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**Right wing populism in Denmark – people, nation and welfare in the construction of the ‘Other’**

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### *Introduction*

Scholars generally agree that Denmark and the other Scandinavian countries represent ‘an exceptionalism’ in terms of welfare state and gender regimes; it has been argued that this context also influenced the way populism emerged, developed and consolidated (Rydgren 2011) in the past half century. In particular, some of the scholarly literature in the Nordic context focuses on the particular relation between nationalism and populism, suggesting that contemporary forms of populism have been shaped and influenced by the historical context and the construction and perception of ‘the people’, ‘the nation’ and ‘the other’. This is for instance indicated by the way the nationalist populist Danish People’s Party (Dansk Folkeparti, DF) discursively constructs and relates party ideology and positions to the national question. Within this frame, the nation and those who belong to it are perceived to be threatened from immigration flows, from European integration and Islam. This approach to the nation-state carries historical legacies; scholars have observed that Scandinavia has through the years developed a particular form of ‘welfare nationalism’ (Brochmann and Hagelund 2012), which since the 1960s and 1970s linked national issues with social equality, democracy and gender equality in the

construction of 'national belonging'. This chapter suggests that these understandings of the nation and welfare state have in recent decades been seized by the populist right and re-interpreted by paradigms emphasising differences and cleavages between natives vs. foreigners, deserving vs. undeserving, friends vs. foes.

This contribution analyses two different organizations: The Danish People's Party and the Free Press Society (*Trykkefrihedsselskabet*, TS); the first is one of the electorally most successful parliamentary represented populist parties; the second a grassroots' radical right wing movement that focuses on the issue of Islam vis-à-vis the question of freedom of speech and free press. One set of issues deals with the relation between Danish populism and welfare nationalism/national politics of belonging, focusing on the intersections of the nation, the people and the welfare state from historical perspectives. This chapter es the question to what extent we can identify a particular Danish exceptionalism with legacies in both history and democracy, which influenced contemporary forms of populism and othering in Danish politics and society. Another set of issues refers to the characteristics of contemporary Danish populism. The third set of issues address counterforces combating hate speech and crime against the 'other' focusing on the strategies of civil society organisations as well as the relations to public institutions. On the basis of the empirical analysis we discuss how to understand the 'politics of fear' permeating contemporary Europe from the Danish perspective. Here the articulation of fear of immigration, Islam and the Muslim Other includes the fear of losing the particular version of the welfare state.

Scholars have argued that in spite or perhaps because of their historical legacies, the Nordic countries face serious problems with accommodating ethno-cultural and religious diversity and integrating

immigrant minorities as equal citizens on the labour market and in society (Brochmann and Hagelund 2012). Mainstream political parties have since the 1990s been engaged in re-thinking and reframing the relation between the national, the democratic and the social questions. Arguably, it is within these cleavages that the influential Scandinavian populist DF managed to mobilise the Danish voters.

While the scholarly literature on populism has generally focused on political parties (Mudde 2007, Albertazzi and McDonnell 2007, Rydgren 2011) or on the concept and content of populism (cf. Arditi 2010), we propose that an important contribution to the populist ideological development also comes from grassroots' movements, often providing intellectual content to the populist Right wing, such as The Free Press Society. Both types of organizations mobilize public opinion and electorate by means of a discourse and rhetoric that emphasise national sentiments of belonging. Within this framing, liberal Western democracies play a central role in the fight for freedom and liberty (e.g. freedom of speech) and against obscurantism, authoritarianism, religious fundamentalism, male chauvinism.

We propose that Danish exceptionalism is embedded in a culturalist ideology that prioritises what are perceived as 'our' values, principles and rights against the threat represented by Islam and Muslim immigration. The findings from our research suggest that a subtle 'intellectual labour' division exists between the two organizations: if the DF is characterized as the popular, or populist, organization directed towards the problems faced by the 'common Dane' particularly when confronted by immigration and domestic and European political elites, the Free Press Society aims rather at addressing and debating aspects related to the danger of Islam and the future of freedom of speech in the West at a more intellectual level. The analysis thus poses interesting questions about the role of

grass roots movements and radical right wing intellectual elite vis-à-vis the political parties in the shaping of populism 'Nordic style'.

### **1. The rise of right wing populism in Denmark: The Nation, the People, Welfare**

Denmark has a historical legacy of closely articulating the relationship between the nation, the people and the welfare state (Mouritzen 2006). This tradition goes back to the 1930s, when the governing Danish Social Democratic Party redefined the people of the nation, by linking it not only to the homeland, but also to the struggle for democracy and social welfare. As Danish historian Ove Korsgaard (2004) observes, this particular re-framing contributed to create and consolidate consensus about the triple meaning of 'the people', which in the discursive national understanding at the same time refer to the national, the democratic and the social questions. This section will develop this point further in relation to contemporary Danish populism.

The formation of the modern democratic Danish nation state dates back to 1848. As was the case for other nation state making (see Anderson, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1992) the shift towards a modern democracy raised controversial questions about the meaning of the nation and the notion of its 'people'. In particular: who should have the right to vote? Who belonged to the people? How should the people be constituted: by ethnos or demos? How should democracy be linked to welfare state? In particular, the loss of the Southern Jutland in the 1864 war against Prussia and Austria had strong impact on feelings of national identity and belonging at the light of a shrinking territorial power and jurisdiction.

