweden suffered a serious economic crisis from around 1990 and cut the welfare budgets significantly in an attempt to handle the situation, along with extensive privatization of areas such as education and health services. Denmark has over the last few decades developed a system where the original universalist principles have been modified in the direction of emphasising “incentives”, or, the “worthiness” of recipients, thus creating a more “dualist” system disfavouring not least immigrants. In Norway, thanks especially to the country’s oil-based wealth, universalist principles have been retained to a much higher degree than in the neighbouring countries, but some of the same sorts of pressures have been noticeable there as well (cf. e.g. Bay et al. [2013]). These developments have demonstrated the welfare state’s degree of vulnerability and thus contributed to the perceived importance of how immigration, i.e. largely refugees, asylum-seekers and family reunification – impacts on

the system as either a financial burden or as a threat to the social trust that forms the basis of the system, especially in that it supports the willingness to pay high taxes.

History and Immigration Discourse

These are the three countries in which SCANPUB studies how the immigration issue has been handled in the public sphere(s) since 1970. On the basis of the above sketch of the history of the Scandinavian countries, to which extent can one expect developments to be different from elsewhere in the world, and to which extent can they be expected to be internally different in the three countries in question? With e.g. the recent changes to the welfare system and other areas of public policy in mind, is a longer historical perspective at all relevant?

The results of SCANPUB's quantitative content analysis of immigration coverage in the Scandinavian press 1970-2016 are reported in some detail in Hovden and Mjelde's article in this issue. The shortest possible version is that the analysis confirmed the widespread general impression that formed the starting point of the whole project: On a scale from the most immigration friendly to the most immigration negative, Sweden is near the first pole and Denmark near the other – while Norway occupies a spot somewhere between the two. We also performed an analysis of the same newspapers' coverage of the "refugee crisis" of 2015 (Hovden et al. 2017), complementing and using the codebook of a project at the London School of Economics (reported in Chouliaraki and Zaborowski [2017] and Georgiou and Zaborowski [2017]). The LSE project included the coverage in key newspapers in eight European countries, SCANPUB added the three in Scandinavia.

The latter project showed that the press in Scandinavia as a whole was different from that in other European in certain ways. The development followed the general European pattern in that coverage was more marked by humanitarian perspectives from April (mass drownings) to September (Aylan Kurdi found on the beach) than later in the autumn of 2015, when suffering was more abstractly presented and, especially after the terror attacks in Paris in November, attention turned more toward security issues and how governments strived to cope with the wave of new arrivals. As a whole, though, the Scandinavian press appeared different from the rest in two ways: (a) Like the press elsewhere in Europe, coverage prioritised elite voices over those of refugees and «ordinary citizens» - but less so. (b) As for framing, the Scandinavian press appeared, on the whole, less preoccupied with negative consequences of various sorts than the press elsewhere. But this is also where differences within Scandinavia were quite clear: The Danish press was more negative than the other two, and the Swedish press put more emphasis on positive moral consequences for the population. Norway was located somewhere between the two (Hovden et al. 2018).

This pattern then emerged, as indicated above, also from the quantitative analysis of newspaper coverage of immigration of all kinds between 1970 and 2016 (cf Hovden and Mjelde, this issue). A major challenge for the project is now to suggest explanations for these differences. To which extent is it useful to look back on, say, the national histories over the last couple of centuries, and to which extent will a closer look at the last few decades be sufficient?

If national cultures matter for widespread attitudes and arguments, then the distinct histories and characters of nationalism and national identities are relevant for an analysis and

understanding of public discourse on immigration. The Swedish idea that the country's distinguishing feature is its leading degree of modernity and international orientation may clearly point in the direction of a welcoming attitude. To the extent that Danish nationalism is tied to an understanding of the country as small and vulnerable and marked by Grundtvig's blend of nationalism and Christianity, it is not unlikely that these features will impact on public discourse on immigration, especially from areas where other religions prevail. Norway's nationalism is of course also of vital importance, marked by its short history as an independent state and German occupation during WW2 on the one hand and pride in strong democratic, egalitarian traditions on the other. Many public discussions of immigration tend to be more about "who we are (as a nation)" than about migrants of various sorts (cf. Andersen, this issue). A historical perspective could also be useful when it comes to difficult questions about the discourse's inclusiveness in terms of views represented. Swedish national newspapers seem to e.g. carry much fewer letters to the editor than their counterparts in the other countries and migration-negative voices appear more weakly represented. The same may apply to the rhetorical styles employed in public discourse, e.g. that Danish debate appears much more marked by crass language: This may have reasons from way before the 1970s.

