Othering: the cartoon controversy as a case of cultural racism in Denmark.

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Abstract

In this last century a lot of world-conflicts not only crossed and damaged people and their life, but also influenced our culture and our modern view of the Others and the world.

Even if Today apartheid doesn’t exist there are, in our society, many different types of Others that arise from and must struggle with segregation, religious discrimination, cultural racism, discrimination based on social status or racial belonging: that cannot be seen as a separated or better behavior than before so why we think to be into the so called “modern and civilized world”? Who manipulated our view? in which ways? How is the context in which we live relevant for the creation of cultural racism and cultural stereotypes about the Others? History is often red as a tale of western dominance and colonialism, but how we can understand other world conceptions and cultures if we are totally blinded by this reading? History has delineate how the Western societies have trying to say “we are the best because we are westerns, white and christians” but how we can understand other world conceptions and cultures if we are totally obscured by this thinking? Western perceptions of culture include a complete view about the power-interactions that are inside the social structure. Institutions like schools, universities and major social structures like welfare systems mirror these interactions and perpetuate the image that nation states want to create for themselves.

Scholars have tried to understand and analyze why such phenomena have such an important role in the social structure, but what we described above is just one of the countless faces and interpretations of history: every culture has its own unique way to interpret historical events, highlighting some more than others, so the narrative can vary wildly from case to case. In this critical historical moment problems about Othering and the correlated view about culture and identity are really important to understand, both to create a better interaction between cultures (as we all live in a multicultural context) and because recognizing
these differences can help changing of the social structure and consequently the discourse of power into the Nation.

In this project we will consider the importance of being aware of cultural racism and of the interactions that exist between our perceived identity and the Others.

The Danish political scene and media usually draw immigrants as “medieval muslims with an undemocratic mindset” (Kubliz 2010) and this discourse has created a certain stereotype among the Danish public opinion and a general not-positive perception of the Others.

The aim of this project is to show how interactions expresses and reproduces underlying social-cultural representations of others in the specific context.

**Problem definition and dimensions**

Our problem definition is as follows:

“What does the cartoon controversy tells us about the perception of muslim immigrants in denmark?”.

With this project we would like to cover the dimensions of Subjectivity and Learning and Text and Sign.

**Chapter 1**

**Introduction**

In this first chapter we introduce fundamental concepts and ideas such as *Ethnicity, Ethnic identity, Identity, Culture, National Culture, Others, Groups.*

To outline a satisfactory answer to our problem definition, we need to focus on the cultural and historical perspective of some of the concepts that revolve around the meaning of Others.

This overview is made up of reflections about important papers by scholars such as *Stuart Hall, R. R. Regmi, Antonio Gramsci and Homi K. Baba.*

With this material, we will try to analyze the Danish mindset in a more aware manner, trying to explain how this mindset led to the creation of a particular image of immigrants.
We think that for a good understanding of this new image is important to recognize the development of the historical and cultural context and the influence of that on the society.

**Discourse**

*Approaches and cultural theories, presentations and understanding*

Edward Said with his “Orientalism” (Edward, 1979) has depicted the exaggeration and distortion of the Muslim communities around the world correlated to the culture and the social-life of the European or American. Such description also wants to open the mind of those who consider the Arab culture as backward-minded, uncivilized or as a terrorists by using a really brilliant theoretical analysis of the Western society and mindset. In this first part we will discuss about such terms trying to create a link between theories and analysis.

“Human beings not only classify objects and events; they categorize people-themselves as well as others.” *(Regmi, 2003: 2)*

Our life is a continuous cycle of social interactions, like the family context or the school one, and we could say that this cycle is made of all our daily relations with the world. Since birth we are put in a certain cultural environment, and with time, thanks to this cultural perspective, we are able to understand and make sense of what is around us. Parents, friends, schools are the first and most important tools that create our independent way of thinking about the world and the starting point from which we build up our identity.

Several scholars and researchers are trying to understand exactly what Identity is, but its definition is highly subjective and varies wildly in different times and different cultures. Identity is also something that includes us as members in a group-category, it is built on a certain behavior, common descendance, racial origin, religion, life perspectives and physical characteristics, but at the same time it separates us from the others.
This particular behavior and thinking is something that is agreed and can be observed in all the members of a defined group, that it is generally defined as an ethnic/religious group.

Social identity, for example, is enforced by the county’s policy and the rules are related with us, as a people; but these rules are not made to be compatible with all ethnic or cultural groups and sometimes these are not accepted or understood at all. In this case the native majority of the county will classify the others, the non-native, as “not integrated” or otherwise claim that they are unable or unwilling to adapt to the dominant culture.

When we think of ethnicity we always include the existence of others, the existence of something/someone that exist outside the boundary of our personal cultural knowledge and heritage. In a sense, ethnicity is always defined in a negative way. With ‘negative way’, we mean that an ethnic identity is often defined by stating what is not, by highlighting the elements that do not belong to it. This is because the elements that make up an ethnic identity are often taken for granted by those within that ethnicity, and can be brought to light only by comparing them with something different. This sense of not understanding the others can be defined as the gap that creates the discourse of cultural stereotypes and, to a larger extent, a discourse of hegemonic power.

“Thus constructed, prejudicial knowledge is forever uncertain and in danger, for, as Balibar concludes, ‘that the “false” are too visible will never guarantee that the “true” is visible enough’.” (Hall, 1996: 55)

Culture is something that all of us have, it is continuously shared and is active in all our interactions. It is also expressed through the body language, feelings and emotions. The existence of “me” includes the existence of “other” than me, this status quo represent a starting point for understanding first of all our identity in the world, and as a second point, the understanding of others, that’s to say people who came from different perspective or culture.

