

Danish Borders of Identity: *Danskhed*, Social Capital, and Immigration

by

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Abstract:

Questioning national identity is an ongoing issue in Denmark. *Danskhed*, the Danish word roughly translated as “Danishness,” has a firm foundation in the historical homogeneity of culture and ethnicity. However, as global migration increases in the twenty-first century, notably with the influx of Syrian refugees, Danish national identity has a crisis of its own. There are both negative and positive reactions to increased multiculturalism, as seen in the comparison between far right politics and

activist groups fighting to help refugees in Denmark. This essay aims to find elements within Denmark that are redefining social capital as a method to create a cohesive multicultural society. By placing historical context alongside contemporary identity clashes, defining key terms, and combining the theory of social capital with personal observations through interviews, each section contributes to provide a multidimensional analysis of Danish identity. The introduction of different perspectives on the issue show that national identities are imagined constructs, and can be redefined to be more inclusive. Can *danskhed* change to work to benefit both those who are native Danes, and those who are not?

Introduction:

How one defines oneself is greatly due to the impact of other barriers in place—barriers that may be physical or imaginary. The imagined borders created by the idea of belonging have the ability to create or destroy the sense a community or nation, therefore affecting the group’s ability to produce social capital. As seen in national identities, imagined communities are fragile and completely dependent on group unity. In the case of Denmark, increasingly diverse societies are redefining national identity and social capital. Previous Prime Minister of Denmark, Helle Thorning-Schmidt, once asserted that *danskhed*, a Danish word roughly translating to “Danishness,” “can also be many other things. These values exist between people. It is welfare, solidarity, mainstreaming equal opportunities, our humor” (Olsen).

However, the exact definition of *danskhed* has gone through generations of debate about the definition of Danish cultural identity. In recent decades, the debate has increasingly intensified by the influx of non-ethnic Danes into Danish society and their integration. Starting slowly at the turn of the century with increased global

mobility, to the recent migration of 2014, the flood of immigrants and refugees is changing Danish culture, and the social perception of *danskhed* is a key player when determining and granting inclusion in the social order. The compartmentalizing of individuals into “Danes” and “Non-Danes” goes against the idea of a collective group image, while it strengthens the invisible wall that separates the communities—Danes feel more Danish, while those deemed as social “others” do not.

When one looks at the idea of *danskhed* and the sentiments connected to national belonging, one can see how multiculturalism has impacted the nation of Denmark: it has rocked the societal cohesiveness of the sovereign state. Denmark’s population overall remains relatively homogenous, but now the country is struggling with the cultural aspects of the integration of migrants, with intensifying cultural protectionism, and with increasing openness and acceptance of immigrants. As I address the spectrum of responses, I first look at the nation as a social construct with restricted abilities to produce social capital through cohesiveness. The following sections outline *danskhed* and its components in the face of increased multiculturalism, which leads to the questioning of the traditional national identity based on homogeneity. In the instance of Danish national identity, the greatest challenges pertain to the mixed reactions of how to approach the changing demographics. Finally, to show the many dimensions of the topic, from the political to the private, I use personal narratives and interviews with passionate activists and a member of the Danish Red Cross illustrate both the constructive and harmful responses to the shift in the Danish national identity in the midst of a global refugee crisis. There is a well-known analogy often used to describe the reserved social quality of most Danes—like a glass ketchup bottle, it may take time and effort to get

the condiment out of the bottle, but once you do, you have a hard time containing it and soon the ketchup is everywhere. This issue might take a bit of shaking to understand its complexity.

Defining a Nation and Defining *Danskhed*

Emerging from late eighteenth-century Europe, the notion and feeling of belonging is not a new trend; however, the concept of defining belonging to a nation or nation-state has become a legitimate way of categorizing the modern world.¹ A nation and a state are distinct ideas, yet the combination of the terms creates an unintentional clash of their definitions. A state refers to a governing body with the ability to use force to govern within a designated territory, which separates itself from a legislative and administrative body of government. On the other hand, a nation refers to a much greater sense of personal identity. The etymology of nation derives from its Latin root *nasci*, meaning “to be born of,” which tightly connects the idea of nation to a familial bond among members (Love 219). Bound by the sense of family and ethnic awareness, these communities share histories and cultures, which maintain a sense of solidarity among members. By definition, a nation is exclusive in its very nature as these elements develop over time. The combination of “nation” and “state” into a single term—essentially, the concept of a governing body enforcing its power that one is born into—becomes extremely complicated when territorial and ethnic boundaries begin to shift. Thus, these movements and shifts develop into nationalism, the ideology seeking to attain and preserve the solidarity, autonomy, and group identity of a recognized nation, or a group seeking that recognition (Love 220). Observing the shift in mentality from nation to nationalism, the state relies on a definition of perceived sameness through their cultural identity. A nation-state,

therefore, is an “imagined community” which enforces these ideals “through a variety of—economic, political, and cultural—processes (Love 221).

In the case of Denmark, the values of homogeneity and sameness are crucial for building the identity of the nation. Since 1864, the constitutional monarchy has contained the same land area, with the state turning inward to develop a strong infrastructure and national consciousness influenced by outside factors, rather than looking outwards toward the changing borderlines of continental Europe² (Love 221; Anderson 113). Features of a modern national identity create a space of mutual belonging for members of the in-group—in the case of Denmark, as with many other European powers, language and tradition still weigh heavily in the current debates. The development and modernization of the nation-state is the recognized basic unit for “developments in politics, economy, art, language and knowledge” to create a shared set of sociological artifacts, and now stands as a reminder of the “national order” (Rytter 302). Shared sociological artifacts of majority groups, such as language, location, developments, and local traditions, are factors that create a shared culture; shared culture, in turn, fosters the concept of the nation, and the continuing rise of modern nationalism as construction of identity builds on these older ideas.

A key player in this step toward a unified national identity in Denmark was N. F. S. Grundtvig (1783-1872), the philosopher, educator, politician, poet and composer. His works created a foundation for notions of belonging by “combining individual enlightenment and a holistic view of identity linked to blood, birth and language”³ (Agius 244). Blood and birth remain the first two leading factors in decisions regarding belonging, predominantly when it comes to belonging to a

nation. *Jus soli*, the right of soil, grants citizenship and nationality to anyone born in territory, while *jus sanguinis*, the right of blood, is inherited through the parents rather than given unconditionally through the birthplace. Both principles were deemed valid measures of belonging until 2004, which ended the rule of *jus soli* in European countries through the twenty-seventh amendment of the Constitution of Ireland⁴ (Elections Ireland). Both rights, particularly *jus sanguinis*, preserve the notion that belonging is hereditary and specifically connected with a geographical location, further valuing a homogeneous culture. Aside from being born into the nation, by blood or location, marrying into a nation also carries historic familial meaning. The right through marriage remains a permissible method to receive residency or citizenship in most countries, but is becoming increasingly more difficult in Danish politics, as I will discuss later on.