During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the triad: nation, democracy, and welfare was temporarily resolved by the growth of the Danish welfare state. The Social Democratic Party [*Social Demokratiet*, SD] played a key role in this political project, integrating the national to the social question. One of the objectives of the Social Democratic Party was to give shape to a model closely connecting socialism and democracy to the nation state, by feeding on national feelings, solidarity and belonging. The SD gained power in 1929 and formed a government with the Social Liberal Party [Det Radikale Venstre, RV] which lasted until the end of the German occupation in April 1945. During the 1930s economic crisis, the SD under the leadership of Prime Minister Th. Stauning, ran a successful election campaign under the motto 'Stauning – or Chaos'. The SD led government negotiated a national agreement with the Liberal Agrarian Party [Venstre, V], representing the peasant organizations; the so-called Kanslergade Agreement [*Kanslergadeforliget*], which adopted reforms that contributed to establish the Danish welfare model.

In spite of historical differences between the various Nordic roads to statehood and parliamentary democracy, there were a number of similarities in the political development (Hilson 2010). One example is the similar formulation of the national strategies of the Scandinavian Social Democracy during the 1930s. The motto for the Danish SD was 'Denmark for the people' [*Danmark for folket*], also the name of the 1934 party program, which echoes the ideological motto of the Swedish Social Democratic Party 'labelled 'the peoples home' [*folkehemmat*]. Scholars have attributed the relatively peaceful and consensual political development of the Scandinavian countries during the economic crisis and the consolidation of national Socialism and fascism to the political compromise of the 1930s between the Red-Green coalitions negotiated between Social Democratic and agrarian parties that were able to resolve the potential class conflicts (Hilson 2010: 33).

The Nordic Social Democrats thus created a kind of social nationalism or ‘welfare-nationalism’. In 1934 the SD moved from a class to a ‘peoples’ party’ and redefined the people as a social and political construct united by democracy. The democratic dimension made the concept of the people different from German National Socialism. The triple meaning of the people made it possible to refer to the people as ‘the working people’, whose interests the party took care of and at the same time talk on behalf of democracy and the whole nation. The implications are that one is not only born into a national community, but also into a social community. The social and national can only be linked by understanding yourself as a part of the nation and of the community (Korsgaard 2004; 422).

The discursive struggles about the meanings of the nation and the people raise have implications for the understandings of relations between nationalism and populism. Based on reflection on the Danish political history, Korsgaard’s approach makes a crucial distinction between state nationalism and folk-nationalism [*folkenationalisme*], i.e. between nationalism ‘from above’ and ‘from below’ (Korsgaard, 2004; 342-47). This refers to the fact that in some national movements the state has been the key driver whereas in other national movements civil society was the key driver. This makes it possible to identify a decisive difference between Danish and German nationalism during the 19th century – the German nationalism was based upon the state, whereas Danish nationalism post 1864 was based on civil society movements. The Danish case illustrates that the discursive struggles about understanding ‘the people’ may have conflicting implications on the different historical periods and in diverse national contexts. In the Danish context the meaning of ‘the people’ was redefined by the SD to include almost everybody living (legally and preferably with a citizenship status) within the nation.

Another particularity concerns the universal Scandinavian welfare state premised on a gender dimension, the dual-breadwinner model and public responsibility for care work (Borchorst and Siim 2002). Nordic scholarship has shown that the Scandinavian welfare states can be traced back to the reform of the patriarchal family legislation in the mid-1920s (Melby et. al 2008), which reduced male privileges by establishing formal equality between the spouses in marriage. The universal welfare model, which was further developed by reforms of social and labor market policies in the 1960s and 1970s, has been considered to be particularly 'women-friendly' (cf. Borchorst & Siim 2002), since the public responsibility for care work enable women to combine wage work with care work.

Since the 1970s, Scandinavian welfare states have been relatively successful in economic terms and the basic components of extended welfare policies and redistribution; a welfare model which is presently supported by virtually all mainstream parties. Social equality, democracy and gender equality have become crucial elements in the Nordic countries' sense or construction of national belonging. Yet, it has been argued that they face serious problems in accommodating ethno-cultural and religious diversity and integrating immigrant minorities as equal citizens (Togeby 2004; Mouritzen 2006). Recently scholars have analysed the Scandinavian welfare model from a perspective of migration proposing that there is one model with three exceptions, all based upon 'welfare nationalism that links welfare with access to national citizenship (Brochmann & Hagelund 2012). Tensions also exist between gender equality policies and recognition of immigrant minorities (Siim & Skjeie 2008).

Denmark's EU membership and the increased mobility and immigration have arguably re-activated the struggle about the meaning of the people and reformulated the 'old' questions about who belongs to the people, how to define the borders of nation and link the national and social questions. In the 1970s and

1980s the Danish membership of the EU was a contentious question across the Right/Left divide. Since at least the 1990s immigration have raised new questions about belonging, borders (Hedetoft 2006) and on what conditions the ‘other’, the ‘alien’ should access to Danish and European citizenship and welfare provisions.