In our personal interactions, e.g within speech acts, we are always referring to a meaning that is agreed upon with the other participants; this meaning often has a
cultural connotation to it, which is to say that it varies depending on the culture the participants belong to.

This meaning allows us to have a conversation with the others; in doing so however, we are also alienating and 'creating' the others by referencing our own culture. The problem is, when we create a meaning of something in reference to a certain cultural behavior of a specific ethnic group, we are actually creating an image of the others that is influenced by our personal vision or understanding of the context. Culture influences our interactions with the world and our critical thinking of the world-interactions\(^1\) are influenced by our context.

Even if you belong to a minority ethnic group in your homeland, you will have a certain types of interaction with the members of the majority ethnic groups. Similarly, we can say that the majority ethnic groups will have a certain views of the members of the minority ethnic group.

This game of views and understanding between majority and minority is called “Cultural Representations of the others”. (Hall, 1996)

Media and technology have radically changed the methods with which we usually share culture; Indeed these have, in a certain sense, destroyed some cultural boundaries: we can easily communicate with members of different groups all over the world in just one or two clicks.

The real question is: if technology has destroyed these boundaries and exposed us to new cultures, are we ready or enough open-minded to coexist pacifically with other cultures in real life? Does not living with other cultures mean to share and communicate in an aware way?

There is also a different line of thought, that speculates about the potential of media and technology as tools that create and strengthen the negative views of the others by the dominant culture.

Probably there is not a definitive answer to what has happened or it is happening, but both perspectives are interesting and crucial for a good understanding of the relation between culture and media nowadays.

Context is relevant in this debate, it is the element that shapes our thinking and allows us to develop or damage our culture.

\(^1\) We define ‘world-interactions’ as follows: any instance of verbal, nonverbal or physical interaction we have with other human beings, on both a micro and a macro level.
The capitalistic game of power has created, during the centuries, different levels of power and different ways of communication used by the dominant cultural ideology, that clearly exclude the discourse advanced by less powerful groups. Dominance and subordination are clearly visible and represent an integral part in our everyday life in all aspects of the modern capitalistic society; We are now in an age that seems to be defined by the concept of Hegemony as delineated by Gramsci. The creation of the image of the others is influenced by our identity, which in turn is influenced by our critical thinking, that is ultimately influenced by a context manipulated by the game of power of the ruling classes. Relations between culture and its outcomes on the context are particular important to understand certain ethnic or religious controversies and the creation of the social images of the ethnic-groups.

In the moment when one culture is in touch with another culture in the same context, there, we have a new creation of views of the others. Language is one of the elements that produce meaning of culture: in each nation language represents an important and powerful tool that allows the governments to influence the opinion or choices of their people through media; language becomes the symbol which delimitate the nation, but also the symbol with which the ruling class expresses ideological criteria, that, according with the government, are part of a rigid value and norms about the world-interactions and views of the Others. A clear example of this are newspapers: slight changes in language and wording can change the meaning of an event, highlighting certain elements while hiding others.

**Cultural racism: overview about the concept (Wren, 2001)**

According to Karen Wren, the Europeanization of culture around the different state members has created discontinuities into the national structure and internal organization that gave the input to reinforce the culture and the national identity. This new European concept of delineating images of national-identity and culture has created many discourses about 'race' and ethnicity in the new century.
This new concept seems as an effective tool to join people together and make them feel as an only entity with a same history, culture, space and identity in opposition to the Others.

“The term 'race' signifies the pseudo-scientific division of all humans into distinct categories based on skin color, each having particular associated character traits, and it is the inherent 'inferiority' of particular 'racial' groups which has historically served as justification for their subjugation” (Wren, 2001: 142).

In our times it appears critical to define who we are in terms of race or ethnicity; the globalization processes and the Europeanization process have created broad biological and physical categories of people, but at the same time this classification has developed a strong identity in terms of national belonging.

This national identity sometimes represent a pressure to define one's self, because this definition of being a member or not of a community is also a sort of subjective representation, not only in terms of acknowledging identity but also about identification of the self with particular physical characteristics.

Cultural racism is a term born during the 1970s to 1980s; according to Wren it “is a theory of human nature where humans are considered equal, but where cultural differences make it natural for nation states to form closed communities, as relations between different cultures are essentially hostile”(Wren, 2001: 143).

The definition of cultural racism is anyway a term of the European context, that is to be viewed as near to the nationalistic ideas and concepts of identity and recognition of these by the members of the same nation.

The national states' tools of unification based on cultural and historical creation of identity leads to the obvious consideration of the Others, that are necessarily those who do not recognize themselves into the national group, so they end up being clearly excluded from it.

Probably this sense of exclusion is similarly perceived among those who are born citizen but whose identity are not clearly defined, maybe because their physical characteristics are not recognized or accepted by the majority group.

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2 The definition can be found in Wren, K. (2001)
This exclusion could be seen also as the gap whereby powerful groups control the discourse of the Others in the national context; in the media, in the public opinion and, obviously, within the government’s internal structure. Those considerations about identity feelings are identifiable from us because we are part of this nationalistic creation of culture.

Chapter 2

Methods of the project: Critical Discourse Analysis

“Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context (…) critical discourse analysts take explicit position, and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality” (Van Dijk, 2008: 352).

This approach wants to understand, analyze and study the whole field of a specific socio-political or socio-cultural phenomenon, that means research a problematic topic in which work on.