If blood and place of birth are the first two, the third link to identity is the importance of a unified language in a nation, which nearly occurred by accident in the process of forming a nation. Language initially helped to unify a people, but primarily only the literate elite within the society. In eighteenth-century Europe, it was “essentially for administrative purposes” that rulers within their realm of power over specific geographical location had made protected the idea of an official language, unconsciously for the sake of convenience (Anderson 84). Unification through the vernacular language helped lead to the rise of nationalism and defining a national identity, but it is not the sole artifact defining a national identity. Language, however, remains pertinent in modern debates of national identity worldwide; the languages offered for nationality tests to gain citizenship is a concrete example. In Denmark, the government awards extra points to individuals applying for visas and

asylum, based on their knowledge of Danish, and those granted residency are expected to attend language classes to be proficient to a certain level. Language is a significant factor in not only granting residency and nationality to individuals, but also as a unit to measure the success of the individuals in society. The importance placed on language affects the process of integrating and belonging to the culture by separating native and non-native speakers. Tradition and heritage are results of shared language—from religious backgrounds and celebrations to mutual understandings of historically cultural building blocks found in Viking folklore, the idea of *hygge*,⁵ and the daily use of the *Dannebrog* (the Danish flag)—all would not be preserved and continually expressed without a collective knowledge of Danish.

However, the attributes of blood, birth, and language are not the most significant parts of national identity. Yes, having similar traditions and speaking the same language are important for enabling citizens to find employment, understand the customs, and attend social gatherings. But what is most important is the desire for people to live and coexist with each other. The belief in a nation ultimately creates a sense of belonging among members; this love creates such an attachment, that one could go so far to say that a nation even fosters a love for the group.⁶ “Regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail, . . . The nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately, it is this fraternity that makes [the nation] possible” (Anderson 7). Comradeship, and a familial bond of shared heritage, remain the strongest argument when looking specifically at Denmark and the struggle to define national identity.

Maintaining *Danskhed*

For the last 150 years, Denmark has been a nation of sameness—of a single language and religion, in the same region that belonged to the same kingdom since the age of the Vikings, with little to no variances of minorities in the culture. Creating a self-imposed national identity allowed Denmark to thrive into the twentieth century, and national pride remains a defining factor for Danes today. The modern and progressive self-identity of Denmark is distinguishable with its unrelenting dedication to social welfare, gender equality, and open democracy for all citizens (Agius 244). Being the smallest of the Scandinavian democracies, the nation also upholds standards and traditions of being known worldwide as one of the top countries in terms of openness and egalitarianism (Eakin). There are key societal factors and government institutions supported by the people that instills Danish pride in the citizens: the free healthcare system and higher education for all, high standards of living with low poverty rates, high income equality, commitment to sustainability, and supporting an open society for religious and social freedoms, the overwhelming success and approval from society toward the social-democratic system always points others back to Denmark for positive examples.⁷ Through the strong history of the state working for the good of all, the levels of social trust skyrocket as high as their voting turn-out percentages—nearly always in the upper 80s—and the belief that an individual benefits the society as a whole. The Danish tribe, or the idea of native Danes sharing kinship as a national community, was born through these binding qualities (Rytter 307). These policies and social constructs are just some of the components in the construction of Danish identity, and along with

others—blood, birth, language, and shared history—they enforce the sense of pride within Danish nationals.⁸

Social Cohesion in Diversifying Denmark

It is crucial to understand the changing demographics of Denmark over the last three decades to properly analyze the national ability to integrate new citizens into a functioning society. Until the 1990s, the population of Denmark remained largely homogeneous in terms of ethnicity and culture—meaning the overwhelming majority of Danes were of Danish decent, who spoke Danish and remained in Denmark for generations (See Figure 1). Starting in the 1980s, this norm began to shift, displaying a rise in the diversity of immigrants in Denmark and a growing percentage of migrants born in non-Western countries. A variety of factors—such as the system of guest workers, civil unrest in the Middle East and North Africa, and global climate change driven migration⁹—led to the changing perceptions of immigration and global migration (Kaergaard 473).

Table 1. Immigrants in Denmark 1870–2005

Year	Total number of inhabitants	Born in		
		Denmark	Other western countries	Non-western Countries
1880	1,969,039	96.8%	3.1%	0.1%
1911	2,757,076	96.9%	2.9%	0.2%
1930	3,550,656	97.5%	2.3%	0.2%
1970	4,492,966	–	–	0.2%
1980	5,122,065	97.4%	1.8%	0.9%
1990	5,135,409	96.5%	1.8%	1.8%
2000	5,330,020	94.4%	2.0%	3.5%
2005	5,411,405	93.7%	2.1%	4.2%

Source: Kærgård (2006).

Figure 1

Most recently, beginning in 2014, the influx of Syrian refugees has affected the integration system and policies, causing drastic changes in an attempt to manage the effects of the migrant crisis on Denmark. As mentioned in the previous section, much of the Danish national identity is built around the strong historical idea of sameness.¹⁰ Rising multiculturalism in Denmark creates conflicts within the state in the forms of political change and extremism. This changing political atmosphere and extremism in Danish society gives way to growing nationalism and the rise of the Far Right. With the growing nationalistic intentions in the right-wing government, Danes and not-Danes living in Denmark begin questioning the notion of *danskhed*—not only in the sense of adjusting and merely tolerating new traditions and customs, but in terms of cultivating acceptance as the society changes (Agius 249).

Defining the following sociocultural terms is necessary to completely analyze the issue at hand. Social capital¹¹ is defined as the ability of a group to collaborate voluntarily to achieve goals that benefit the society as a whole through societal norms, that is, without a need for defined or written rules (Nannestad 609). One observable product of social capital is the mutual trust present in a society—for example, the stability of welfare states, such as what is present in Denmark, is reliant on social trust and the knowledge that each citizen will pay what is due in taxes as a societal expectation. Citizens do so knowing that everyone does their part to keep society functioning, which further enforces previously existing social norms, creating a cycle of contributing and benefiting for both the individual and the group as a whole.

The entirety of social capital can be divided into two major parts: “bridging social capital,” and “bonding social capital” (Nannestad 610). The creation and

maintenance of both types of social capital is essential when observing the productivity and cohesiveness of a group, and even more so when integrating migrant groups into society. Bridging social capital is the group's ability to look outward, which connects individuals to a broader social structure. Bridging social capital is able to transcend divides and support links across diverse groups, creating a broad sense of trust in intergroup networks, as seen with a nation, culture, or state. On the other hand, bonding social capital defines the group's ability to look inward and connects individuals with other like individuals in their social group, as seen with neighborhoods, clubs, teams, and other exclusive networks. While positive bonding social capital creates concrete trust between individuals, it can become excessive and a negative aspect for social cohesion as a whole. Tangible examples of the negative connotations of bonding social capital taken too far can be seen with extremist groups like the Nazis and fringe societies like the mafia. Another form of negative bonding social capital are immigrant groups whom Nannested calls "parallel societies," or the creation of "immigrant groups [who] live in their own neighborhoods, speak their own languages, and generally lead their lives quite isolated from the rest of society." In all of these examples, there becomes a clear separation of "us" and "them" due to the exclusive nature of these groups.

