

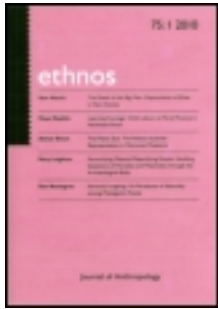
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‘The Family of Denmark’ and ‘the Aliens’: Kinship Images in Danish Integration Politics

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'The Family of Denmark' and 'the Aliens': Kinship Images in Danish Integration Politics

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ABSTRACT *Applying insights from newer anthropological kinship studies, this article suggests that the current Danish immigration regime is based on and legitimized by a certain kind of 'kinship images' that are used and reproduced in Danish public and political discourses. Since 2002, every Danish citizen applying for family reunification with foreign spouses has been met with a 'requirement of national attachment', which basically distinguishes within the pool of citizens between the 'real' and the 'not-quite-real' Danes. The article discusses the possibilities of 'integration' in the current situation where Danish legislation and public discourses tend to distinguish between Danish citizens on the basis of their family history and national attachment. The article furthermore discusses different strategies of 'kinning' through which the 'not-quite-real' can aspire to become 'real' Danes.*

KEYWORDS *Relatedness, kinning, marriage migration, family reunification, integration*

In recent years, there has been a growing scholarly interest in transnational marriages as a path to migration (Ballard 1990; Shaw 2001; Constable 2004; Kofman 2004; Strassburger 2004; Charsley 2006; Charsley & Shaw 2006; Beck-Gernsheim 2007; Rytter 2007, in press). Marriage migration has in many respects become the last legal entry point into 'Fortress Europe' for non-European immigrants, and many European countries have altered their rules on family reunification, in order to protect their national interests against an uncontrolled inflow of foreign spouses. Denmark took a leading position in this endeavour when in 2002 the *Folketing* (Parliament) adopted new legislation on family reunification, which was proudly presented by the Liberal-Conservative (*Venstre-Konservative*) government as the strictest in the

world (Schmidt in press). The immigration regime makes it difficult not only for foreigners but also for Danish citizens – and in particular the eight per cent of the population with immigrant backgrounds¹ – to obtain family reunification with non-European spouses.

The new legislation had three overall purposes. First, it was meant to hamper the practices of transnational arranged marriages documented among Turkish and Pakistani immigrants where more than eighty per cent of all marriages were contracted with spouses from Turkey and Pakistan (Schmidt & Jakobsen 2000:144). In a broader historical perspective, the new legislation was the culmination of a moral panic concerning the marriage patterns of immigrants in Denmark, and was thus presented as a necessary means to rescue young, second generation immigrants (especially women) from being forced into marriages with spouses from their countries of origin (Rytter 2003a:43). Second, the legislation was an aspect of the general securitization of migration following ‘11 September 2001’, adopted to secure the borders and protect the nation from further transgressions by non-European immigrants – especially those from countries dominated by Muslim populations. Finally, it was believed that the combination of these two objectives would provide fertile ground for a new and improved strategy for the national integration of immigrants and refugees already resident in Denmark.

To comply with these three related political objectives five requirements of age (*24års-reglen*), accommodation (*boligkravet*), financial assistance (*forsørgelseskravet*), collateral (*sikkerhedsstillelsen*) and national attachment (*tilknytningskravet*) for obtaining family reunification were introduced.²

The new legislation had an immediate effect on marriage-related immigration. Whereas 6499 spouses came to Denmark through family reunification in 2001, the number was reduced to 2619 by 2008. The most frequent reason for a newly wed couple to be denied reunification was that their combined national attachment to Denmark was considered insufficient. The requirement of national attachment was (and still is) based on a calculation made by the immigration authorities in order to decide whether the total national attachment of a married couple consisting of a Dane and a foreign spouse is *greater* to Denmark than to any other country.

This article applies insights from anthropological studies of kinship to discuss common ideas of national community, identity, and relatedness in Denmark and explain why it has become widely accepted to base citizens' right to family reunification on a notion of national attachment.

The five requirements dictate certain standards regarding where marriages should be contracted and how family life should be organized in Denmark. But whereas the requirements of age, accommodation, financial assistance and collateral could be called 'democratic', as they affect everyone equally, the requirement of national attachment targets specific groups of Danes as it distinguishes within the pool of national citizens between the majority of 'real' Danes and the minority of 'not-quite-real' Danes. The latter group comprises the growing number of immigrants, refugees, and their descendants who have settled in the country and obtained Danish citizenship in the last 50 years.