CDA works on different perspectives as sociolinguistic, discursive, ethnic-linguistic so in general, is interested in the way people interact into a specific context with the Others. Particularly relevant is the consciousness of the ideology that the western-socio-cultural context gives to us and the ones in which we want to work in.

Most of researchers and scholars are deeply involved into the capitalistic western culture, so in a certain sense, all their research are to be understood at least partially as a reflection of the dominant discourse.

Thus the final work must be seen as a sociopolitically situated (Van Dijk, 2008) meaning that discourse of power and influences on the Others are deeply connected.

One of the other fundamental aims of the Critical Discourse analysis is to focus on the structure in which the discourse is born and operates inside a Nation, defying the
relations of power and dominance in it and the effects of this discourse on the everyday life society.

Media is an important part of the communication system and represents a powerful tool used by the dominant class to manipulate the interactions and the National discourse at large.

These kinds of influences are more negative than positive so that are what we can define with the creations of various social problems as cultural racism or ghettoization. Discourses can be spoken, written and also symbolic or visuals, and in order to create a satisfactory view of the whole phenomena CDA wants to study the different aspects of it. (we can say that is a multidisciplinary research analysis).

Theories inside CDA are not unitaries and defined as a general method for the analysis, but depends from case to case.

Concepts such as cultural hegemony, gender, dominance, power, race, social structure or social institutions are the grounds on which we can see and study the inequitable levels and the social conflicts connected to such discourse.

The analysis can be done at micro or at macro level: for example inequality between social groups and the discourse of power and hegemonic control is at the macro level, in correlation with the society.

Interactions at micro level are strongly significant at macro level, in the sense that speech acts and media communication influence not only the individual but also the whole system and consequently the agency of people.

“A central notion in most critical work on discourse is that of power, and more specifically the social power of groups or institutions (...)Thus, groups have (more or less) power if they are able to (more or less) control the acts and minds of (members of) other groups”. (Van Dijk, 2008: 355)

Power dependent on the social structure and its different levels of impact on people is also influenced by powerful discourses.

The possibility to dominate or be dominated by groups is defined by power and control of the public discourse.

The real problem in this social condition of “being dominated or dominate” is that this system is encoded into norms and rules and is legitimated by law.
In the following scheme we delineate an example of how to build a critical analysis about Media through the fundamental concepts of Critical Discourse Analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What analyze?</th>
<th>How those elements are relevant for ..?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Micro or macro?</td>
<td>Understand the interaction and the critical fact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO has POWER?</td>
<td>Study the context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access and control of POWER</td>
<td>Social structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through which ways...?</td>
<td>Ways of communication of the hegemonic discourse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Media analysis covers various aspects within the critical socio-political view as semiotic, linguistic, and indeed discourse.

“The point of such research is that events and actions may be described with syntactic variations that are a function of the underlying involvement of actors (e.g. their agency, responsibility, and perspective)”. (Van Dijk, 2008: 359)

Relevant in this type of analysis is the language (syntax, lexical structure and speech acts), that in the field is viewed as the tool or way to convey information and influence people's opinions.

We have chosen this type of analysis as a method for different reasons; CDA is usually used to operate within the field of media to describe the socio-political dynamic so it is particularly relevant for us to determine the Othering expressed by the Danish ruling class. Conversely, the study of Othering requires us to talk about media, which is the main object of discourse analysis within CDA.

For instance, FDA (Foucauldian discourse analysis) could have been equally valuable to us, but it focuses more on history and its role in relation to power; while we do a brief historical overview, our main field of interest is the social context, so we preferred CDA. Since the goal of the project was to gain insight into a phenomenon (othering) that produces social issues on both a micro and macro level, we also tried to use Critical
Discourse Analysis to interpret the texts “Honourable Fellow Citizens of the Muslim World” and "Why i published those cartoons" . By focusing on the danish discourse, we tried to an hermeneutical analysis of the cartoon controversy that is centered around power relation between the Danish public and the muslim community, and we also observed how this relation is portrayed in the media.

As we are not danish speakers, the whole project is more a general overview and a broad analysis of the cartoon controversy with the textual analysis of two key pieces of media; A more precise, in-depth analysis of the perspective of one of the parties involved (for instance jyllands-posten) would have proven too difficult for us as the most of resources are in danish.

Sometimes our writing could appear a bit negative towards the Danish side, and we acknowledge this: however, we think that at the root of othering stands a projection made by the dominant discourse (denmark in this case), and that is the reason behind our criticism.

Chapter 3

Danish context : Nation and identity problems

Discussion about cultural theories, Karen Wren’s Cultural Racism and Benedict Anderson’s “imagined communities”.

Denmark is one of the most developed countries, in the sense of a strong welfare system and economic power but, like England³, is also one of the countries in which the cultural racism is more perceived and disclosed in the discourse of power. Migration is really recent in Denmark and at the beginning it was a necessary consequence of the demand of labour workers, but when this was saturated the problems have started and the concept of “otherness” has rapidly evolved.

In the Danish mindset the idea of Nation is very strong and bounded to different life-aspects; they feel a strong historical and cultural identity really connected to the values of the United Nations.