Presently, all major political parties are engaged in the re-thinking and reframing the welfare state. One controversial issue is between an exclusive understanding of ‘us’ the people and ‘our welfare’ tied mainly to the nation state vis-à-vis inclusive and post national notions of welfare and solidarity that included ‘the migrant other’. Recent research suggests that Denmark has become highly and increasingly polarized (Minkenberg 2008) in relation to national identity and welfare questions. Within this framework, the populist Danish Peoples’ Party presents itself as the protector of an exclusive notion of welfare and solidarity, limited to ‘our people’, to those ‘who have paid for [welfare] for generations and generations’. From the Danish context immigration and increased cultural and religious diversity have been followed by a ‘culturalisation’ process of the welfare issue and the integration discourse (Vad Jønsson & Petersen 2010: 204-209; Meret 2012) rooted in the particular understanding of national identity, welfare and democracy. We argue that right wing Danish populism has adopted a specific ‘model’ influenced by Danish history and society. This model can be identified consisting of: a welfare-nationalist approach with clear exclusionary drives; a strong anti-immigration/nativist agenda (Betz and Meret 2009) and an opportunistic gender equality agenda (see Meret and Siim 2013a).

## **2. Contemporary Danish Populism**



The term populism was first used by Danish scholars in the 1980s, to describe and characterize the rise and development of the Danish Progress Party, (*Fremskridtspartiet*, FrP), predominately characterised by tax protest and anti-establishment position. Considering the Danish case, the first wave of neo-fascist parties was only marginally present in the country, the rise and development of the FrP belongs to the second populist wave (see Von Beyme 1988). The contemporary history of the DF and the role of the party in Danish politics cannot fully be comprehended without considering the DF legacies to the FrP. The DF did not emerge from a political vacuum, but capitalised on the FrP political experience, agenda, developments. The FrP was born as a tax-protest, ultraliberal and anti-establishment party and it signed the times of the populist tax protest mobilisation in Denmark and in other Scandinavian countries (Norway in particular) that peaked in the 1970s and early 1980s. Later, the political agenda of these parties ebbed out, but left a political opportunity open to a rising populist demand, yet this time driven by anti-immigration and strong ethnonationalist positions.

The former uncontested DF leader Pia Kjærsgaard joined the FrP in 1978 and she was elected party MP in 1984. She made a rapid political career in the party, becoming a crucial actor in the struggle for the FrP leadership. In the early 1990s internal party divisions, disagreement and struggles for power eventually split the party up. As a result Pia Kjærsgaard and four other FrP members left in protest in 1995 and launched the DF. At the 1998 parliamentary election, the DF received more than 7 pct. of the votes and from 2001 the party secured a decade of Liberal-Conservative government (2001-2011) supporting the minority government.

In terms of voters' support, the DF has until recently been a party of (male) manual workers with lower education (see Meret 2010). As for social class, the DF is the most clear-cut working class party in

Danish politics (Meret 2010; Betz and Meret 2012), a characteristic that worries mainstream parties left of the centre, in particular the SD. Populist right wing voters - in this case the DF voters - are intolerant towards immigration, ethnic and cultural difference and the large majority of them considers Islam a security threat, a danger to national identity and social cohesion (Meret 2010). Low political and social trust among the DF voters tends to confirm the close relationship between anti-immigration, nationalist and ethnocentric positions and anti-establishment.

From 1995 the DF gradually abandoned tax-protest and ultra-liberal approaches, incorporating pro-welfare positions in the party programs and ideology (Meret 2010). The adoption of a welfare profile was pivotal to the transformation and consolidation of contemporary Danish populism and signalled a radical shift from its forerunner. Moreover the combination of welfare, nationalist positions, anti-immigration and European scepticism allowed the DF to play on different registers and issues when constructing and identifying 'the Other' (Hervik 2011). The start of the DF was difficult but the electoral breakthrough came at the 1998 election, where the DF gained 13 seats in the Danish parliament. This ensured the party a rather solid parliamentary representation.

The pursuit of order and cohesion within the party's own ranks was the first step into a process of 'normalisation', which should bring the DF from the margins to the mainstream. This implied a strongly centralised party organisation, intolerant towards internal party conflicts and vertically centred on the party central organ. Thus DF has from the start been characterized by a rigid internal party discipline. This makes the DF one of the most modern, well-organised, top-administrated and professionally marketed parties in Danish politics (Knudsen 2007: 140).

Between 2001 and 2011 the DF played a key role as a support party for the Liberal-Conservative coalition government and exerted its influence on the political and public media discourse in the ‘othering’ of immigrants, especially Muslims. From November 2001 until 2011 the party took part to virtually all major agreements on labour market reforms, welfare reforms, reforms of the public administration. The DF worked together with the government to approve all financial agreement from 2002. Most significantly, the DF played a crucial role in drafting the new migration law and in foreign politics, the DF support was vital to endorse the Danish military participation in Afghanistan and in Iraq in 2003. The only exception was European politics, where the DF has remained sceptical towards further integration, which, in the view of the party, would undermine Danish national sovereignty.

When the Social Democratic lead government coalition took power after the election in November 2011, the DF lost its political role as a support party for the government, but in spite of the economic crisis and the general tiredness of the government coalition, the DF lost relatively little (-1,6 pct.). In 2012 the founder and leader Pia Kjærsgaard, resigned and Kristen Thulesen Dahl took over the leadership post. This change did not affect the party popularity. At the municipal elections of November 19, 2013 the party for the first time had a breakthrough also at municipal level, winning around 10 per cent of the votes and thus becoming the third largest party after the Social Democratic and the Liberal Party also at the municipal level. At the last European elections in May 2014 the party gained a landslide victory, winning 26, 6 per cent of the Danish votes: this made the DF the biggest party with three mandates in the EP. After the election, the DF left the *Europe of Freedom and*

*Democracy Group* (EFD) at the EP to join the *European Conservatives and Reformist Group* (ECR), headed by English Conservative David Cameron<sup>1</sup>.