I will argue that the persistent distinction between 'real' and 'not-quite-real' Danes is not only made possible, but also perceived as legitimate, by the widespread use of what could be called 'kinship images'. Kinship images constitute an indigenous theory of how Danes are related to each other (Carsten 2000, 2004) and are a specific way to talk and think about the nation that continuously marks out who belongs to it and who does not. Bertel Haarder, the former Minister of Integration representing the Liberal party (*Venstre*), utilized just such an image of kinship when he wrote about the Danes in 2003 in one of the major Danish newspapers:

We [the Danes] have a job, because we care about what our family and neighbors think about us, and because we want to set a good example for our children. But foreigners do not feel these inhibitions in the same way. They live in a subculture outside the Danish tribe. That is why they so quickly learn about the possibilities for getting money [out of the welfare system] without making an effort. (Berlingske-Tidende, September 20, 2003)

Here the Minister not only offered a generalized, derogatory description of foreigners in Denmark, he also introduced an explanation for the differences between Danes and foreigners: the latter live 'outside the Danish tribe', and the ways 'they' live and think are radically different from the ways 'we' (the Danes) do. However, Haarder's depiction of the Danish tribe is in no way exceptional, but rather an example of how kinship images are used to delimit the national community. Even though it may not necessarily be done to harm or exclude anyone, kinship images nevertheless produce and reproduce 'symbolic fences' (Gullestad 2002, 2006) between different segments of the population.

This article discusses the basic conditions for integration in the current historical situation where both Danish national legislation and popular kinship

images tend to distinguish between different types of citizens and in the same process to question the legitimate rights and attachments that some groups have in relation to the nation and the welfare state. The first part of the article explores how ideas of national relatedness are embedded in the requirement of national attachment. The second part analyses the notions of integration implied in the current immigration regime and discusses how people categorized as 'not-quite-real' can aspire to become 'real' Danes.

The National Order

The nation-state is the basic unit for developments in politics, economy, art, language and knowledge, which in turn has fostered the idea that every human being belongs to one (Wimmer & Glick Schiller 2003). This has resulted in the creation of a global 'national order' of separate peoples and nation-states (Malkki 1992).³ National belonging is manifested through citizenship. Anyone with a passport can literally document which location in the world he or she supposedly belongs to. However, the national order is challenged by flows of globalization, with people crossing national borders on an unforeseen scale and frequency, and by the fact that many people change their nationality. Furthermore several sovereign nation-states, such as Sweden, Pakistan and the USA, actually allow dual citizenship. These examples all contradict the logic of 'the national order'.

The geographical territory of the Danish nation state has changed in recent centuries. It was not until the cession of Norway in 1814, the military loss of Schleswig-Holstein in 1864 and the plebiscite deciding the southern borders in 1920 that Denmark ended up with the territory Danes recognize today.⁴ However, since the nineteenth century periods of extensive nation-building have utilized language, public schools, the mass media and national history as ways of fostering the idea of a more or less coherent national community and identity. Today Denmark is often described as an old nation-state with a very homogenous population (Gundelach 2002:58), despite the fact that approximately 8% of the population has a different ethnic background than Danish.

Since 1950, the distribution of Danish citizenship, that is, the process of naturalizing aliens as Danish subjects, has been granted twice a year to foreigners who meet specific, politically defined criteria. Currently, all applicants have to comply with the laws passed in 2002 by the parliamentary majority consisting of the Liberal-Conservative government and the right-wing 'Danish People's Party' (Ersbøl 2004:96). The parliamentary body responsible for these matters

is a specific 'citizenship committee' (*indfødsretsudvalg*). So historically, Danish citizenship has been granted on varying legal and moral principles, depending on contemporary politicians and international trends (Hansen & Jelstrup 2005:89). However, the key point in relation to my argument is the fact that so far Danish citizens have been equals before the law (Ersbøl 2004:92). Danish citizenship used to be based on an exclusive status and a set of legal rights that gave national subjects certain privileges and obligations in relation to the national community and the welfare state. This basic principle has been broken by the introduction of the requirement of national attachment.

Notions of National Attachment

When the requirement of national attachments was first introduced in 2000, it was only applied to foreigners living in Denmark who requested family reunification. Then, the total national attachment of the married couple should be *at least as great* to Denmark as to any other country. When the new legislation was introduced in 2002, the requirement was changed in two ways. First it was also applied to Danish citizens who married foreigners, and second the total national attachment of the married couple now had to *be greater* to Denmark than to any other country in the world (Dilou Jacobsen 2004:104). These apparently minor changes had a major impact.