³ As claimed by Wren, K. (2001)
The interpretation in which the nationalistic identity was created and still remain, extremely close to the predominant perception of the European values. Media and political issues are culturally connected to the Danish idea of the world's interactions, expressed by the united group of Danish members distinct from the Others (the whole Europeans and not). The image of Denmark that the Danish government is trying to advance in Europe is clearly in opposition with the internal perceptions of the terms “equality”, when is used in reference to non-Danish citizens. Modern liberal and progressive country, equal opportunities, represent the fake face of Denmark. As Karen Wren states “What has made cultural racism in Denmark so damaging is its subtle and almost invisible character. It is easily absorbed into the predominant ideologies of a country which images a homogeneous past and present..” (Wren, 2010: 146) and we agree saying that the nationalistic and cultural Danish idea about the everyday relations is extremely close, and sometimes finalized to reach something. Second and third generations immigrants are also included In this discourse; this looks more a question of visible appearance of genetic traits than one of cultural-diversity. According to Benedict Anderson (Anderson, 1991) the idea of Nationalism represent nothing less than an “image about communities” where people trust and believe in the territorial and cultural belonging to be the most important aspect of identity. This thinking about communities is strongly connect to the creation of cultural stereotypes and cultural racism that targets the Others. Nationalistic ideas and cultural racism in the Danish mindset appears multifaceted and more complex to analyze than at the beginning; if during the first immigration wave the Others were a “something” necessary for the Nation, something used to the benefit of the Danish people, now immigrants are an evil to the Nation; in the eyes of the Danish public, they represent the breakup of the welfare system. Traditional public opinion explains that the problem with this fluent immigrations of Islamic people is that they are attacking the Danish culture. But, what is it culture? Culture is shared, is influenced by the inhabitants of a territory, so how we can delimitate when the Danish culture and the Others’ culture start, if those
are living in the same country, sharing knowledge and language? It is obvious to us that there it exists a common flux, even if this is hidden. Both cultures are in a continue evolution, in a continue sharing process of acquiring, absorbing knowledge and in an opposite process of judging and separation from the different one. Danish culture therefore cannot be seen as a pure or non-influenced way of thinking; this culture is something that is in continue process of transformation. Probably for the late migrations, Denmark, remains a country with a critical discourse about the non-Danish citizens and a hidden non-equal situation about division of power in all the social life aspects. Media as a most of the European countries is a fundamental tool for influence the public opinions so changing the deep sense of cultural racism in the propaganda could be a good point for develop a different Danish view of the Others.

**Historical Overview of the perception of immigrants**

In this section of the project we would like to talk briefly about the perception of immigrants (and Muslim immigrants in particular) from the Danish public discourse: we think is important in order to understand the impact of the Cartoon Controversy and explain the reactions of the Danish media. In order to do so, we will mainly reference the paper *Immigration to Denmark: An Overview of the Research Carried Out from 1999 to 2006 by the Rockwool Foundation Research Unit* A good starting point for the topic at hand, we would like to define what we mean with Western and Non-Western country, as this difference is relevant when it comes to immigration. According to the research paper by the Rockwool foundation Western countries include: EU member states, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand; All the countries not listed above are considered Non-western. (Rokwell Foundation 2009: 10)
From the end of World War II up until 1973, the majority of immigrants from non-western countries were composed by guest workers; thanks to a prolonged economic growth, there was a high demand for industrial labor that could not be easily satisfied by the Danish workforce, and as a consequence this demand was satisfied by immigrants, mainly from Turkey and Yugoslavia and later from Pakistan. During the mid-60s we witnessed a second flow of immigrants towards Denmark, this time driven by family reunification with the first wave of guest workers.

This trend slowed down drastically in the early 1970s, when the Oil Crisis stifled production and the fear of unemployment.

Immigration resumed in 1974, and the number of immigrants from the main three countries that were a source of guest workers increased; we also saw a steady increase in the number of refugees from 1980 until the end of the millennium, even if their numbers were quite low before 1983. In 1986 we had a drop in the number of applications, caused by tighter requirements. Another big fluctuation took place between 1988 and 1993, partially because of the war in Yugoslavia, and the number of asylum seekers kept rising until a sudden drop in 2002. (Rokwell Foundation 2009: 10-11-13)

As pointed out by Anja Kublitz in “The Cartoon Controversy”, there has been a shift in the perception of immigrants: In the 1960s they were perceived as ‘workers’, and as such they were supposed to go back to their country after a number of years; in the 1980s and 1990s on the other hand, thanks to the different nature of the immigrants (now mainly refugees and second generation immigrants) they were identified with their country or culture of origin, and became ‘cultural´ immigrants and residents. (Kubliz 2010: 111)

In this phase that main perceived quality of the migrants was the difference in culture, and this fact led to the first attempts at integration of the immigrants in the Danish culture (i.e. naturalization). In the 2000s however, the growing concern about Islam led to another change: The main factor that identified immigrants became religion instead of culture, and this shift was the cause of an even bigger polarization of the debate about immigration: if before the difference in culture was seen as an obstacle to integration that had to be overcome, now the obstacle was the Muslim mindset. A big actor in this debate was the Danish People’s Party, that brought to the table a rhetoric that opposed Islam to western democratic values.
Islam, they claimed, was an antiquated mindset that enforced tyranny, gender inequality, violence and dogmas, opposed to democracy, equality, rationality and peace. This discourse is referred to as an “Enlightenment Project” by the author, (Kubliz 2010: 112) stressing the fact that direct puts contradiction supposedly western and Islamic values, and one might argue that can be traced back to the tradition of Danish secularism: generally Danish politicians have always tried to keep religious affairs separated from politics and out of the public scene.

We can see a number of dangerous assumptions in this discourse, especially in regard to the nature of Islam: This discourse assumes that all immigrants from Arabian countries are Muslims, and then implies that being Muslim equals to being a religious fanatic. Moreover, claiming that Islam is undemocratic and backward-minded, opposed to the Danish liberal mindset, most likely implies that Muslims should follow the Danish example, and yet this discriminatory attitude is decremental for integration. The fear of ghettoization expressed by the Danish public is probably well founded, especially considering the role that welfare and social cohesion has in Nordic society, but is also endorsed by the Danish public itself when this kind of rhetoric is used.