### **3. Characteristics of Right Wing Populist Organizations**

This section analyses similarities and differences in the political communication, ideology and values of the two main organizations: the DF and the TS. The selection of the *Danish Peoples' Party (DF)* [*Dansk Folkeparti*] as the populist party for empirical analysis and interviews was obvious since scholars agree that DF presents an illustrative example of a highly influential Right wing populist Danish political party;. The selection of a radical right wing movement<sup>2</sup> was a more difficult task, since there is still little research on Danish radical right wing grassroots movements. Arguably The Free Press Society, TS (Trykkefrihedsselskabet, TS) provides a timely choice. The TS founder and leader *Lars Hedegaard* became a public and contested spokesman for 'freedom of speech', particularly after the attack to his person allegedly for his anti-Muslim rhetoric in 2013. He was the editor of TS Danish language journal *Sappho* and is the co-founder with Ingrid Carlqvist of the international English language journal, *Dispatch International*. The influential advocate for 'free speech', the lawyer Jacob Mchangama, was also a member of TS. In addition there is an overlap between TS and individual members of DF.

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<sup>1</sup>The EFD consists of Eurosceptic nationalist right-wing parties with no real influence in the EP. The DF tried to join the ECR in 2009 but was denied access due to its reputation as a racist extreme right wing party.

<sup>2</sup> The Danish team conducted 20 interviews between June 13 and September 10, 2013: 10 with members of political parties, 4 with members associated with the Free Press Society, 6 with 'victim' organizations. Interviews were conducted by Jeppe Fuglsang Larsen (JFL) (cf. Siim, Fuglsang Larsen & Meret 2013).

In contrast to the DF, the TS is still a relatively unknown organization. In February 2015 it again came on the front page, after the Paris shooting and the Copenhagen killings, which put the issue of ‘free speech’ on the top of the public agenda. Arguably these events contributed to ‘normalise’ the organization profile due to the relatively uncritical approach characterising the public discourse on ‘free speech’. Another factor could be that the mainstreaming of the DF opened an opportunity window for a radical right wing critique of immigration, defence of Danish/Western values and anti-Islam positions. This place has been taken up by the TS. The two organizations share an ‘absolutist’ defense of freedom of speech in society and a lack of tolerance to opposition within both organizations.

#### *Political communication, Leadership Style and Rhetoric*

The DF has in the past decade been clever in using simple slogans and visual symbols in campaign posters and in the media to get the party message across. Furthermore, the DF former leader Pia Kjaersgaard played a crucial media role as a woman ‘of the people’, promoting herself as the spokesperson for the ‘common Dane’ (Meret 2015). She was the first female politician in Denmark to launch a new party, and was, for almost two decades, the only woman leading a right-wing populist party in Europe. Arguably she is emblematic for the successful charismatic populist leader able to attract loyal followers and respect and achieve political success and leadership longevity (Meret 2015).

The style of TS leader Lars Hedegaard is characterized by a provocative, contentious, often borderline rhetoric and style: his radical positions on Islam and Muslims on hate-speech and Othering compared to the DF. Hedegaard was for example charged for hate speech according to the ‘racism’ paragraph in 2011 after being accused of racism in 2009 for his statements ‘that girls in Muslim families are raped

by their uncles, cousins, or their fathers'. He was convicted by the Lower Court in 2011, and acquitted by the Higher Court in 2012 after claiming that his expressions were formulated at a 'private' meeting and were not intended to be expressed publicly. Their writings are about freedom of speech targeting primarily Islam as a religion, Islamism and featuring Muslim minorities as the inner enemies.

The interview analysis show that the two organizations are aware of their crucial role and of the role of mainstream media in political communication; all informants were strong defenders of the freedom of speech and in favour of abolishing the so-called 'racism paragraph' (§ 266b) from the Danish penal code<sup>3</sup>, thus freeing racist and hate speech from penal prosecution. This position correlates with a strong and uncompromising defense of Jyllands Posten's publication of the Muhammad cartoons in September 2005 and of the 'right' to 'offend' religious/Muslim minorities. Asked about the charges addressed to them for their outspoken racist and Islamophobic attitudes, informants had well-prepared replies, arguing in different ways but with similar content that freedom of speech 'is a core value in Danish and Western societies' and needs to be safeguarded. This position can be illustrated by the formulations of DF Member of Parliament about hate-speech:

The legal prohibition against hate-speech or 'racism paragraph' is a big problem, because it prohibits freedom of speech; but apart from this there is no problem with free speech in DK. An open society [Karl Popper] and the open Danish debate have contributed to prevent extremism and neo-Nazism in contrast to what has happened in Sweden. (...) It is bullshit to talk about racism ... it is not a question about racism, or race. I do not subscribe to racism as an ideology.. The concept of Islamophobia is also bullshit. I relate to the religion Islam and to the

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<sup>3</sup>§266b, the so-called 'racism' paragraph of the penal-code adopted in 1971 states: "Everyone who publicly or with intent, expresses statements or another information in public, by which a group of persons is threatened, insulted or degraded because of their race, color, national or ethnic origin, faith or sexual orientation must be punished with a fine or prison up till 2 years". Stk.2. At the assessment of the character of the punishment it is of particularly serious circumstance, if the statements have the form of public propaganda.

things I see. And I see the big problems which Islam creates in Western societies. It is a pseudo-Freudian explanation that you criticize, is something you also must be afraid of. ... the word racism becomes a form of crusade where everything is lumped together in relation to what racism can mean, apart from being about biological differences. If you are critical of Islam you are labeled a racist. This is an etymological perception of what the word means, and it is pure bullshit (Interview by JFL, 2013).