When the Danish Immigration Service has to decide the total national attachment of a newly wed transnational couple applying for family reunification, it does so on the basis of various predefined parameters. These parameters have been adjusted several times since 2002 and constitute a flexible political tool when it comes to regulating which foreigners are to be allowed family reunification. In 2008, the parameters for deciding the total national attachment of a married couple were as follows⁵:

- How long you and your spouse/partner have lived in Denmark.
- Whether one or both of you have family or other acquaintances in Denmark.
- Whether one or both of you have custody of or visiting rights to a child under the age of 18 living in Denmark.
- Whether one or both of you have completed an educational program in Denmark, or have a solid connection to the Danish labour market.
- How well you and your spouse/partner speak Danish.
- The extent of the ties of both of you to any other country, including whether any or both of you have made extended visits to that country.
- Whether you have children or other family members in any other country.

The evaluation procedure amounts to a calculation, the purpose of which is to decide whether or not a married couple fulfils the requirement of national attachment, and should be given permission to live together in Denmark.

The following example of Sohail and Nadia, a newly wed Danish-Pakistani couple, is a real case taken from a report published by the Danish Institute for Human Rights (Olsen *et al.* 2004), where it was used to exemplify how the Immigration Service evaluates the total national attachment of a newly wed couple:

Sohail is twenty-five years of age, born and raised in Denmark by parents originating from Pakistan. He is a Danish citizen and his parents and siblings all live in Denmark. At the time of handing in the application, Sohail has worked continuously as a salesperson for almost six years and is furthermore representing Denmark on the national team in an unnamed sport. Nadia is a Pakistani citizen. She is twenty-four years of age and has never visited Denmark before. Nadia has a sister who is already living in Denmark, but this is not considered to be a circumstance that enhances the national attachment of Nadia herself. The married couple met during Sohail's holiday in Pakistan, and were soon after married. The couple communicates in Urdu. The report does not say whether or not Sohail has been on a longer holiday in Pakistan or whether he has been there frequently. In their final decision, the Immigration Service denied them family reunification because their total national attachment to Denmark was not seen as greater than their total national attachment to Pakistan. In the decision the Immigration Service emphasized that Nadia had no independent attachment to Denmark. (Case reproduced from Liisberg 2004:32)

The case of Sohail and Nadia shows how Danish citizens with parents originating in another country have a hard time fulfilling the requirement of national attachment, because they lack a long family history and genealogy related to Denmark. In this case, it was not enough that Sohail was a Danish citizen and had his entire family in the country, that he had worked steadily since he was nineteen and that he represented Denmark at international sport events. Despite these circumstances, Nadia's and Sohail's total national attachment to Denmark was not considered great enough.

In an ideal 'national order' there is an absolute correlation between the territorial boundaries of a nation-state and the nationality of those living there. To some extent this was the case in Denmark half a century ago, but recently the picture has become more blurred. Groups of immigrants, refugees and spouses and relatives who have entered the country from non-western countries and in time obtained citizenship embody the disparity between the Danish

nation and Danish citizens. Despite their achieved legal status they are not regarded as 'real' Danes.

In a broader perspective the recent developments in Denmark are far from unique but are part of the more general rise in 'neo-nationalism' (Gullestad 2002; Hervik 2004; Gingrich & Banks 2006) and 'cultural fundamentalism' (Stolcke 1995) that is documented all over Europe. In fact, the Danish situation has many similarities with Norwegian 'ethno-nationalism', defined by Gullestad as (2006):

An imaginary geography where 'foreign' appearance and family name work as markers of cultural difference and social distance. Ethno-nationalism is a close-knit set of specific understandings about geography, history, culture, religion and perceptions about skin colour and descent, a close-knit set of ideas that has only recently been re-invented. (p. 302)

What is notable about the specific Danish case is that by introducing the requirement of national attachment, exclusionist kinship images have been elevated to a legal principle, which again legitimizes the idea that some citizens have more rights to and ownership of the benefits of the welfare state than others due to their 'natural' relatedness to the Danish nation.

The Family of Denmark

The force of kinship images is their ability to construct and characterize the national community through metaphors. In *Metaphors we live by*, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) emphasize that metaphors are embedded in language and therefore in the very ways in which we comprehend the world. A metaphor is not a single arbitrary, more or less poetic, construction, but an element in a broader structure of concepts and meanings. As an example, the nation itself is a concept we can *love*, *build up*, *nurse* or *defend* in meaningful speech-acts.

Metaphors are also grounded in bodily experiences of the physical and cultural environment. When we cope with abstract phenomena, such as the nation, we use a *Gestalt* from one domain of experience to structure another domain (Lakoff & Johnson 1980:230). In this respect, the nation has been described metaphorically as a biological organism, for instance a body (Eriksen 1997), or as grounded in local idioms of solidarity within family and kin groups (Herzfeld 1997:75; Gullestad 2006). The nation is also represented as complementary parental figures. On the one hand, the nation is the caring mother who protects and nurtures the children of the nation (mother's milk, mother tongue). On the

other hand, the nation is described as the vigilant father, the fatherland, ready to defend the territory and the children of the nation against external aggressions (Hage 2003:31ff.; Carsten 2004:158). These examples show how we use tangible experiences from the primary sphere of the family to grasp the abstract imagined community of the nation.