Even then integration is brought up in a more positive way, one cannot help but notice that there is an attitude of superiority lingering behind the concept, and to an immigrant it could sound as if he was supposed to disregard his/her own culture in order to embrace the Danish one.

Is often mentioned that immigrants are unable to understand the Danish society, often the media highlights the cultural differences between Muslim and Danish values, but is it important to remember that the Danish case is unique: such developed, well-functioning welfare and bureaucratic systems are unheard of even in Europe, and it can sometimes appear invasive to outsiders; no wonder then, that immigrants from non-western countries have a hard trying to integrate themselves is such a different, complex system. Naturally, when confronted with something completely alien, one tends to retreat to what is already known, and if the host country demonizes this set of knowledge and beliefs, than the guest is more likely to perceive the host's culture as a threat.
This 'us vs them' mentality, coupled with the assumptions about the nature of Islam and muslim practices, is a clear case of othering to us; in particular, the focus on religion matters appears to be the critical point of this perspective, and it also acts as a mean to justify (racism/exclusion) leading to what could be defined as anti-Islamic paranoia: as an example, we could point the reader to the first danish mosque.

The first official danish mosque was built in Copenhagen just last year (2014), and its construction and opening was not free from controversy: many in the danish political scene (led by Danske Folkepartiet) claimed that the mosque was spreading an extremist view of Islam, and there were widespread concerns about the influence that foreign funders could have on the imams and on the Muslim community as a whole. (Hooper 2014)

Chapter 4
Setting the stage: events of the cartoon controversy
Before going in depth analyzing the texts, we'd like to mention the events that these texts refer to, describing the events that are commonly referred as ‘the cartoon controversy’.

During the last week of September 2005, the newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* published a set of twelve cartoons representing the prophet Mohamed in various offensive ways: one in particular depicted Mohamed with a bomb in his turban. In a later article published by the *Washington Post* (Rose, 2006), the editor of *Jyllands-Posten*, Fleming Rose, explained that the cartoons were an answer to several episodes of intimidation and self-censorship all throughout Europe. (ibid.)

On the 30th of September, all twelve cartoons were published, accompanied by an article by Flemming Rose himself which stated that, since the Muslim community is a part of Danish society, they should be able to accept criticism like anyone else.

Two weeks later, on the 14th of September, the Danish Muslim community organized a peaceful protest in front of *Jyllands-Posten’s* offices in Copenhagen: the march through
the city center was accompanied by messages of pieces in both Danish and Arabic, and united a number of different Islamic beliefs. (Kubliz 2010: 108-109)

In the days that followed the protest the news spread beyond Denmark: the cartoons steered a lot of controversy in several Muslim countries, and a number of embassies asked to meet the Danish prime minister in order discuss the matter, but the minister refused on the grounds that he held no power over the Press and he wouldn’t compromise freedom of speech in order to accommodate religious beliefs. (Hamilton, 2006)

This decision was highly controversial, and was later criticized by both Danish officials and international organizations like the EU and UN: while the prime minister was right in deciding not to pressure the Press in any way, they said, refusing the meeting was seen as a sign of hostility by the Muslim ambassadors.

At the end of the year the United Nations sent a mission in Denmark to investigate the claims of racism and discrimination, while in various Muslim countries (notably Saudi Arabia) some political and religious leaders started to demand punishment for the editor of the newspaper.

Throughout the month of December and in several other occasions the following year, a group of Danish imams traveled to Egypt and Syria to find political allies in their struggle against the Danish government, demanding official apologies from both the prime minister and the newspaper; as a consequence of this mission several countries in North Africa and the middle-east start boycott of Danish goods and officially condemn the cartoons.

The European Union also condemned the cartoons and asked the Danish government to distance itself from the offensive material, however EU officials also harshly criticized the boycotts, claiming that they infringe international treaties.

While the controversy was spreading on the international stage, in Denmark the tension was high: the cartoonists receive several death threats, and many of Jyllands-Posten's offices were evacuated due to bomb threats; Fortunately none of these threats was actually acted upon.

The government was placed under a lot of pressure for his poor handling of the issue, with representatives from other Nordic countries condemning the cartoons and the losses reported by Danish industries caused by the boycotts.
By the end of January 2006, the Prime minister backed down and tried to apologize: In a press conference, the prime minister distanced himself from *Jyllands-Posten*, but reiterates that he is not able nor willing to restrain the Press; *Jyllands-Posten* on the other hand, published an article in both Danish and Arabic that apologized not for the cartoons directly but for hurting people's feelings. The Muslim-Danish community declared itself satisfied with these apologies, but many outside Denmark saw these apologies as insincere and continue to demand for a satisfactory answer. Abroad, both Bill Clinton and Vladimir Putin spoke against the cartoons, claiming that Danish authorities were hiding those who insulted Mohamed behind freedom of speech. In the month of February, several European newspapers re-published the cartoons and the reception seemed to be negative overall. Notably, the French paper *France Soir* also published some original vignettes; the government immediately distanced itself from these actions, and the cartoonist was fired. Many extremist groups continued to ask for a punishment of *Jyllands-Posten*, threatening Danish and Swedish citizens in Syria and the Gaza strip. Boycotts continued despite the condemnation from the EU, going as far as threatening to reduce oil exports to Denmark (a proposal made by some countries in the Persian Gulf). These are, in short, the events of the cartoon controversy; the scandal continued in several Muslim countries with more threats to Danish embassies and more boycotts, meanwhile newspapers all over the world were printing the cartoons, adding original material and in general contributing to the debate on freedom of speech and religion.