Positive and beneficial levels of both types of social capital help to support the overall well-being of a society as well as provide a sense of belonging to each member of the group. In the case of Denmark, creating and maintaining a balance when faced with rapidly changing demographics and the question of national identity is a challenge—not only in the sociocultural sphere of thought, but also in the political and practical measures of the nation. Immigrants in Denmark require a balanced

relationship between the levels of both bridging and bonding social capital. Positive bonding social capital maintains migrants' original cultural identity as they have shared experiences with other migrants, while high levels of bridging social capital connects them to Danish society and provides a welcoming integration experience offered by native Danes. However, outside factors, such as policy changes within the government, public opinion, and the method of discourse greatly impact the ability for both native Danes and immigrants to cultivate the social capital necessary to have a positive impact on society, as will be discussed at a later point through examples. Cohesion as a product of social capital becomes an element of a nation—by connecting, the desire maintain group status remains, further enforcing the imagined boundaries dividing different groups from each other.

The “Disruption”

Due to its strong history and foundation in sameness, the largest question to the Danish national identity is what happens when the norm starts to change. The rise of globalization has resulted in ever-increasing levels of global migration and movement to established nation-states. As seen in the case with Denmark, traditionally homogeneous nations are becoming increasingly multicultural (Kaegaard 471). While Grundtvigian ideas were beneficial to the construction of a national identity, they also lead to the idea of *danskhed* being exclusive in nature, due to the link between identity, blood, and birth. “The Grundtvigian notion of Denmark as a small power under threat from external influence has remained a powerful idea” (Agius 245). Those viewed as “outsiders” and “cultural others” –*de fremmede*, in Danish—interrupted the ideas and practices of the Danish homeland in a space solely owned by the Danes, which instills in Danes who wish to preserve

danskhed the radical fear of losing land and identity at the hands of strangers. Such a clear distinction of identity supports a binary logic that “competing identities are a disruption and challenge to the consistency of the self,” and further restricts differences and otherness in order to preserve the self and the identity of the majority (Agius 246). Likewise, public institutions such as *Folkehøjskoler*, *Folketinget*, *Folkekirken*, and *Folkestyret*—words literally meaning the people’s high schools, the people’s thing (the Parliament) the people’s church, and the rule of the people—all have a strong linguistic foundation in the same word, reinforcing a strong sense of community for the Danish people: *folk* (Eakin).

Imagined borders and communities—looking at kinship images of the *danskhed* rather than the construction of a physical wall or border—separate groups of people. Citizenship denotes national belonging, as the modern idea of the nation-state system depends of the notion that each individual belongs to one specific nation.¹² The sense of an imagined community creates exclusive identities marked by national belonging, further separating and occasionally barring individuals from joining different nations based on heredity. There is a familial bond deeply rooted into the Danish identity as Grundtvig suggested—Danes are bound to each other by blood, birth, and language. Based on constructs found in the themes of “family” and “the Danish tribe,” the familial idea of a nation distinguishes between true Danish citizens and non-Danes to obstruct the process of integration. Kinship images, supported by Grundtvigian ideas, directly correlate to who has the ability to belong to the Danish national identity and who does not. Those groups and individuals supporting the traditional sense of the term can create tension between Danes and non-Danes, particularly when the Danish pillar of free speech is pushed to its limits.

The Cartoon Crisis and Freedom of Speech

Open democracy and the concomitant freedom of expression remain two of the critical pieces of Danish national identity. In Denmark, historically, openness and the sharing of ideas enable the participation in democracy to flourish, which in turn lets citizens feel as if their voices are actively important to the survival of their state. However, in 2005, the publication of images brought the issue of the exclusive nature of *danskhed* to light at a global level. The national newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* printed a series of politically charged cartoons depicting Muslim identities, questioning how far the Danish value of free speech could go.



Figure 2: One of the images of the Cartoon Crisis, drawn by Kurt Westergaard. Image from *Jyllands-Posten*. 2005.

The twelve images, called *Muhammeds ansigt* (the face of Muhammad), contained Muslim stereotypes, ranging anywhere from the depiction of a Danish child called Muhammad in a school, to mocking Islamic traditions by depicting the face of their deity. A variety of issues associated with a civilizational clash were depicted—images that invoked stereotypical themes such as hostility, radicalism, the

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suppression of women, and the restriction of personal freedoms. The most well-known image, drawn by Kurt Westergaard, was of the Prophet Muhammad with a lit bomb in his turban (See Figure 2). The Cartoon Crisis, the name for the notorious publication of these images, engendered violent hatred toward Denmark in many Muslim nations in the Middle East and North Africa. Immediate backlash resulted in strikes against Danish dairy exports and attacks on foreign Danish embassies, notably in Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan. Danish reputation in allied countries of the Islamic world came to a standstill, and later terror threats and attacks were linked to the cartoon crisis.¹³ However, the most significant change within Denmark was the debate of Danish values, notably the Grundtvigian influence on free speech as a core value (Eakin). Initially, *Jyllands-Posten* attempted to contribute to the debate of Islam within Danish culture, criticizing Islam and self-censorship using free speech. The newspaper published the texts with the cartoons in Danish, and the language barrier did not separate the two cultures—globalization and multiculturalism in Denmark were no longer options, but rather a challenge to the idea of sameness within *danskhed* (Jerichow 41).

The historic sameness associated with *danskhed* promotes the clash of cultures between Danes and non-Danes, as seen with the publication of these cartoons. This clash views the increasing number of immigrants as dangerous to the homogenous nature of Denmark's society and should be avoided. Traditional ideas of identity and changing demographics push the nation to ask how *danskhed* should be defined as the historic norm is challenged (Jerichow 42). As the relationship between native Danes and growing minorities causes political and social tension, the terms used in this discourse have created an unexpected shift in vocabulary. As Jerichow

writes, “‘Bilingual,’ for instance, no longer describes an enviable skill with languages, but a social handicap since the ‘other’ languages are no longer English, German or French, but immigrant languages, such as Urdu, Kurdish, Turkish or Arabic,” while a “ghetto” becomes a term for low income areas or schools with diverse or immigrant residents and students (43). Changing the approach to the meaning of words and a language is a defense mechanism to preserve the Danish identity, but creates and supports stereotypes and assumptions of such areas and groups of people. These changes toward multicultural societies, in turn, challenge the historic foundation of societal cohesion, which creates a natural environment for hostile measures to take place in public spaces or in the political sphere.

Danish People’s Party: Difficulties Creating Social Cohesion

As seen in the Cartoon Crisis, questioning the freedom of speech as a pillar of *danskhed* in relation to the “clash of civilizations” can have unintended consequences. The idea that the Danish identity is under threat from cultural others became part of the discourse surrounding the shift toward multiculturalism.