Here racism and Islamophobia are lumped together and both rebuffed on the basis of an argumentation that discards their 'actuality' or 'relevance' in contemporary societies and particularly in Denmark. Charges of racism and Islamophobia are also considered to hinder public discussion and thus automatically freedom of speech, without reflecting whether this is really the case. Another position expressed by several informants, finds it problematic that the penal code prohibits the free and open debate about controversial issues related to Islam, immigration and integration of Muslims in Danish society. One good example of this is given by a well-known MP for DF: For her the right to free speech is understood as 'the right to offend/insult other people' *krænkeretten*. Legal limits prevent people from raising controversial debates, because of the fear of being convicted for offending peoples' feelings. In her own words:

I think that the racism paragraph §266b is wrong and limits freedom of speech. It does not protect against racism, but protects the groups who feel offended. If you say something about a group you can get convicted, even if it is true. It is a paragraph about not offending peoples' feelings. If we should keep this paragraph, you should only be convicted if what you say is not true (interview by JFL, 2013)

Similar arguments were used to repudiate and dismiss accusations of populism. For example by another member of DF who denies all accusations that the party should be a populist party asking:

Does populism mean to be in tune with the public opinion (*folkestemningen*)? May be you could turn it around and say that we just share same beliefs and attitudes as ‘the people’? I could understand if we changed attitudes and opinions from case to case and had one meaning one day and another the next day. Then it could be true. All parties have a degree of populism because you say things when the timing is right. [But] we are better than the other parties in timing, because we have people to help us determine when it is good to voice your beliefs. We do not change opinions but we address the issues directly and propose solutions when there has been a case of for example rape, or home robbery in the houses of elderly people. Popular opinion/feelings are supporting us when we say it, but it has always been our policy (interview by JFL, 2013)

Populism as a concept is here re-formulated by referring to the proximity between the party and the people, as well as the consistency and reliability of the party politics over time, compared to the other parties.

The TS primarily refers to the danger of Islam and Islamization for the future of democratic Western societies. The informants are eloquent on the role of Sappho’s (the journal of the association) position on Islamofobia:

Sappho debates Islam. It is about culture, freedom and about the future of Western societies. We are not racists; we are not interested in race. We are interested in freedom of expression, the fundamental right in order to create a free democratic society. People can call me what they want. [But] it is ridiculous and totally insinuating to call



me a racist. Islamophobia is also ridiculous, but I will not accept the premise behind this concept. I believe the great Islamophobists, if you take the word serious, are those who try to close the debate about Islam, because they are afraid of reprisal from hard-core Islamists. It is the people who closed down Lars Vicks [Swedish author and cartoonist] exhibition because he is considered a problem. They are afraid of what will happen. There are publishers who do not dare to print the Mohammed-drawings. They are the Islamophobes.

All TS informants are ardent defenders of freedom of speech, but have different attitudes towards Islam and Islamization. Lawyer Jacob Mchangama agrees for instance that the 'racism paragraph' ought being abolished, but he argues that the primary political goal is to 'defend freedom of speech', as the basic liberal value in democratic societies and believes in 'religion, equality and freedom' inspired by the US model. In contrast to the two organizations, he is less concerned about the struggle against Islam and does not directly refer to 'the dangers of Islamization'.

The paragraphs above show that rightwing populist organizations consider freedom of speech to be a goal in itself and not as a means to create a democratic society; this explains their official policy limited to the removal of the 'racism paragraph'. For the informants of the organizations, the defense of freedom of speech is an absolute value, which legitimizes the right to offend and insult 'the other', 'the enemy', constructed either as the immigrant, the asylum seeker, or Islam. Not only freedom of speech is also used to repudiate accusations of populism, but also of racism and Islamophobia. There are debates about whether the 'anti-racism' paragraph is still useful<sup>4</sup>, but according to a 2010 poll a large majority of Danes (about 69 %) still wants to keep it<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup>[http://www.cepos.dk/fileadmin/user\\_upload/billeder/JUNI\\_JULI\\_2011/Ugeskrift\\_for\\_Retsvaesen\\_26\\_juni\\_2011\\_Artikel\\_om\\_Racisme\\_paragraphen.pdf](http://www.cepos.dk/fileadmin/user_upload/billeder/JUNI_JULI_2011/Ugeskrift_for_Retsvaesen_26_juni_2011_Artikel_om_Racisme_paragraphen.pdf); [http://www.humanisme.dk/hate-speech/samlet.php#Lars Hedegaard/](http://www.humanisme.dk/hate-speech/samlet.php#Lars_Hedegaard/)  
10) <http://politiken.dk/newsinenglish/ECE1081207/poll-danes-support-anti-racism-paragraph/>

It is worth noticing that all informants are critical of the mainstream press and feel stigmatized by the media. There is, however, an important difference in the rhetoric of DF on the one hand and TS on the other; informants from the party tend to express more pragmatic critiques of Islam compared to informants from the TS who are more outspoken and more radical when it comes to express their political and theoretical attack of Islam. TS members find it difficult if not impossible to distinguish between Islam as a religion and political Islam.