Now we think it is time to take a closer look to the parties involved in this discussion: starting with *Jyllands-Posten* and their stance on freedom of speech: Flemming Rose stated several times that they printed the cartoons because they believe in freedom of speech and they believe that religion, like any other subject, should be object of satire (Rose, 2006): we personally think that this is a noble goal, and that satire, when done properly can help us better understand its object: by making fun of our systems of beliefs, satire points out their shortcomings and helps us understand and improve upon them. By highlighting corruption and other problems, political satire can direct us toward
the parts of our political system that need fixing; similarly, religious satire points at those practices and concepts that are found to be contradictory with our laws or our modern times, and maybe it can help us change those practices in a way that can better fit with our modern society. A good example within Christianity could be that of Pope Francis, who is both highly criticized and praised for his attention to these kinds of problems and his will to renovate the Catholic Church.

Under this definition of satire as a tool to better understand our beliefs, the cartoons published by *Jyllands-Posten* could be seen as satire, but is also important to remember that they were produced in response to alleged self-censorship: there is an inherently negative and provocative attitude within them, even if they are satiric; the main difference, one might argue is that they are ultimately made to provoke and not improve Islam: they try to do satire but they end up enforcing negative, harmful stereotypes.

The stance of the Danish prime minister is equally ambivalent: he supports secular democracy and refuses to interfere with the Press, an act generally seen as authoritarian in western democracies, but this position leads to the entire country being blamed along with the paper: one entire people can not be held responsible for the action of a provocative right-wing news outlet, and in our opinion the government should have had received the ambassadors and explained to them that the Danish government does not endorse *Jyllands-Posten*’s position: this would have not avoided the controversy, especially if the minister was to hold his stance against censorship, but maybe it could have been possible to avoid many of the more violent responses by making the ambassadors understand that neither censorship nor punishment for the newspaper are available option in Western and Danish culture, regardless of the content and that what has been show was *Jyllands-posten*’s opinion alone.

We could also understand the reaction of the Danish-Muslim community from this same angle: they tried to protest in a pacifist manner because they knew that, despite the hostile political climate, the majority of Danes is more tolerant and inclusive than *Jyllands-Posten*.

Admittedly, it would have been harder to convey this message to other countries unaware of Danish culture, and it was made worse by the small, vocal minority of Danish imams that went to Muslim countries to “add fuel to the fire”.


As for the huge backlash in the Muslim world, they were rightfully upset, but this does not justify death and bomb threats; as we said before, some of the cartoons are really provocative and hold little to none satiric value, so it was perfectly natural to expect a negative response; however the issue was blown out of proportion by the Danish imams and by some extremist groups and leaders, which in turn reacted violently and thus only strengthened the message of *Jyllands-Posten* that Islam is a barbaric and backward-minded mentality that incites to barbaric violence and tyranny and cannot be criticized.

Ultimately, one could say that the issue discussed here was one of Othering: the Danish tabloid expressed the cultural and religious others that it found in the Muslim community.

**Analysis of “Honourable Fellow Citizens of the Muslim World”, International**

**08.02.2006 kl. 12:00 from Jyllands posten by Carsten Juste Editor-in-Chief**

This article draws the image of the *Morgenavisen Jyllands-Posten* and the real aims of it tracking the context in which the Prophet Mohammed cartoon is born and the correlated phenomenon that they called “misunderstanding” of significance about that. Starting from the introduction of this article the Editor-in-Chief clarify the position in which the *Jyllands-Posten* want to act.

The purpose of that “correction of these misunderstandings” (Carsten, 2006) want clearly to express at the National audiences their “good intentions” and their unawareness of the correlated reaction from the Muslim community.

The cartoon controversy represent a really critical event, it is a good example of a macro level context.

Media as we know yet is a fundamental ground in which the informations are disseminated from the dominant class and presented to the people.
In the same way we could say that the publication of this formal excuses have trying to modify the mind of the people through the re-thinking about the first fact of the publications, that is the “freedom of expression” (Carsten, 2006) and obviously the lack of awareness about the consequences.

The macro level of analysis influence not only a single part of the society but the whole of that single parts, understanding why this cartoon publication is developed as a world-debate about religion and tolerance is not so strange.

Who has the power for start from a normal National debate to create a world-debate? The government, the media and for sure all the powerful national people.

Carsten Juste the Editor-in-Chief of the Jyllands Posten clearly represents a powerful figure inside the political Danish context.

The structure of a specific Nation is express by the powerful figure that with active work monopolize the important tools of communications, media, schools and so on.

In this article the editor want to explain first of all, to the Nation, but also at the world, that the Morgenavisen Jyllands Posten “attaches importance to upholding the highest ethical standards based upon the respect of our fundamental values” (Carsten, 2006) so the sudden cartoon were must be seen only as an outgoing part of a “public debate on the freedom of expression” (Carsten, 2006).

Using this approach to explain the misunderstanding about the Cartoon, the Jyllands Posten refuse to accept any type of responsibility about the creation of the world-debate and so the correlated cultural racism that is clearly viewed on the Cartoon drawing.

The whole fact on the wrong interpretation about the drawings is now sell as a casual problem based by the different cultural view so the problem is that the muslims have a different culture because they haven't understand in the correct way the drawings.