In the Danish socio-political context, the notion of 'the family of Denmark' (*Familien Danmark*) is one such significant and productive kinship image. As the social anthropologist, Anne Knudsen observes, there is a certain poetry to this: 'the family of Denmark has a beautiful ring to it' (Knudsen 1996:64; translation mine). This beauty is embedded in the condensed figure signalling coherence, solidarity and security, but it is also associated with peacefulness, coziness and happiness – all values found in the ideal family. Evoking the notion of 'the family of Denmark' in public discourse is a way in which to speak of average people such as Jensen, Hansen or Olsen without differentiating among them or accentuating one over the others. In that respect, 'the family of Denmark' also sometimes signals mediocrity and may be used with a touch of sarcasm. It also represents the envious side of Scandinavian egalitarianism, where no one is supposed to stand out from fellow kinsmen, friends, colleagues or neighbours. The notion of 'the family of Denmark' combines real experiences (or idealized fantasies) of family life with the more abstract national community.

'The family of Denmark' has been discussed in ethnographic studies in and of Denmark. Anne Knudsen provides a polemical discussion of the Danish welfare state and illustrates through numerous examples how the family is the general model for social organization at different levels. Relations between caseworkers and clients, teachers and pupils, medical staff and patients (and one might add Danes and foreigners or majorities and minorities) are all modelled on the structures of authority and intimacy found in the family (Knudsen 1996:56–7). In particular, the relationship between mother and child is to be found everywhere in the Danish welfare system (Knudsen 1996:73). Similarly, the American-born anthropologist Jonathan Schwartz, who has lived and worked for decades in Denmark, notes how immigrants and refugees are often reduced to symbolic children when they are represented by the majority:

One of the obvious differences between our [immigrants'] situation in Denmark and [those] of France and Britain is that voices of the settlers in the two large countries are audible. They may not be listened to, but at least they can be heard [...] Danish journalists, politicians, social workers and social scientists talk about us sometimes as if we

were not even present – something like the way children are talked about when they misbehave or are 'so cute'. (Schwartz 1990:43)

A number of studies conducted in Denmark are preoccupied with the same power mechanism and point out how dominant ideas of national 'selves' and 'others' are structured as relations between 'hosts' and 'guests' (Schwartz 1985; Hervik 1999, 2004; Rytter 2003b). The logic is straightforward: the aliens have come to Denmark and settled in 'our' country. We invited guest-workers from the European periphery in the 1960s and 1970s, and more or less voluntarily accepted groups of refugees and their spouses who have entered through family reunification. To reciprocate this gesture, the newcomers should submit to the explicit and implicit rules of the country.

There are several examples of how the Danes and the Danish nation are constructed as an imagined form of kinship, and how basic ideas of what it means to be a family, structure the relations between majorities and minorities. Kinship images are often taken for granted which only serves to conceal their impact. It is even difficult for the people exercising the power of 'familism' to see and understand what they are doing. They have no evil intentions, but act as they do for the common good, as they see it (Knudsen 1996:61).

I now go on to test the range and validity of these kinship images against some of the findings in recent anthropological studies of kinship.

Euro-American Kinship

In *American Kinship*, Schneider (1968) explores dominant understandings of family and kinship in North America. According to Schneider, a core element of American and European kinship is the idea that 'blood is thicker than water'. Schneider finds two distinct types of family relations defined within *the order of nature* and *the order of law*, respectively.

Family and kinship relations of *the order of nature* are divided into two categories of family and kin which are both considered variations of natural connections. First there are relations based on substance, referring to the idea that each parent provides one-half of the child's biogenetic constitution. In this respect, people are said to contain a part of their mother and of their father and therefore also parts of their grandparents, and so on. The second type of natural bond is that understood as a relation of blood. Common blood relates ego to his or her siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc. Even though these are two different ideas of relatedness, they are both considered to be part of what Schneider calls *the order of nature* and contain categories of relatives that

cannot be terminated or changed, because it is never possible to have an ex-mother, ex-child or ex-brother (Schneider 1980 [1968]:23ff). By contrast, family and kin belonging to *the order of law* are created through marriage such as spouses, in-laws, the children of a spouse's previous marriage, and so on. These relations are not seen as natural but rather as purely juridical and constituted by laws on marriage, divorce, divisions of property, inheritance and so on. These family and kinship relations can in both theory and practice be changed and substituted with similar ones (Schneider 1980 [1968]:25ff).