*Ideologies, values, policies and target groups*

Informants from the DF and the TS tend to construct 'the other' mainly as Islam as a religion, Islamization and Muslim culture in opposition to 'us' represented by Danish, Christian values, primarily epitomised by 'freedom of speech', 'democracy' and the like. Another strong dividing line is constructed between 'us' – the democratic, tolerant, capitalist West - and 'them'- the authoritarian, male chauvinist and intolerant Muslim countries.

In addition, the interviews illustrate that informant from TS (and Dispatch International) articulates radical anti-Islam attitudes combined with protection of freedom of speech as an absolutist value. Both the editor of Dispatch International and the vice-chair of TF present their core value as freedom broadly understood referring to George Orwell's approach, maintaining that if freedom means something, it is the "freedom to say what people do not want to hear". Consequently, the right to free speech is also the right to offend – and the Muhammad cartoon crisis is taken as an example to show that 'offended feelings are no argument against free speech'.

The interviews also underline a division of tasks between the political party, DF, and the TS organization in their ideologies, values and rhetoric in the public sphere. The DF features the popular or populist positions directed towards the problems that refer to the ‘common Dane’ experience with immigration and thus aim at defending ‘the Danish people’, while the style and rhetoric of the TS are characterized by outspoken and discriminatory positions based on the absolute dedication to safeguard freedom of speech. In addition the TS differs from the DF in its ambition to target the public of intellectuals, by exclusively debating the danger of Islam for the future of freedom of speech in the Western world, often inspired by anti-Islam milieus proliferating in the US (cf Pamela Gellner, Robert Spencer and the like). Despite the differences between the two organizations the TS still have close links with the DF, although it stresses that no formal associations with any of them exist, and in addition the association counts several individual members of the Liberal Democrats, the Liberal, Conservative parties, as well as with international Free Speech networks. The interview with the informant from Dispatch International illustrates that the journal explicitly targets intellectuals:

I know that many of the people that read our paper are academics. Professors, doctors and you know... intellectual people. The paper is written in a language that is not for the man on the street... I would like to reach out to all the intellectuals, because the man on the street, the working class, they have already noticed what is going on. They were the ones that voted for Sweden Democrats. They are living in the same suburbs as these immigrants so they saw it coming many years ago, but the middleclass, the intellectuals, they have the capacity to see that what we are writing about is really, really important; i.e. the question of free speech and free mind. The problem is that they are afraid to speak their mind, because they know it could cost them their career or even their job (Interview by JFL, 2013).

The organizations also differ in relation to gender equality and homosexual rights. The DF generally finds that Danish women have achieved gender equality and have no reason to advance further, but it has no demands about rolling legislation back as regards to gender equality. The party primarily supports gender equality policies directed towards ethnic minority women, as a key part of their 'integration' in Danish policies, but it normally does not represent a strong dividing line to mainstream views. This contrasts with TS members generally not showing concerns or interest on gender equality and sexuality issues.

The interviews confirm that DF's position on gender equality policy gay rights and homosexual marriage does not represent a strong dividing line to mainstream views (cf. Meret & Siim 2013a). Informants tend to express acceptance of the status-quo, which resonates with the Danish legislation. The party is against proposals for reserved months for fathers, the 'daddy quota', and gender quota in corporations but the 'anti-quota' position is in line with other parties in the liberal-Conservative block. The party uses gender roles and family values strategically as 'populist' issues targeting Muslim minorities. Since issues of forced marriages, the wearing of the veil or niqab are no longer on the public agenda, the DF raised the issue about halal meat in institutions and the establishment on local mosques at the last municipal elections. Potential conflicting lines with mainstream attitudes still exist, for example the DF's opposition to the Muslim veil in public institutions and the party disapproval of same-sex marriage in the Danish Church.

The above analysis of the diverse articulations of positions concerning Muslims, Islam as a religion and Islamization can illuminate the differences and overlaps in relation to who is constructed as the 'we'

and who is framed as 'the other'. In the case of the DF, the 'we' is the ethnic Danish citizen, 'the common man'; the 'other' is Islam/the Muslim who threatens our future and our values. In the case of the TS, the 'we' are clearly the intellectuals; the 'other' is Islam and the Muslims. The TS targets Islamization, which includes Muslim culture and religion, perceived as a threat to the survival of European/Western societies and culture. Solutions vary accordingly to approaches. For DF the solution is simple: to weaken the EU and give the Danish nation its sovereignty back, by establishing efficient border controls and stopping what is seen as migration for 'welfare tourism'. For the TS the solution is more complex: Muslim immigration must stop altogether, not only to Denmark but to Europe and natives must engage in a global intellectual 'war' against Islam/Muslims/Islamism. This can be interpreted as a strategic division of tasks between the two organizations and the overlap of membership is one indication of this, but it may as well be interpreted as an expression of real and opportunistic differences in positions and political ideology.

#### **4. Counterstrategies to hate-speech, othering and racism**

This section gives a brief overview of diverse strategies to combat hate-speech, othering and racism in the Danish context inspired by recent results from the RAGE-project (Siim, Fuglsang Larsen and Meret 2014; 2015) It addresses counterstrategies to hate-speech, othering and racism through interviews with a selected number of victim organizations and democratic anti-bodies targeting mainly immigrant, refugee, and LGBT issues. The studies can contribute to illuminate the strengths and weaknesses of the political culture, democratic traditions and present migration and anti-discrimination policies.