Through this shift, the weakness of the imagined community of a nation-state boils down to the crumbling foundation of sameness, with the state of Denmark as a prime example. The rise of nationalism as a protective response to the changes hinders the production of positive social capital in the society. Without the ability to foster social cohesion, integration becomes nearly impossible. There are numerous of factors in place obstructing social capital: the rise of the Far Right, restrictive policies, the method of discourse, and public opinion. These factors collectively demonstrate the increase of nationalism in Danish politics and society, while providing examples to demonstrate the fear of “others” elevates a cultural struggle in the form of a

restrictive immigration policy, whose intention was to preserve a strict definition of *danskhed* (Agius 245). The breakdown of these factors aids in understanding each component of the issue to foster ways in which the issue can be approached and solutions developed.

Dansk Folkeparti, or the Danish People's Party, was established in 2002 as the Far Right political parties began their rise in a number of parts of Europe. The Party Program firmly establishes that the essence of the party is in "a warm and strong love for our country," along with a mission statement "to assert Denmark's independence, to guarantee the freedom of the Danish people in their own country, and to preserve and promote representative government and the monarchy" (Danish People's Party). However, the party is widely known for being anti-immigration—"we will not accept transformation to a multiethnic society"—a political leader for enforcing stricter policies and opposing participation in the European Union, and the preservation of Danish culture, language and beliefs. More recently, the Danish People's Party called for a national center to strengthen the Danish primary school competencies in cultural subjects, such as Christian studies and Danish history, to strengthen Danish heritage at a young age. The initiative was not only supported by this party, but by other political groups as well¹⁴ (Jørgensen).

At the same time as the birth of the *Dansk Folkeparti* in 2002, Denmark implemented new legislation through Parliament and the *Ventre-Konservative* (Liberal-Conservative) government, both of which boasted that the strict measures on immigration, family reunification, and permanent residency, were "the strictest in the world" (Rytter 302). Through these changes in policy, naturalization could only be determined and approved by the Danish parliament, which required passing

language and citizenship tests, the renunciation the former nationality, and declaring loyalty to Denmark for approval to be considered. Reduced or cancelled funding for many ethnic-minority organizations occurred through these policies, while further “initiatives such as the ‘cultural canon’ were promoted to bolster Danishness” in society (Agius 246). Specific elements gained international notoriety, such as the increased residency time from three to seven years to apply for citizenship, and the infamous “24 years’ rule,” which blocked all non-resident spouses from cohabitating with their partners in Denmark until both parties were at least 24 years of age. For these policies surrounding family reunification and citizenship through marriage, called “white laws,” there are five requirements: age, accommodation, financial assistance, collateral, and national attachment—all of which were justified to “ensure ‘proper integration’” for those seeking permanent residence within the borders of Denmark, and supported by the Social Democratic party¹⁵ (Agius 246). Initially, there were three goals of these policies: to stop child marriages, protect young immigrants from forced marriages based on their countries of origin, and protect the nation in the face of rising global terrorism, with the hope that proper integration techniques of immigrants and refugees would improve.¹⁶ The primary explanation for denying reunification of a newlywed couple was the lack of combined national attachment to Denmark. “The requirement of national attachment was [and still is] based on a calculation made by the immigration authorities,” ensuring that the combined national attachment overall is greater to Denmark than any other, especially when looking at a married couple consisting of a Dane and a foreign spouse (Rytter 305). Strict enforcement and preservation of kinship images builds upon the linguistic definition of a nation—it is something that one is born into,

rather than accustomed to or a group that can be joined. Imaginary borderlines separate the Danish identity to where it is unachievable for the “other”: therefore, it must be preserved by any means possible.

The Danish government has not always faced these issues with legislative walls. Denmark traditionally plays a helpful and protective role for individuals in need—from legislation to protect and evacuate their Jewish population during German occupation, to being one of the first states to join the UN and its committees and their continual support for Danish international allies (UNHCR 2). Led by the previous Prime Minister, Social Democrat Helle Thorning-Schmidt, the coalition government of the Social Democrats, Social Liberals, and the Socialist People’s Party approached the situation with a more open and inviting interpretation of Danish identity by producing inclusive legislation. Dual citizenship was also made possible under this coalition as of 2014—a measure that had previously been impossible due to the national attachment clauses found in several policies—and there were plans to rewrite or “remove the points system, work better towards better integration and treat immigrants with respect”(Agius 250) .

After the election in June 2015, however, the emerging victor with twenty-one percent of the vote was the Danish People’s Party. They gained more seats in than ever before in Parliament, and the party’s founder, Pia Kjaersgaard—who has once been quoted for having suggested that Muslims “are at a lower stage of civilization”—is now the speaker of the Parliament. “With the backing of the Danish People’s Party, the center-right Liberals formed a minority government that has taken one of the hardest lines on refugees of any European nation” (Eakin). One of their hard-stances on policies appears in the form of an amendment, Bill L87, to the Aliens Act passed

at the end of January this year. Not only does the bill extend the waiting period to access family reunification for asylum seekers from one to three years and add fees to the application process, it also allows for the police and immigration authorities to strip-search refugees and their belongings in search of money and valuables to cover the cost of maintenance¹⁷ (UNHCR 2). The UNHCR has declared a strong opposition to Denmark's legislative changes, as stated in the letter of comments and observations on the amendment:

The proposals presented by the Government are evidently aimed at conveying a message to make it “less attractive” to seek asylum in Denmark ... [are] worrisome and could *fuel fear, xenophobia and similar restrictions that would reduce—rather than expand - the asylum space globally* and put refugees in need at life-threatening risks (UNHCR; emphasis mine).

They also provide advice to Denmark regarding how the nation can ameliorate these policies. Aside from rejecting the amendment, there are actions such as opening and expanding resettlement programs, supporting other European countries to further develop asylum and integration systems that would “be a more effective, positive and humanitarian way of reaching a sustainable solution” of the problem, rather than ignoring possible solutions through passing restrictive policies (UNHCR 2). The examples recommended by the UN also fall into the category of ways Denmark can foster both positive bridging and bonding social capital between refugees and citizens. By developing a productive system and providing programs that welcome asylum seekers, rather than prolonging the separation of families and hindering the asylum process, the Danish government would slowly push towards integration over assimilation—the reverse of the persisting trend. When looking at the current

integration system in Denmark, it is important to observe that in this generally homogeneous nation, “the process comes much closer to ‘assimilation’ than to integration in a civic state” (Rytter 477). The integration process is so specific that many policies enforce assimilation, where policies prefer immigrants that appear “easy to integrate,” with valuable skills such as higher education, language competency, and largely arriving from a Western country. The idea is that if you are living in Denmark, so you must become a Dane in order to preserve and protect Danish norms and traditions—after all, “it is the host, not the guests, who decides the menu”(Rytter 477).

Denmark: A Personal Account

This next section looks at experiences and interviews surrounding the issue of questioning Danish identity and the production of social capital within the changing society. The first example is my personal account of crossing the border between Denmark and Sweden to experience the enforced controls and policies recently put into place. The following three are interviews and site visits in the Copenhagen area that display the actions of groups and individuals as a response to the increased legislation against immigrants and refugees. I have chosen the example to first show habitual difficulties, but to also demonstrate the positive reactions to the rise of extreme nationalism in Denmark.