Generally, Schneider claims that family and kinship are integrated and work over time due to a 'diffuse, enduring solidarity' (Schneider 1980 [1968]:97): 'diffuse' because the relations are not necessarily directed at any specific goal; 'enduring' because they last and are often irrevocable; 'solidarity' because they are based on mutual trust and imply – and often demand – help, support and cooperation (Smedal 2001:13).

In the history of anthropology, David Schneider's analytical approach to family and kinship was groundbreaking and marked the transition from studying kin and family as biology and functional units, to conceptualizing them as cultural and symbolic domains. In an article published in 1977, nine years after the first edition of *American Kinship*, Schneider suggests that his findings on family and kinship could also be applied to other domains such as religion or nationalism (Schneider 1977). I will try to follow this suggestion and apply his analytical vocabulary to the Danish national community and the logic behind the legislation on family reunification. The Danish people, the 'real' Danes, are part of a coherent national community based on common history and cultural heritage. The national community can be characterized as an enduring, diffuse solidarity. We are Danes and we belong to the land like our parents, grandparents and ancestors did before us. Our presence within the national territory and our national citizenship (*indfødsret*) are of *the order of nature* and comply with the global 'national order' of people and nation-states.

It is a totally different situation when we talk about the immigrants and refugees who have entered and settled in Denmark since the 1950s. They are in the country because they have been granted permission through work permits, residence permits, asylum, etc. People from this group have, over the years, obtained Danish citizenship, but only by abandoning their original citizenship. Also the so-called second-generation immigrants, who have been born and raised in Denmark and may never have had any other citizenship than Danish, are regarded as abnormal in relation to *the order of nature*, because even though they live in Denmark, they are supposed to live in another

country in another part of the world. The presence of this expanding group of people is the result of *the order of law*. They are only in Denmark due to labour migration, family reunification, wars, or oppressive regimes elsewhere. Since they cannot refer to a specific national birthplace, a local place of origin, a family business or a family farm that substantiates their natural and legitimate belonging and attachment to Denmark, they are structurally excluded from being part of 'the family of Denmark'. Just as the domain of family and kinship contains different kinds of relatives, so too, is the national community constituted by different kinds of citizens (Schneider 1977:68). In this respect, Schneider's analysis not only explains how and why it has been legitimate to distinguish between 'real' and 'not-quite-real' Danes in the legislation on family reunification by expanding the requirement of national attachment, it also captures the new tendencies in Danish public and political discourses towards a more hierarchical and exclusive 'ethnic nationalism' in contrast to the previously egalitarian and inclusive 'civic nationalism' (Ignatieff 1993) that used to characterize the national community and welfare state system.

The distinction between the two categories of national citizens was further stressed in 2003, when the Danish Parliament introduced law no. 1204 in order to remove some of the unintended consequences of the new immigration regime. In the summer of 2002, it became clear that the rules of family reunification not only affected arranged and forced marriages but every transnational marriage. Expatriates, who for years had served Danish interests in the diplomatic corps, employees of NGOs or international companies all over the world, were no longer allowed to bring their foreign spouses back home. Their situation was reported in the media and soon put on the political agenda. As a result, the requirement of national attachment was supplemented by the so-called '28-year rule' (*28års-regel*) that exempted everyone who had held Danish citizenship for at least 28 years from the requirement of national attachment. As a result of this adjustment, Danes by *the order of nature* were relieved of the requirement of national attachment when they turned 28. By contrast, Danes by *the order of law*, who had often obtained Danish citizenship later in life, had to wait 28 years before the requirement of national attachment was removed.⁶

The *Folketing* introduced law no. 1204 as a necessary adjustment, so that the strict rules on family reunification would not affect the 'wrong' groups of citizens (Dilou Jacobsen 2004:115–18). However, in making this legal adjustment they once again used national legislation to emphasize and expand the distinction between 'real' and 'not-quite-real' Danes.

Changing Identities

The rest of this article discusses the ideas of immigrant integration that are implied in dominant kinship images and affirmed by the requirement of national attachment. I discuss some of the strategies that 'not-quite-real' Danes can utilize in order to become 'real' Danes.