The role of democratic forces in opposing populism was explored by analysing two types of voluntary associations; ‘victim organizations’, defending victims of hate-crimes, discrimination and othering, and ‘anti-bodies’, defined as militants on the other side. The debate about how to combat hate-speech, othering and racism raise questions about the understandings and practices of hate speech and racist behaviour directed towards diverse minority groups: i.e. Muslim immigrants, Jews, asylum seekers and refugees, sexual minorities. In the Danish context all respondents from the selected organizations<sup>6</sup> pointed towards immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers, especially of Muslim background, as one of the major target groups and as the primary victims of racism and populist othering.

On the basis of an extensive mapping, a small number of voluntary organizations were selected for an in depth study through focus-group interviews<sup>7</sup>. The five organizations addressed asylum seekers and refugees, racism, immigrants and LGBT minorities. The *SOS against Racism* - the Danish branch of an international organization targets racism; *Sabaah* targets immigrant youth inspired by the Danish LGBT movement; *The Trampoline House*; *LGBT Asylum and Refugees Welcome* all target asylum seekers and refugees in the Danish system. These associations and groups were mainly examined through focus group interviews with activists<sup>8</sup>. The objectives were to map out how the organizations

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<sup>6</sup> Victim-organizations and anti-bodies were selected as active participants in the public debates about discrimination of migrant and Muslim minorities (DRC & ENAR), including organizations of migrants and Muslim minorities (EMRK & NDU). Informants from the four ‘victim’ organizations were interviewed: 1) The *Documentation and Counselling Centre on Racism* [Dokumentations- og rådgivningscenteret om rasediskrimination] (DRC), 2) *Ethnic Minority Women’s Council* [Etniske minoritetskvinders råd] (EMKR); *European Network Against Racism* (ENAR) and *New/Now Danish Youth Council* [Nudansk Ungdomsråd] (NDU)

<sup>7</sup> All interviews were carried out by Jeppe Fuglsang Larsen. One interview was with SOS against Racism; the other two with members of Sabaah and The Trampoline House. *SOS against Racism* is a European wide organization founded in 1984, with branches in many European countries and around 200 paying members in Denmark. *Sabaah and the Trampoline House* are newly founded organizations based in Copenhagen. A focus groups interview with *The Trampoline House, LGBT Asylum and Refugees Welcome* was conducted September 2014.

<sup>8</sup> See *Hadforbrydelser i Danmark – vejen til effektiv beskyttelse*, [Hate-crimes in Denmark- the Way to effective Protection], Udredning Nr. 8, Institut for Menneskerettigheder 2011. And *‘Hadforbrydelser. En håndbog til politiet* [Hate crimes a handbook for the police], Insitut for Menneskerettigheder, 2011.

understand themselves,<sup>9</sup>, for example as victim-organizations, ‘anti-bodies’, or counter- forces, how their relation are to other democratic forces fighting hate-speech, behavior, racism and discrimination as well as to the mainstream political culture, institutions and rightwing political force in Denmark and Europe.

Most of the organizations are Copenhagen based, which remains the main center of activities for anti-racists, LGBT and migrant rights’ movements and activists. The themes addressed central issues, such as: representation and aims; strategies and alliances; relationships to political institutions. In spite of the different ‘target groups’, the interviews revealed that the informants generally do not understand/see themselves as ‘victim organizations’ or ‘anti-bodies’ opposing political institutions but rather as positive forces working to establish a ‘we’. Organizations such as LGBT Asylum, Sabaah and SOS against Racism all aimed at integrating the roles of activists and advocates, working both ‘for and with’ their target groups. This strategy can lead to tensions within these organizations in their efforts to combine the dual role activist/advocate.

One illustrative example is the Trampoline House that has created a participatory model aimed at encompassing all actors, or ‘users’ of the House. Their militant approach is articulated as a form of ‘everyday activism’, directed primarily towards the users of the Trampoline House and aimed at the empowerment of the ‘users’. This practice does, however, reveal tensions between ‘empowerment’ and ‘self-empowerment’ of (immigrant and refugee) activists; for example if the ‘users of the house’ are

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<sup>9</sup> All the interviews were conducted using the common RAGE questionnaire guideline, which contained the following topics: 1) The goals, values and activities of the association/network/group; 2) Demonstrations and campaigns 3) Collaboration with similar organizations; 4) Political communication and members; 5) The understanding of and strategies against racism (see Siim, Fuglsang & Meret 2015)

able to participate in the planning and decision making, but there is no evidence to what extent these activities in practice contributes to their self-empowerment and agency. Tensions also exist between the long terms strategies 'to change the whole system', i.e. by closing the asylum camps, and 'everyday activism' aimed at improving the daily life of refugees 'here and now'.

It is worth noticing that our informants agree that in the Danish context it is easier to receive public support for organizations targeting minorities who reside legally in the country, such as organized LGBT groups as Sabaah, than support for asylum seekers and refugees, who have not achieved status as legal residents as in the case of LGBT Asylum and the Trampoline House. Thus organizations targeting issues of integration have a relatively good case for receiving popular support, public recognition and funding compared to organizations targeting controversial issues related to immigration. This illustrates that the status and future prospects of the organizations to a large extent depend on the specific target groups as well as on the political climate and opportunity structures.