Border control between Denmark and Sweden

I had been to Sweden before, but never by train, never alone, and never with the daunting knowledge of a border check dividing the two countries with a political statement the Øresund never uttered. I bought my ticket from a small machine, and asked a woman with a DSB¹⁸ badge if I was walking the right direction. Her English

reply was as polite as her smile, as she pointed to a set of stairs that would lead to the platform. There was an initial identification check while getting onto the train with a small line, mostly composed of eager looking tourists with arms weighed down by shopping bags and voices that carried and echoed, thanks to the acoustics of the tunneled space. There were a few others crowded together on the platform—a family with wide eyes and overstuffed suitcases, holding the hands of squirming children as they gave the officer a stack of paperwork and passports. As I approached my turn in the queue, and after a quick glance at my passport and face, friendly security guards wished me a pleasant trip as they returned my documents.

It was easy to overlook the temporary fences constructed on the platform—tall, rickety wires held in place by cinderblocks at the base, the type of barrier erected around a quick-fix construction site, separated the halves from one other, restricting anyone hoping to make a break for either side.

I watched the Danish coast fade away into the grey weather, and waited for the barely distinguishable line between fog and water to become another coast. The small amount of chatter was broken by the smooth Danish train voice, with the message—“Each passenger continuing onward must present their passport, so please be prepared to make this quick so we can continue the journey”—repeated in a bouncing Swedish, and lastly in a starkly contrasted English.

This check seemed informal for an event that did not take place this time last year. I kept my passport on my lap and waited patiently for the officer to reach my section of the train. Passengers looked down at phone screens and folded fingers, barely whispering to others in their group. Out the window, I could see pairs of

smiling travelers moving towards the exits past the fences, and others being escorted by more security in neon vests.

The officer reached my car and moved quickly down the aisle, repeating commands in Swedish and English, and his words became more audible the closer he walked. He asked for passports quickly, and intermittently asked other questions: what is the reason for your travel to Sweden today, or for passengers to look up so he could compare their printed image to the face in the train, and an occasional mumbled thank you could be heard as he handed over documents and moved his way along the train. Many passports had barely been opened before they were returned to their owners, and I could tell which ones were Swedish, Danish, or American by the outer colors and designs – those that were unfamiliar to me required a second glance or added questions from the police officer.

“Are you really Italian?” he asked one man several rows ahead of my seat, “Speak Italian.” The man sputtered a few phrases before the officer attempted to diffuse the tension with a terse laugh, as if to claim a joke that no one thought was amusing.

He had nearly gotten to my row when the identification presented by the row before me was rejected. Danish residence cards were not enough, although they somehow managed to board the train with their cards. His face folded into a stern frown, as the passengers in question grew concerned and other faces on the train peered up from their screens and laps. I watched the scene unfold before me. My heart rate increased and I tried to avoid the officer’s gaze.

“Do you speak English?” He prodded and spoke more loudly than before, while three or four heads bobbed in alarm.



“Do you not have passports? You have to leave the train now.”

There was hesitation and confusion; the passengers looked back and forth between each other and the man in uniform, who then repeated his orders more urgently.

“You need to get off the train so that everyone else can continue.”

They scuffled to gather their few belongings and another officer appeared to escort them away. The rest of the car remained silent. He continued his path down the aisle toward my seat. He snatched my passport from my outstretched hand, and briefly smiled as he glanced at my passport, with the golden eagle seal catching the light, before handing it back with a short thanks and continuing towards the next

car, where he disappeared from sight. My section of the train remained silent for an added minute or two, before we all felt the gentle tug of forward motion. Our journey to Malmö continued, and so did the mild chattering.

We all exited the train as if nothing had happened. There were no more border checks or security guards decorated in neon vests welcoming us to Malmö. No one checked my ID or my passport as I purchased my ticket and found a seat on a train back to Denmark and peered out the window once again at the Øresund. I was once again on Danish soil and biked home, as if the whole experience had never happened.



Figure 3: "Sweden and Denmark to lift border checks 'soon'". The Local: Sweden's News in English. (2016) Web. 6 Jan. 2016.

Figure 4: Border fence at Hyllie, Sweden train station. Photo: Elyse Lawson. 14 March 2016.

Figure 5: Swedish border control officer conducting the passport check at Hyllie station, Sweden. Photo: Elyse Lawson, 14 March 2016.

Trampolinhuset

The station rests above a busy street where different people and languages bustle about in a typical fashion for the Nørrebro community. I had been told before hand that this was the ghetto, but it nowhere near resembled stories and images of American ghettos that filled my head, or any ghetto elsewhere I could have thought of for that matter. The brick and colored buildings neatly lined the streets and bike lanes with matching orange-tiled roofs, much like the rest of Copenhagen, though perhaps with slightly more graffiti, although maybe that was only something I imagined.

My class had spent the last few days discussing Danish neighborhoods and words used to describe them. Neighborhoods to the north of the city, like Østerbro,



Figure 6: Trampolinhuset street view. Photo by Copenhagen Voice.

were posh and expensive, while following Nørrebrogade would take you through this area, well-known for its small, bazaar-styled grocery stores, numerous veiled women, and more kebab and falafel options you could ever try. The farther you wandered past this trendy and cheap living area, the more the word “ghetto” was acceptable to use. The image of a ghetto I had imagined was different, but the general idea stood true—ghetto was a term used for an area of low-income for minorities, rather than the permanent residence for well-to-do native Danes.

A few minutes’ walk from the S-train station takes me and the rest of my class to the front door of a small, plain building with a colorful sign attached to the corner. “*Trampolinhuset*,” it says, with beams of bright yellow fighting for your attention against the grey day, like the flash of a lighthouse. We were getting a hands-on tour of this place, a community house for local refugees, and I didn’t know what to expect.

The space was large and open, taking up a majority of the first floor space available. There were sparse decorations, but well-used furniture and a foosball table were set apart from the circle of chairs prepared for our discussion. A tall bespectacled man introduced himself as Søren, the refugee counseling and coordinator, and another man sat and smiled shyly at us as we took our places in the circle.

“Welcome to *Trampolinhuset*,” the Dane began, the Danish name sounding almost elegant, “a community house, resource center, and sanctuary for asylum seekers and refugees here in the Copenhagen area. My friend is also here to explain his own experiences after arriving here from Syria to seek asylum in Denmark.” His head bobbed solemnly when mentioned, and remained silent as Søren continued. He launched straight into telling us about the house itself, especially its relation to the

political situation in Denmark and the individuals who go through the doors of *Trampolinhuset* on a regular basis.

“In Denmark, the state says that one must have a reason to be accepted into the system—until that happens, you remain an asylum seeker, stuck in the limbo of a very slow process. The Dublin Convention protects each individual the right to seek asylum, but there is no protected right to be guaranteed asylum when it’s requested.”

Søren elaborates on approaching officers and asking for help and asylum, and how the Convention, again, requires that individuals get the help they need.