So far, Schneider has provided an analytical perspective that explains why the division of the national community, emblemized by the requirement of national attachment, is widely considered legitimate. On the other hand, his model does not allow much room for contestation or local creativity in response to the mechanisms of differentiation and submission. In this respect, a recent study conducted by Howell (2001, 2003) on childless Norwegians and their ideas and practices, concerning adoption of children from Asia, Latin America and eastern Europe is much more instructive. Howell shows how newly arrived children are soon given a position within the family that adopts them and in Norwegian society as a whole, despite the fact that the adopted children and their new parents do not share any biological substance. These adopted children are included in their adoptive families by Norwegian law, but the families also adopt symbolic gestures themselves, such as narratives and social practices, to transform the children into 'real' family members. Howell (2001:207) calls this process of social and cultural becoming 'kinning'.

In a critical discussion of the concept of integration, Abdelmalek Sayad makes a very similar observation in suggesting that the discourse on integration is about identity. When politicians and policy-makers speak of integration they imagine a movement 'from the most radical alterity to the most *total* identity' (Sayad 2004:216; italics in original). This new total identity is bound to be a national identity as the concept of integration is part of the 'identitarian' vocabulary of the nation-state (Sayad 2004) that distinguishes between 'the children of the nation' and the aliens.

Uniting the insights of Howell and Sayad, there are resemblances between the changes a subject will have to go through when it comes to the processes of 'kinning' and 'integration', respectively. Both imply an ontological change in the subject involved. They constitute specific locally recognized ways of including aliens in the community of the family or the nation, and, by that same process, of granting them obligations, responsibilities and ownership of the common good.

In the Danish case, there are at least two processes of kinning in which citizens categorized as 'not-quite-real' Danes engage in attempts to become 'real' Danes. The first is the long-term strategy of intermarriage. The second strategy relies on various technologies of self, which, paradoxically, take place in Sweden.

Intermarriage as a Strategy of Kinning

The explicit political agenda of the new immigration regime was to reduce the flow of newcomers by preventing transnational marriages. Immigrants with a tradition of transnational arranged marriages are urged to redirect their marriage preferences in favour of inter-ethnic and inter-religious marriages with spouses found in Denmark (Rytter 2010:101ff). The ambitions of national politicians to govern the marriage market and alter existing marriage patterns in many respects resemble a state-defined preference for marriage endogamy within Danish territory, the Danish nation and –following Bertel Haarder, (the former) Minister of Integration, quoted above – the Danish tribe.

The current legislation on family reunification assumes that the intermarriage of immigrants already residing in Denmark with ethnic Danes together with their subsequent biological reproduction within the national territory will inevitably make them and their offspring more Danish. It is generally assumed that, during the process of kinning, immigrants will abandon their cultural idiosyncrasies within a generation or two and start to become 'real' Danes.⁷

In a study of transnational belonging among Somalis in Denmark, sociologist Kleist (2006) presents a case that illustrates how marriage and biological reproduction are meant to relate people gradually to 'the family of Denmark'. Saphia, a Somali woman, fled Somalia in the 1990s and went through a long transit period in an institution for asylum-seekers before she managed to establish a meaningful life in Denmark. She has, among other things, married a 'real' Danish man and given birth to their daughter. Nevertheless, the reactions her daughter meets depend on whether she is accompanied by her father or her mother. When she is with Saphia, the girl is often treated as an unwanted immigrant, whereas, in the company of her father, she is seen and treated as a lovely little girl with beautiful hair and radiant skin (Kleist 2006:124). Following my line of argument, one could say that in the company of Saphia the daughter is regarded as an alien. In the company of her father, however, she is perceived as a person undergoing transformation, moving away from her embodied radical alterity. She is a girl who through the practice of kinning, is gradually being recognized as a 'real' Dane by her surroundings.

The case of Saphia illustrates how it is widely accepted in the Danish social imaginary that biological reproduction within the territory and nation initiates the process of kinning and gives citizens categorized as 'not-quite-real' Danes partial rights over national places and spaces. Danish history contains several examples of how aliens have been absorbed into the local as well as the national community. The many French, Dutch and German surnames in the population

bear witness to the fact that if one goes back a sufficient number of generations in family genealogies, many forefathers of 'real' Danes are actually immigrants.

Kinning as a Technology of the Self

In the work of Signe Howell, kinning is an ontological change that adoptive parents can initiate in favour of their newly arrived children, but Howell does not discuss how the newly arrived children themselves can contribute to this transformation. This is actually possible in the Danish case. As the Immigration Service applies relatively few parameters in deciding the national attachment of newlyweds, it becomes possible for transnational couples to initiate and stimulate the process of kinning themselves. In this way, a couple who were first denied family reunification because their attachment to Denmark was considered insufficient can in time actually improve their record of national belonging and make the evaluation tip over in favour of Denmark. Paradoxically, this mainly happens abroad, in Sweden.