As for the specific development of immigration policies, on the other hand, any attempt at explanation will have to consider the political party systems of each country and the various constellations that have formed the parliamentary basis for governments in the three countries. As pointed out by political scientists (Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup 2008), differences between Sweden and Denmark are not least tied to the fact that the mainstream conservative parties in Denmark had to explore cooperation with the far right, populist party in order to establish a parliamentary basis for a government, since the social democrats had formed an alliance with the liberal centre party. In Sweden, the social democrats found sufficient support for a government to the left of it, so conservatives could create a government without involving the right-wing populists. This also had consequences for public debate in the two countries, since the participation of right-wing populists in government or in the parliamentary support for a government will tend to give their voice more prominence. This has also been seen in Norway, the only country in which the right-wing populist party has actually participated in a coalition government with the conservatives (since 2013). On the other hand, one has observed that a government position also curbs some of the more radical tendencies within the populist party since the rhetorical options of a government party is more limited than those of a party in opposition.

In other words, any explanation of differing patterns in public discourse between our three Scandinavian countries must involve both longer and shorter term historical perspectives, and the balance between these will vary with what aspect of the discourse one wishes to explain.

Public Spheres Are Deliberative Systems

Habermas described the real existing public spheres of nation states in his *Between Facts and Norms* ([1992] 1996): It has a politically central, general arena, but its structure is that of a complex network that "branches out into a multitude of overlapping international, national, regional, local, and sub cultural arenas" (373). One can also distinguish between different levels based on the "density" of communication, and the complexity and scope of organisation - "from the episodic publics found in taverns, coffee houses, or on the streets;

through the occasional 'arranged' publics of particular presentations and events, such as theatre performances, rock concerts, party assemblies, or church congresses; up to the abstract public sphere of isolated readers, listeners, and viewers scattered across large geographic areas, or even around the globe, and brought together only through the mass media." (374). SCANPUB's interest in the role of the cultural public sphere is represented in this issue by John Magnus R. Dahl's contribution.

This bewildering complexity has increased tremendously after the addition of the world wide web and its multitudes of virtual spaces for public communication. SCANPUB aims to chart and analyse also some of these more recent parts of the public sphere. Examples are represented by Moe's and Andersen's articles in this issue. In order to understand them and their functions, we have turned our attention to deliberative systems theory as a source of insights that complement and follow up on the characterization of the complexity of the modern public sphere by Habermas above (Mansbridge et al. 2012). The over-arching question is how to account for the vast variety also of non- and semi-deliberative elements in today's public spheres. Habermas claimed that all of the public sub-spheres within the public sphere remain "porous" in their relation to one another. Deliberative systems theory holds that "it is necessary to go beyond the study of individual institutions and processes to examine their interaction in the system as a whole", in which "a single part, which in itself might have a weak or even negative deliberative quality with respect to one or several deliberative ideals, may nevertheless make an important contribution to an overall deliberative system" (Mansbridge et al. 2 and 3).

But before we can understand and evaluate the «overall» deliberate systems, we need to have a closer look at their constituent parts. This issue also gives examples of SCANPUB's work beyond what is traditionally covered by the term «public discourse». The project is, of course, work in progress.

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NOTES

¹ Mona Sahlin in an interview with *Euroturk*, a magazine published by an organization for youth of Turkish descent, in 2002 https://ligator.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/intervju_3.pdf

² In Sweden, there was a series of social-democratic coalition, minority and majority governments (coalition 1917-20, 1921-23, 1924-26, 1932-36, 1936-76, 1986-91, 1994-2006, 2014-18). In Denmark the social democrats were in government in coalitions or alone 1924-26, 1929-39, during the 2nd world war in an all-parties coalition, and then 1947-50, 1953-68, 1971-73, 1975-82, 1993-2001, and 2011-2015. The social-democratic Labour party in Norway was in government for about two weeks in 1928, and then basically ruled, with the exception of WW2, from 1935 to 1965, 1971-72, 1973-81, 1986-91, 1990-97, 2000-01, 2005-13.