However, assistance from the system is not always helpful, as you wait to have your fingerprints checked for a criminal background and asylum history, as if the authorities already do not trust you. The man next to him continues to nod his head along with the conversation, before he softly spoke up.

“If you are found to have either instance on your record, you will be deported, either to the other European country, or back to your native land. Many people try to come back after they are sent away. Many people get to Europe in different ways, but often by boats. It’s a long journey, followed by a longer wait.”

Søren continued, explaining the many steps of the waiting process:

Phase one: there’s an interview process to know who you are, why you’re here, and if your case should be processed in Denmark. Length of wait: one day to one month.

Phase two: The first official step of the asylum process. It requires a sequence of more in-depth interviews that can last for days and are reviewed by the refugee board. Here, you wait for acceptance and integration, or rejection and deportation.

The beginning of the second phase is where *Trampolinhuset* offers their assistance and support, helping to prepare individuals for consistent interviews with the boards, providing doctors, help with lawyers and legal advice, providing transportation, offering language classes and skills or job training through the house.

Meanwhile, as you wait, you live a different life separately. There are refugee camps, like the one north of the city called Sandholm, tucked away in the woods far from other people—almost a symbolic distance to have such a vast separation from “them” and society—where the small spaces are greatly shared and society continues around you. Once finally granted asylum, each individual is assigned a municipality to inhabit for the next three years. Through community outreach and houses like *Trampolinhuset*, there are various refugee programs to better assimilate to the Danish ways of life once approved with permanent residency.

Søren elaborated on the inspiration for his involvement - what started as a part-time job driven by activism and passion grew to encompass more than just learning the first-hand accounts of refugees in Denmark. His greatest take away was how active a member of this society one can be—these volunteers and workers are not only helping people, but providing individuals with the opportunities and tools for them to help themselves.

The quiet Syrian man spoke again, this time, with a little more force behind his words.

“Everyone here at the house has a say, and we all work together here to make the house work. It is a place where we all belong. It is your place, and you are free to do as you want,” he looked at Soren, as if for approval of his English and to continue his thoughts, “Leaving home and all of your family and friends is hard, but here, I have found my family in Denmark.”



Figure 6: A classmate and man from Syria playing foosball in the recreational room of Trampolinhuset. Photo by Elyse Lawson.

Dansk Flygtningehjaelp Ungdom

I was lucky to have a friend of a friend interested in similar ideas as me, but in a location that enabled her to funnel her skills into on-site volunteering. Mette has been involved with an organization called DFUNK, *Dansk Flygtningehjaelp Ungdom*—which, roughly translated, means Danish Youth Refugee Help—that works with young refugees resettling in Denmark. She got involved just wanting to put her

time into something useful, and now several years later, she has worked her way up to the national board when she moved to Copenhagen, and has been able to see not only the changes and progress within the organization, but also the challenges faced with the changing political climate.

One of the organization's goals is to "give young people the opportunity to help refugees in their daily lives and in their local area" (DFUNK). In order to make this a reality, they organize Youth to Youth networks between young Danes and young immigrants to create safe spaces in local areas, to ease the transition into new Danish municipalities and society as a whole. I was very excited to speak with Mette—her perspective would greatly differ from articles, the media, politicians, and stories from refugees themselves. She is barely older than I am, working for better integration techniques in her area, despite the negative images daily shown on television and newspapers.

Mette has long worked under the restrictions of Denmark's legislation, but she and other members of DFUNK are still able to achieve their goals. "When you come to Denmark as a refugee, part of your integration process is three years in an assigned municipality. They haven't chosen this—they have no friends or network." This is where DFUNK comes into play. For many newcomers in Denmark, DFUNK fills in a gap that benefits everyone.

"We believe in integration through friendship," Mette explained, cross-legged on the couch in her *kollegium*, as I asked why the organization focused primarily on the younger members of the population." When you meet someone your own age, you understand each other and yourself better, even if you have different backgrounds, and you can help each other. Promoting integration through the

exchange of culture, and this exchange is a good thing for each side. You need to integrate to have a job and friends, but you don't need to change everything [about your culture].”

Another essential pillar of the organization is fighting biases without hatred. “We don't believe in assimilation,” as the networks and friendships promoted by DFUNK can prove, and the tendencies of Danish law oppose. “We don't hate the government for the policies, or hate people who disagree with [us]; we look for constructive solutions,” Mette continued to share different initiatives that work towards the goals of the organization. “We are going to live side by side, so we might as well do it in a constructive way.”

They do not work with a political party or affiliated organization, but they aim to spread awareness of the situation, and put a focus on the facts. Since Mette first joined in 2012, the group has grown and become widely known in the community and abroad—with this growth, comes influence, which can be particularly useful with the rocky politics of Denmark at the moment.

“We stand in the same place, but we have to fight back harder because the politics have shifted.”

When reading articles in the media and trying to become more informed on the issue, sources are frequently one-sided. The rise of fear towards change and growing radical nationalism dominates a majority of the media, rather than facts or personal accounts of migrants themselves. According to Mette, the biggest change immigrants and refugees have made to Danish culture is that they have caused many to hold onto their Danish ideas even stronger, which has led to this rise in fear, nationalism, and more strict legislation. Voices promoting integration and policy

reform often go unheard. Mette's experience working with DFUNK and refugees displays the necessity for shifting public opinion and the discourse surrounding the issue, so that there can be a change for Denmark—a way to create constructive social capital and a positive integration experience.

A way to accomplish this goal is to combat fear and nationalism with facts and cultural exchange, which proves to be challenging due to the negative views in the media.

“Even though the political side has shifted, we still have a lot of support, and people want to help us. We want to tell people how it is. I think most people who believe in the [far Right] political parties who say that it's a bad thing that we have refugees have never even met one... Because so many people haven't met a refugee and haven't had the chance to make a subjective [decision], they only know what's in the media. You can't force people to meet refugees, but we try to reach people through stories and campaigns.”

“Is it difficult to change minds?” I asked.

“I hope that we can change minds—there is a large segment in the middle that is voting and believing in stuff because they don't know any better. We had an election in the spring, so we launched a campaign called *'Ingen flygter for sjov'* (No one flees for fun) and at one point, we were in Copenhagen and we had small stories that refugees had written. I remember talking to a woman who at first disagreed with me—‘why can't they be in Syria and rebuild their homes?’—and she spoke with a man that was one of the refugees who shared his story on the small sheets we were handing out, and at the end, she said, ‘Why don't you tell that to the media? I've

never heard this side, your side, of the story before.’ I hope that we were able to change her mind using facts and through sharing stories.”



Figure 7: "No one flees for fun" DFUNK campaign. September 2015.

Changing minds and sharing facts over perceptions proves to be an effective method time and time again, especially when seeing the impact of an organization such as DFUNK. I spoke with Mette about the importance of words, and how the hostile environment for discussing the issue creates a difficult platform to resolve the problem. A large shift needs to occur in the discourse before a larger change in politics can take place. The change in perceptions would ultimately be a giant step forward in DFUNK’s long list of goals.