Is not paradoxically strange affirm that “Maybe because of culturally based misunderstandings, the initiative to publish the 12 drawings has been interpreted as a campaign against Muslims in Denmark and the rest of the world”(Carsten, 2006) if they want promote the respect of the different religious belief?

Why is that happen if they really want to “respect the right of any human being to practise his or her religion”(Carsten, 2006)?
Honestly those affirmations appears not really clear and if we can say that a bit sociopolitically situated.

In all this article we can note positive sentences that are referred to “us, we, Danes” (native Danes) so Christians, and sentences more neutral as “their religious belief” (Carsten, 2006) that are clearly referred to the Others.

The Cultural superiority of the Danes appear more than obvious in the all article thus is confirmed at the end of it where there is a clarification about how also few Muslims are success people.

Why the government has permit the publication of this false excuse? The answer is obviously clear; the government has permit that because they want people that trust that the Danish community is strong and more positive than The Others, in this case, the muslims community.

Another thing to note is that the article was written only in english and not in Arabic so they expect that the muslim community in Denmark understand English, that is an evident focus point of the Anglo-American language hegemony in Denmark.

Government and media have the power for modify the thinking about not only facts as the cartoon controversy but also about the mindset of the whole nation.

**Analysis of “Why I published those cartoons” by Flemming Rose (published on The Washington Post, February 19th 2006)**

In this article, the cultural editor of Jyllands-Posten Flemming Rose explains the motivations behind the publication of the Mohammed cartoons, and then proceeds to defend them.

Flemming starts by highlighting the difference between editing and self-censorship: editing, he says, is a selection of content made to respect ethical standards and taste, while self-censorship is a selection of content made on ideological grounds.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Rose explains that he published the cartoons as a response to several episodes of self-censorship occurred all throughout europe; all started when a Danish children's writer was not able to find a drawer for his book: the author wanted to write a story about the life of Mohammed, but he was unable to find
someone willing to draw him: when he eventually succeeded, the artist wished to remain anonymous fearing repercussions; in the same period, Danish translators of a critical book about islam also wished to remain anonymous, presumably for the same reason. Rose claims that this is a clear act of self-censorship, as are also the Others that will follow.

Later that month, a Danish comedian was interviewed about his performance, in which he urinated on a copy of the Bible; when asked to do the same with the Koran, he refused.

Around that same time, the Tate gallery in London withdrew an installation that showed, among other things, the Koran, the Bible and other sacred texts torn to pieces in order to avoid tensions with the muslim community, and a few months earlier a museum in Goteborg, Sweden did the same thing removing a painting with a sexual motif and a quote from the Koran.

After exposing these episodes, Jyllands-posten's editor proceed to address the cartoons: he includes them in the danish tradition of satire, explaining that the danish Press is accustomed to make fun of every religious or political figure and that, in a sense, the cartoons include the the Danish-muslim community in this tradition; since they are Danish citizens and thus belong to this tradition, he says, they too should be able to take criticism.

For example, he continues, there has been a lot of mis-understanding around the cartoon that depicts Mohammed with a bomb in his turban: while many took it as an insult meaning the that all muslims are fundamentalists and terrorists, Rose sees a critique of how extremist groups misuse religion to justify violence. (Rose, 2006)

In the second part of the article, Rose goes back to the distinction of the topic for editing and asks what respect means in this context: “When I visit a mosque, I show my respect by taking off my shoes. I follow the customs, just as I do in a church, synagogue or other holy place. But if a believer demands that I, as a nonbeliever, observe his taboos in the public domain, he is not asking for my respect, but for my submission.” (Rose, 2006)

Rose stresses that this is not a problem of religion, but one of freedom of expression: different religions can co-exist peacefully if this freedom is guaranteed.
In short, the preservation of freedom of thought and freedom of expression, which are the basis of every democratic society, should be more important that concerns about what is published.

To paraphrase: *Jyllands-Posten* apologized for hurting people’s feeling with the cartoons, but this is not a valid excuse to stifle a freedom that is the foundation of danish society. Moreover, while it gave birth to a huge controversy, the cartoon controversy encouraged public debate about freedom of Press and Islam in general.

Now we would like to apply some elements from the Critical Discourse Analysis theory to the text.

Firstly, we would like to address the Micro and Macro aspects: The discourse is implemented in both contexts. On the one hand Rose addresses the danish-muslim community, but on the other hand he is also aware of the international reach that the cartoons had; what he says in the article can be applied to both the national and international level. On this topic, we notice a distinction between two categories of muslims: Rose contrasts the muslim countries, seen as the realm of barbaric fanaticism and thus the most subject to the stereotyping of the muslim Others, and the Danish-muslim community, that he seems to see as ‘more civilized’ (probably because of its relationship with danish culture).

In particular, we point at this excerpt:

> "In January, Jyllands-Posten ran three full pages of interviews and photos of moderate Muslims saying no to being represented by the Imams. They insist that their faith is compatible with a modern secular democracy. A network of moderate Muslims committed to the constitution has been established, and the anti-immigration People’s Party called on its members to differentiate between radical and moderate Muslims, i.e. between Muslims propagating sharia law and Muslims accepting the rule of secular law. The Muslim face of Denmark has changed, and it is becoming clear that this is not a debate between "them" and "us," but between those committed to democracy in Denmark and those who are not.". (Rose, 2006: 2)

In this quote, we can see this discrimination in action:
the first element that should catch the reader’s attention is the role of Imams, that are here depicted as the expression of religious fanaticism and are opposed to the constitution; while this conception could have a foundation in reality (for instance in the embassy of Danish Imams that went to different muslim countries in order to rally against the cartoons), it is not logical to assume that all Imams are preaching extremist versions of islam.