Since the new legislation was introduced, the number of family reunifications has been drastically reduced. Many of the Danish citizens who are – or know beforehand that they will be – denied family reunification move to the region of Scania in southern Sweden, only thirty minutes away from Copenhagen since the building of the Öresund Bridge that connects the two countries. In Sweden, Danish citizens are entitled to family reunification with non-European spouses due to their status as citizens of the European Union. In this way, the current legislation means that Danish citizens have more legal rights when it comes to family reunification in Sweden than they do in Denmark (see Rytter 2007, in press). In 2005, almost 600 applications for family reunification with a foreign spouse were submitted by Danes in southern Sweden, of which 64 % were men and more than half of the applicants were under the age of 24 (Rapport 2006:9). As a result of this, an estimated 2–3000 Danes have moved to Sweden (or Germany) since 2002 in order to obtain family reunification. In 2007, no less than 12 % of Danish-Pakistanis aged 25 had emigrated to Sweden (Schmidt *et al.* 2009:99).

Many of these transnational couples continue to work or study in Denmark where they also have their friends and family, and see life in Sweden as a temporary 'necessary evil' before they can return legally to Denmark. During this transition period, it is possible for transnational couples to start the process of kinning and improve their attachment to Denmark. In order to explain how this process takes place, I return to the case of Nadia and Sohail, who were denied family reunification because their total national attachment was

considered to be greater to Pakistan than to Denmark. I use Nadia and Sohail to set up a hypothetical scenario of how national attachment and belonging can be acquired, based on my interviews with transnational couples settled in Sweden (see Rytter 2007, in press). I present it to expose the logics of kinship images and kinning that are inherent in the legislation.

After his application for family reunification to Denmark is denied, Sohail decides to move to Malmö in Sweden in order to utilize his status as a European citizen to bring Nadia to Europe. He buys an apartment and leaves home. Four months later Nadia is granted permission to go to Sweden and they start living together as man and wife in Malmö. Sohail continues to work in Denmark, commuting across the Öresund Bridge. After a while Nadia begins to attend the local language school, where she starts to learn Swedish. Every evening she voluntarily studies the social conditions and history of Denmark, partly through talking with Sohail and partly from books, TV and the Internet. They spend almost every weekend in Denmark, where they typically stay the night in the house of Sohail's parents. Nadia soon establishes a network of female friends centred around her sister, who is already living in Denmark, and around her sisters-in-law and their friends. In time Nadia learns to speak both Swedish and Danish, and she gets a job at a shopping mall in Malmö. However, she quits her job when she becomes pregnant. After living together for two years, Nadia and Sohail are blessed with a daughter, whom they decide should become a Danish citizen, just like her father.

If the Immigration Service were asked to re-evaluate the total national attachment of Nadia and Sohail after their stay in Sweden, they *might* end up deciding that they now have become much more attached to Denmark than they were 2 years earlier.⁸ This change has happened because they spend every weekend in Denmark, Sohail commutes to work in Denmark every day, Nadia has learned to speak Danish and they now have a daughter with Danish citizenship. The parameters for deciding national attachment give priority to certain practices, such as command of language, level of education, work, transnational mobility and reproduction, through which transnational couples in Sweden can increase their national attachment and belonging. These practices constitute a number of 'technologies of self' (Foucault 1988) that married couples must subject themselves to in order to continue the process of kinning and increase their degree of relatedness to Denmark.

As I mentioned, the case of Nadia and Sohail is fictitious. In real life, it is not so easy to have a decision on national attachment re-evaluated. The Danish authorities will only deal with applicants living in Denmark, so before a

re-evaluation can take place the Danish spouse, in this case Sohail, must move back to Denmark. This also means that the foreign spouse must go back to his or her country of origin, which in this case means that Nadia must return to Pakistan. From there they can reapply for family reunification in Denmark – but there are no guarantees. The Immigration Service may decide once again to reject the application and the foreign spouse furthermore risk having a difficult time returning to Europe. In fact, I have not heard of any married couples willing to jeopardize their possibilities of building a future together in this way.

Conclusion: Integration of the New Danes

Analysing the Danish legislation on family reunification, I have suggested that kinship images and dominant ideas about the constitution of the national community, obstruct the process of integration. Kinship images mobilized in public discourses not only delimit and characterize the national community, but also at the same time disqualify a large number of people on the basis of their family histories.