“They aren’t a burden or a problem that we need to solve. They aren’t less important than other people . . . We need to stop thinking about refugees as a problem, because we can also talk about them as a big resource for our society.”

Danish Red Cross

I picked up a magazine and flipped through its glossy pages as I stood in the atrium of the Danish Red Cross. “*Alle flygtninge skal have en dansk ven*” stated the bolded headline in the middle of the page. “All refugees shall have a Danish friend,” and I was curious to know how the Red Cross planned to achieve these integration goals.¹⁹ “We want to help them and positive integration,” the small Danish article continued, “therefore, we have now started a whole new integration initiative, called ‘Friends show the way.’ The goal is that all refugees will have a Danish friend that can help them in Danish society.”

I skimmed further into the magazine as I waited, and after awhile, the receptionist kindly handed me the phone number and email of Klaus Nørskov, the head of public relations and external communication for the organization. I took the magazine home with me, continuing to read about friend-families, volunteers teaching Danish, and networks of people creating a sense of community to better help these refugee families integrate, before pressing send on an email to Klaus.

I was greatly interested in the integration project, ‘*Venner viser vej*,’ the development behind the plan, and how the Red Cross is able to measure its success.

Klaus replied that the initiative is based on a number of regional *Folkemøder*, a word directly meaning “people meeting,” where individuals are invited to come together to discuss how to better help people integration into the Danish society. The issue that continued to appear was the need for a friend in this new *kommune*, and the need to create networks. The Red Cross then built upon this concept to create a plan to pair each refugee or family with a Danish volunteer or family that helps create a sense of community. The two also are able to exchange cultural ideas

and appreciation for differences, especially to help the refugees understand the basics of living in Denmark when they are beginning the integration process.

“A lot of research confirms that networks are essential to integration. We strengthen language abilities and other areas that at the end of the day make it easier to get a job and to function in a different society.”

While the entire initiative is a three year project run by the Red Cross, it also receives some funding from the government, and it will take time to be able to measure the overall success of the program. However, the project does more than just create networks for smoother integration: it helps combat the negative views of immigrants in the media by providing personal experiences for volunteers, rather than enforcing the fear of newcomers. For Klaus, the changes to the Danish society are not a loss of Danish identity, but rather, the rise in fear: fear of a breakdown in welfare systems, fear of lack of safety, and fear of lack of freedom.

“Public opinion in Europe is very fearsome towards refugee influx, and as a consequence, policymaking leans towards protecting Europe instead of helping others, regardless of where in the refugee process.”

The rise of fear leads to reactions such as closing borders, which become understandable reactions due to fear, but are ineffective in the long run – they break down mutual policies between countries, countries compete to have the least favorable conditions for refugees, and no transnational solutions are accessible. The European Union has not established a united policy for the entire continent, leaving each member to create their own policies to work with the crisis—however, this lack of union is creating rifts across the continent. Within individual countries as well, the

strengthening populist and nationalist parties make the terrain difficult for activists and organizations.

Along these lines, creating transnational solutions for the continental problem would also enable Europe to better handle the flows of refugees – but first, there needs to be a change in the discourse. These challenges force the Red Cross to view the situation differently, and approach the issue in a way that attacks the source of the problem rather than its symptoms. Creating networks and supporting cultural exchanges can change the dialogue in such a way that Denmark can talk about what refugees can bring to the society, rather than viewing newcomers as a hindrance.

Analysis

Societal cohesiveness is an increasingly greater challenge for Denmark due to the clash of opinions concerning how to approach the conflict. Each of the above instances depicts the varying responses to the changing views of *danskhed* in Danish society. The narratives serve as case studies for the issue from a perspective that is more than a theoretical approach. Observations from daily routines in Danish culture complete the analysis to see the framework of national identity in action.

On the negative side of the spectrum, there are the examples closely connected to the rise of the radical right-wing parties, as seen with the development of the *Dansk Folkeparti* since 2002, and the passing of L87 through the *Folketing*, leading to the physical protective measures seen with the appearance of passport controls on the Swedish and German borders. These sentiments trickle down to an individual citizen level, as seen with the border control officer on the train. The powerful example of the Swedish border control shared through personal narrative is part of the harmful response to the changing demographics in Danish society,

supported by the shift in the political atmosphere. Policies and government decisions greatly impact the public perception of the issue, presenting the idea that those who are different are unwelcome in Danish society. In these instances, the concept of *danskhed* is an exclusive identity that the presence of non-Danes disrupts. If this negative bonding social capital persists in the formation of modern *danskhed*, social cohesion in the face of increasing multiculturalism comes to a standstill.

Protective measures to preserve national identity are common, as presented earlier through various examples, but there are individuals and organizations in Denmark that combat this perception with steps toward becoming more inclusive. Groups such as *Dansk Flygtningehjælp Ungdom*, the Danish Red Cross, and those who work with *Trampolinhuset* represent the positive response to growing multiculturalism in Denmark. The example given by Mette of the woman at the DFUNK campaign shows how the value of Danish openness benefits sharing information to promote positive social capital; the importance of the language used in the discourse effects the issue, as seen through the interviews with Mette and Klaus on public opinion of integration issues. Mette, Klaus, and Søren offer an optimistic view of the situation in Denmark, as opposed to the harsh alternative presented by the government. These stories reiterate the idea that *danskhed* is able to adapt in such a way that modern Danish national identity becomes inclusive to implement integration techniques that benefit both Danes and non-Danes. Reevaluating and redefining what it means to be Danish and portraying this national identity to others is difficult, since the nation has such a strong history founded in the similarities among members. Effective integration is possible through the

development of both bonding and bridging social capital to create a cohesive multicultural society.

Conclusion:

Denmark is facing an identity crisis as the national demographics change. Danish policies and society have gained a worldwide reputation for their “cultural racism,” but it is essential to analyze the situation from many perspectives. The traditional sameness of *danskhed* emphasizes a strong sense of belonging on the familial kinship images of blood, birth, and language, as promoted by Grundtvig in the late nineteenth century. Danish national identity has no history of adjusting to minority groups within the culture, and therefore has difficulties adapting to recent variances in long-established group characteristics. The core institutions continue to exist to benefit the concept of *folk* in Danish culture—*Folketing*, for example, restricts multicultural and multiethnic involvement to just the Danish people, just as the usage of terms like “ghetto” and “bilingual” support stereotypes through limited linguistic choices. The clash between “Danes” and “non-Danes” was further aggravated through the Cartoon Crisis and the passage of restrictive policies, which emerged from the rising Far Right politics as a defensive response to increased multiculturalism—most recently due to the Syrian refugee crisis and influx of migrants to Europe.