This negative approach towards religious authorities could be interpreted as an expression of fear, as if religious communities with a hierarchy constitute a threat towards the secular state in the form of an alternative power structure with equal authority to that of the government. This supposed fear is justifiable if we take into consideration the pervasive impact that the State has in Danish society, and while religious structures should not interfere with the secular state, they do if given the opportunity to do so: In both the muslim and christian world we can find examples of religious leaders assuming secular power and vice versa.

To cite some examples, we could think of the catholic church during the middle ages, or of Henry the VIII of England, if we are looking for an example of secular rulers assuming religious authority.

The influence exercised by religion over its subject is often used as a political tool and can be the element that gives birth to a naiton, so its only natural that states like Denmark, that have a capillary influence over the population and the everyday life of citizens, would be wary of such a problem.

If we stay close to interpretation, we could find a possible explanation for the statements that Rose made about the danish-muslim community:

Assuming that the danish public believes in this principle of interference between secular power and religion (Fleming Rose seems to believe this), they have seemingly no problem with the Church of Denmark because they lack a powerful hierarchy and are loosely organized, but other religions with a more established structure could pose a bigger threat; In this sense, the danish effort for integration is also important to introduce these immigrants to danish society in a way that will bring them to trust and rely on the danish state rather than their own religious community.
When it comes to power relations and media control, it seems like the danish discourse is prominent over the muslim one, at least in regards to the text. In the article there seems to be no space given to the muslim argument: surely it is acknowledged to an extent, but is not really taken seriously; all the conversation is centered around the western values of democracy and freedom of expression.

There are also traces of cultural racism in the text, especially in the distinction between danish muslims and arab muslims that we mentioned before; Fleming Rose in this case is a spokesman of the dominant class, and as such he favours those who embrace danish culture: he undermines the importance of religion and arabic culture, and places his own values and context as a canon in a prominently ethnocentric way.

One might argue that because of this he is unable to understand that culture and cultural identity are transformative processes (meaning that while muslim immigrants can adapt to Danish culture and values, they can not deny their origin).

Rose claims that Islam it’s mostly incompatible with secular democracy, and even when it is religion seems to be heavily downplayed; he declares that christianity is the superior religion when he says “the same cartoonist who drew the image of Muhammed with a bomb in his turban drew a cartoon with Jesus on the cross having dollar notes in his eyes and another with the star of David attached to a bomb fuse. There were, however, no embassy burnings or death threats when we published those.” (Rose, 2006: 2)

His claim is flawed because it is an expression of cultural racism: his vision of religion is not representative of christianity as a whole: he says ‘christianity’ but what he is referring to is danish protestantism alone.

Catholic and Orthodox christianity have a much more structured hierarchy for example, and deal with criticism in different ways (one might also say that they have less tolerance for criticism); The claim that christianity does not encourage violence is not entirely correct, and seven Crusades stand witness to this. Moreover, while is true that in recent times there have not been acts of physical violence, there is much debate around other types of symbolic violence: for example we could look at the recent statement by the Vatican’s secretary of state, that declared the Ireland’s same-sex marriage policy “a defeat for humanity” (Kirchgaessner 2015)
To conclude: we think that *Jyllands-Posten*’s premises are right, we believe in democracy and freedom of speech, and we are convinced that is just to rise and defend these universal rights and values, however we also think that *Fleming Rose* was misguided: while coming from right premises, he was influenced by and subject to cultural racism and ended up perpetrating harmful stereotypes.

**Conclusion**

This project was born from a slow reflection about The self, the perception of the Others and culture.

Initially we were unaware of such terms and their real significance, so we started to read many theories trying to make sense of this intricate web of relationships and concepts. Looking at the project now it is clear that the base of the whole of the project is the theoretical part, but we didn’t really choose what theories to use: it was our interest in danish case and its implications that led us in the metaphorical ‘rabbi thole’ that is the study of othering and identity.

Thanks to this project however, we hopefully became more aware of these concepts and of what they mean in the danish context.

The perception of the Others is defined by language, culture, ethnicity and religion so we tried to understand those terms and the theories behind them as our ground work.
The full aim of the project was developed during the writing process: our purpose was to highlight the hidden messages in the media, in this case *Jyllands-Posten*, but this initial goal has spread beyond just the Cartoon to include much larger concepts and much larger problems.

It is now clear to us that the cultural racism present in Denmark and other countries is an issue that is socio-politically situated and spread with all the powerful tools of the media.

A lot of theories have been used to clarify the terms for the readers and also to create a more open view on the problem formulation.

The Others are integral part of our life so we think is really important know how interact with them, and the Cartoon controversy showed us the danger hidden in these interactions: simples words that arise from just reasons, in a wrong context can have a big negative impact. Othering and cultural racism can blur the lines between what is real and what is manufactured to appeal to a group, and often the difference between the two is subtle; often Othering starts from reality and then derails into imagination.

This analysis has changed our way of seeing and understanding the communications and interactions between people, and we can now recognize how discourse influences our everyday life and social interactions.

Ultimately, we do not think we are able to give a moral evaluation of the Cartoon Controversy because there is no clear winner: both sides were right in some ways and wrong in another. Personally, I agree with the danish side on most matters of principle: I value freedom of speech and think that it may be the single most important freedom that one has in the age of surveillance we live in, but here it appears to me that *Jyllands-posten* used this term more as a trigger-word to inflame the public and defend a misled action; The response of the newspaper was probably excessive, and above all it did not take into account the vast cultural differences that exist between it and the people it was addressing.

**Bibliography**