The selected organizations had different target groups, histories, agendas and strategies towards racism, discrimination, hate-speech and behavior and addressed the issues at local, national and international levels. The informants generally point towards the existence of discrimination in society, especially on the labour market and in the educational system as the main barriers for the integration of ethnic minorities in Denmark; others emphasised the existing immigration legislation adopted by Danish authorities as the major barrier. All respondents agreed about the importance of preserving the 'racism' paragraph as a protection against hate-speech. This contrast with new voices from left wing



intellectuals, journalists and pundits, arguing that the ‘racism paragraph’ is perhaps an admission of failure of the public debate and that the best way to combat racism is to remove it.<sup>10</sup>

The organizations all referred to ‘new forms of racism’ different from biological racism but had different understandings and strategies to combat it. Only informants from SOS against Racism and The Trampoline House refer explicitly to ‘structural, cultural and institutional racism’ within the Danish asylum system, whereas Sabaah and LGBT Asylum refer mainly to ‘discrimination at the level of their own country of origin, (mainly Muslim) community and families’. Some informants also referred to the importance of changing Danish public political culture and the public arena, which they attempt to influence by means of information and education. One strategy gave priority to ‘everyday activism’, as a means of changing the daily lives of refugees starting from ‘below’ with practices. The other strategy gave priority to activism aimed at reforms of the legal rules and procedures in order to force the Danish system to live up to the international human rights conventions.

From the Danish case one of the main strategies adopted by organizations for combating hate-speech, discrimination and racism was to integrate the dual roles as advocates for and activists fighting with vulnerable groups. Informants generally find that it can be effective to combine diverse strategies, for example aimed at legal protection, reform of the court system and immigration policies; ‘everyday activism’ and enlightening the public. The multiple strategies directed towards the targeted groups as well as towards the political and legal system can be perceived to be good for democracy, and the role as advocates ‘for’ vulnerable groups can possibly contribute to create frameworks where self-

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<sup>10</sup> <http://politiken.dk/indland/ECE2078167/kendt-debattoer-er-doemt-for-racisme/>

empowering practices can emerge, although these are now not primary goals for the agenda of these groups.

The interviews raise general issues on the role of immigrants, asylum seekers, refugees and LGBT activism in the Danish context; especially about the danger of reproducing the gap between humanitarian ideas of 'passive' beings, 'victims' that need to be supported by local activists and positions supporting and empowering the agency and political subjectivity of these people. One key question is to what extent the approach of different organizations contributes to empower the agency of migrants and their own action-oriented capacity through forms of self-empowerment?

### **Concluding Reflections: Counterstrategies to Politics of Fear**

This chapter explored some of the key characteristics and features of present day Denmark in terms of combating hate-speech, racism and othering. The 'politics of fear' is a widespread and universal phenomenon influenced by particular historical and political contexts (Wodak 2015), which articulate in various ways in the different national contexts. Who is perceived as friend or foe, as well as how this perception is negotiated and influence by politicians, institutions, authorities and 'the legal system' is among the central issues to understand how 'othering' and discrimination takes place and spreads. This raise issues about what strategies are possible and desirable as advocates or/and activists within specific contexts: to what extent organizations are able to combine diverse strategies, create alliances and collaborate with other groups and finally also change their strategies according to barriers and possibilities within the political opportunity structures?

In the Danish context Copenhagen is still the center for the majority of activities and activism and to some extent also for the struggle against racism, discrimination and hate-crimes. It is worth noticing that in the Danish context most groups are dependent on economic funding and support from government institutions, which influences the goals, strategies and activities of these groups. The groups working on similar issues, such as LGBT organizations, anti-racist or advocates of asylum seekers and refugees have diverse strategies, but usually collaborate and support each other rather than fight each other.

One of the interesting findings in this chapter is what we interpret as a division of tasks between the different populist right wing organizations, i.e. between the DF and the TS, which in this case frame the same groups as the targets and victims in their political rhetoric, but adopt different strategies and propose different solutions to the immigration question.

The TS together with the journal, Dispatch International, clearly target Islam/political Islam/Muslims in general focusing on conflicting values/culture and religion – a rhetoric which in many ways resembles and capitalises on the Huntington's 'clash of civilizations' approach. The DF also focuses on 'the threat of Islam' and on the importance of saving 'Danish values and principles' emphasising the perceived conflicts between Danish culture and cultural values vis-à-vis Islam/Muslims in Denmark. In DFs case the focus is not primarily on 'freedom of speech' but rather on oppressive religion and patriarchal cultures and the need to protect Danish democracy, welfare and gender equality. The recent campaigns in the EP elections in May 2014 illustrate that DF since the economic crisis has become increasingly concerned with mobility and 'welfare tourism' from EU member countries.

The ‘victims’ for TS and Dispatch International are the native Danes and also more generally Western civilization threatened by Islam. This is increasingly perceived as a security issue and the solution exacerbates the conflicts with Islam and Muslims in Denmark and outside. For DF the victims are primarily Danish citizen who have built the country for generations and should be able to receive the fruit of their ancestors’ labour. The solution is stricter border control and less EU and more national control of welfare policies.

The present study raised a number of questions about hate-speech, discrimination and othering in the Danish context that should be further explored: What are the most efficient strategies for civil society organizations in the Danish context? To what extent do diverse civil society actors cooperate and negotiate with political institutions about hate-speech, othering and racism? What needs to be done from mainstream institutions, for example adopting a National Action Plan against racism and hate-speech? How has the political elite, including Social Democracy, contributed to normalise and accept the discourse and values of right wing populism?

Within this framework, global mobility and European integration have put new issues on the political agenda and have inspired political and theoretical rethinking. For example about the need to create more inclusive forms of democracy, citizenship and welfare solidarity, i. e. new notions of a European citizenship and belongings (Fraser 2007). This remains a highly contested issue and the question is what solutions are doable, desirable and practicable.

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