However, the case of Denmark and Danish national identity is not entirely negative—the light at the end of the tunnel is the positive actions by citizens and organizations to adapt *danskhed* to the diversifying culture of Denmark. *Danskhed* does not have to remain an identity based on historical traditions—*danskhed* can become an inclusive identity for non-Danes through the increasingly positive

influence on changing negative perceptions toward migrants. Positive reactions to multiculturalism promote constructive integration techniques, as seen with different initiatives within organizations like DFUNK and the Danish Red Cross. Redefining how a society should produce social capital is necessary to create a dynamic and cohesive identity within progressively more diverse societies. Historical sameness and group perception are difficult to change quickly; nevertheless, study and patience over time to understand where Denmark can progress from here leads to adopting new policies and the societal acceptance of diversity. With Denmark as a model study, we can conduct similar studies and research to understand and help other parts of the world to identify factors of social capital on a case by case basis, so that others can benefit from the techniques used to foster cohesive societies.

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Figure 1: *Immigrants in Denmark*. Digital image. Niels Kaergaard. (2010) 474. 8 Feb 2016.

Figure 2: "The Cartoon Crisis." Digital image. Kurt Westergaard, *Jyllands-Posten*. (2005) 27 April 2016.

Figure 2: "Trampolinhuset street view." Digital image. *Copenhagen Voice*. (2015) Web. 10 March 2016. <<https://themigrationist.net/2015/07/09/the->

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Figure 3: “Classmate and man from Syria play foosball.” Digital image. Elyse Lawson (2014) 7 Sept 2014.

Figure 4: “Sweden and Denmark to lift border checks 'soon.'”. Digital image. *The Local: Sweden’s News in English*. Web. 6 Jan. 2016.
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Figures 5-6: Border fence in Hyllie, Sweden, and border patrol on the train. Elyse Lawson. (2016) 13 March 2016.

Figure 7: “No one flees for fun.” *Jyske Vestkyste*. (2015). Web. 10 March 2016. <<http://www.jv.dk/artikel/2117868:Noter-Kolding--Ingen-flygter-for-sjov>>.

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Køfoed, Andreas. *Et hjem i verden (At home in the world)*. Sontagg Pictures. 2015.

¹ The rise of nationalism and formation of national identities has created specific types of belonging, and has greatly changed since the first instance of developing a nation with the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. The importance of a self-imposed national identity became an essential aspect of strengthening a nation, even more so as the current country outlines—particularly in Europe for the purpose of this research—largely remained the same after World War II.

² For Denmark, the emergence of the modern state began in the late nineteenth century, when the kingdom, “following a series of defeats by Bismarck’s Germany in which it lost much of its territory [including modern Norway and parts of Germany] and a significant part of its population,” which has in turn created a smaller, more homogeneous state. Several Danish historians have associated these drastic changes to the “lasting national obsession with invasion and the continual need to assert *danskhed*, or Danishness.” (Eakin)

³ Grudtvig also is well-known for his development of the *folkeskole*, which used his concepts in belonging and identity to enable many to continue education in any stage of life with others who had shared interests. *Folkeskolene* still are in use today, still true to the original principals.

⁴ *Jus soli* remains valid in most countries in the Americas, though is becoming increasingly rare throughout the world.

⁵ Danes take pride in their language, especially with the word *hygge*, which they claim to be untranslatable and an essential part to Danish culture. While there is no one word translation for the term, *hygge* is commonly roughly translated to “cozy” in

English, but it is used to describe the feeling of being with friends or loved ones and feeling content.

⁶ It is necessary to remember this philosophical, altruistic love of nation, especially in an age when such extreme forms of nationalism often have roots in hatred and racism.

⁷ Denmark is “a place where the state has an improbably durable record of doing good,” even looking back at its occupation under Nazism. “Danish leaders also have a history of protecting religious minorities, prosecuting anti-Semitism and rescuing almost its entire Jewish population” (Eakin).

⁸ Denmark often ranks in the top five as the World’s Happiest Country in the UN’s World Happiness Report, all thanks to many of these factors. Denmark also prides itself in the steps taken towards gender equality across the nation—both maternity and paternity leave are paid and guaranteed, and after years of beating the standard, the voluntary gender quotas created in the 1970s for political parties were abandoned. Denmark and other Nordic countries were among the first countries to allow women to vote, and continues to have among the world’s highest rates for women in leadership roles according to the Gender Gap Report.

⁹ Climate change is creating various conflicts worldwide and displacing many groups of people. Many issues are water related—either there is a lack of water, which impacts local farming and develops power struggles to control the area’s water supply, or there is too much water where floods and rising sea levels cause migration patterns. I do not have the space to further address this complex issue in this essay.

¹⁰ While the percentages of non-ethnic Danes are on the rise, they are comparatively low when looking at other countries—Sweden, Denmark’s neighbor across the sound, has numbers twice as high, while the United States, though historically multicultural, also faces increased radicalism and backlash, as society changes, particularly as the country prepares for another election year.

¹¹ For further reading on social capital, see *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* by Robert Putnam and Michael Shapiro’s “Bowling Blind: Post Liberal Civil Society and the Worlds of Neo-Tocquevillean Social Theory.”

¹² For further reading on state-belonging and statelessness, see Barzoo Eliassi’s “Nationalism, cosmopolitanism and statelessness: An interview with Craig Calhoun.”

¹³ Even though the cartoon crisis occurred in 2005, the aftermath continues to this day. The closing of embassies abroad, primarily Afghanistan, in 2008 occurred after threats; a car bomb killed Danes at their embassy in Pakistan later that same year; the cartoonist still keeps body guards in case of an attack, and he was present at the free speech event in Copenhagen last year during the attack on February 14 (Perlez).

¹⁴ Troels Ravn, of the Social Democrats, once said during a negotiation, “we[as Danes] live in a time where we have a Danish culture, but also is influenced by citizens of other ethnic backgrounds, which means that we live in a multicultural society... [T]herefore it is important that we both are aware of our Danish cultural roots and the influences we have in modern society.” (Joergensen)

¹⁵ According to the Danish Immigration Service (“Coming to Denmark”), the official parameters for determining the national attachment of a married couple seeking residency and reunification in Denmark are as follows:

How long you and your partner have lived in Denmark

Whether either of you have family residing in Denmark

Whether either of you have custody/visiting rights to a child under the age of 18 living in Denmark

Whether either of you have completed a higher educational program in Denmark, or have a determined connection to the Danish labor market

The extent of Danish language skills

Ties to other countries, including children or family in other countries

(Rytter; “Coming to Denmark”)

More information on immigration laws in Denmark can be found through the Danish Immigration Services website – Ny i Danmark – in the list of works cited.

¹⁶ See Rytter and his studies on kinship images in Denmark, for the emphasis on national attachment in the immigration process, especially with examples of immigration through marriage.

¹⁷ For further reading on L87, the *Folketinget* website offers the bill in its entirety, while the notice from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to Denmark offers criticism from the UN perspective.

¹⁸ DBS refers to the Danish network of trains across the country.

¹⁹ The Danish Red Cross also organizes and runs asylum camps and schools for refugee children throughout the country. While Klaus did not have much to say in our interview about the asylum camps and the asylum process, the film “*Et hjem i verden*” by Køfoed offers an intimate and beautiful documentation of five children in one of the Red Cross schools and their experiences in the Danish system.