I have given two examples of how Danes categorized as ‘not-quite-real’ can work in order to change their position and status. In doing so, I present a relatively unproblematic scenario which neglects the fact that the cultural system itself changes over time. What today constitutes a ‘real’ Dane will change as more and more people with an immigrant background obtain Danish citizenship, get married, and start making claims for recognition as ‘real’ Danes and for ownership of the nation and welfare state. Even though these groups will, in time, become part of what Schneider called *the order of nature*, they will continue to have black hair, coloured skin, names associated with other parts of the world, and not least other religious practices and affiliations than standard Danish Protestantism – all features that are not compatible with the title and status of being a ‘real’ Dane. Contemporary Danish politics has in many respects turned into a battle of identity politics in which the criteria used to define which citizens should be recognized as ‘real’ Danes are contested and redefined.

However, the kinship images themselves are also changing. The notion of ‘the family of Denmark’ is powerful because it is capable of presenting the abstract national community as one big happy family, but due to current divorce rates the nuclear family is just one among numerous ways to organize family life. Single parents, couples ‘sharing’ children, the experience of having ‘weekend siblings’, alternative collective families, long-distance relationships of transnational families, the legal possibility of gay-marriages and the right of lesbians to artificial insemination all urge indigenous Danes to rethink the

concept of family fundamentally. This will probably also have effects on the kinship images of the future. Upcoming generations of Danish society might not have the same kind of experiences and sentimental feelings attached to the family as those dominant today, and they will therefore probably develop new images and ideas of the abstract national community. Only time will tell whether this re-definition will make the national community more open or more restricted than it is today when it comes to distributing recognition, ownership and identity.

What we do know is that in late 2009, the strict rules of family reunification were supported by all political parties represented in the Danish *Folketing* except the Social-Liberals (*Det Radikale Venstre*) and the Red-Green Alliance (*Enhedslisten*), a fusion-party consisting of different left-wing organizations, but neither of them currently have any influence on the national policies of immigration or integration. According to frequent opinion polls, the legislation on family reunification is supported by the vast majority of Danes and understood as a fair and reasonable way to deal with the forces of globalization confronting the Danish nation and welfare state. However, in the summer of 2008, the European Court of Justice passed a verdict in the so-called *Metockcase* which challenged the Danish immigration regime. The fundamental right to the free movement of labour within the European Union, a corner stone of the European common market, was violated by the restrictive Danish legislation on family reunification. The verdict may very well undermine the protective Danish immigration regime in the future.

On a more general level, this article emphasizes that words and categories are never innocent. Verbal communications are never 'just talk', but rather reflect more basic common understandings. Kinship images have a long history in the Danish language and imaginary, but it was not until the introduction of the requirement of national attachment in 2002 that these kinship images became tangible. Elevating specific ideas of national relatedness to a principle of the national law has had a direct impact on the lives of thousands of Danish citizens, who have been forced to rearrange their family lives after marrying spouses from non-European countries.

Words are also important in other ways. In his discussion of the contemporary rise of nationalism in western Europe, Herzfeld (1977:83) points out that the language of blood has returned and with it also the risk of literal bloodshed. Such a far-reaching conclusion cannot be made on the basis of this article, but it is important to emphasize the problematic – and potentially dangerous – situation we face, when it becomes legitimate and commonsensical to

mobilize ideas of *the order of nature*, the unbreakable bonds of blood, or to present the national community as 'a Danish tribe' in public and political discourses.

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Notes

1. NYT – *fra Danmarks Statistik*, nr. 37, februar 2005.
2. In order to obtain family reunification, these five requirements have to be fulfilled: (1) Both partners must be above the age of 24 (*24års-reglen*). (2) The partner residing in Denmark must have 'adequate accommodation of reasonable size' at his or her disposal (*boligkravet*). (3) The partner residing in Denmark must be able to provide for his or her partner and must not have received public financial assistance for a year prior to submitting the application (*forsørgelseskravet*). (4) The partner living in Denmark must post a specified sum of money (in 2008 DKK 58,207) as a collateral in the form of a bank guarantee to cover any possible public assistance paid by the municipality after the foreign spouse has moved to Denmark (*sikkerhedsstillelsen*). (5) Finally, the existing requirement of 'national attachment' (*tilknytningskravet*), that so far had been significant only for foreign citizens living in Denmark, was increased so that it also became necessary for Danish citizens to comply with the requirement of national attachment when applying for reunification with foreign spouses. For more about the requirements and how they are administrated in practice, see http://www.nyidanmark.dk/en-us/coming_to_dk/familyreunification/spouses/. See also two reports published by the Danish Institute for Human Rights (Olsen *et al.* 2004) and (Olsen & Liisberg 2005).
3. It is no coincidence that there is an etymological connection between the concepts of *nation* and *nature*. These concepts are related through the Latin concept of *natio*, meaning birth (Herzfeld 1997:41).
4. This statement neglects parts of Danish colonial history. The national border changed with the relative independence of Iceland in 1903–1918, the Faroe Islands in 1948 and Greenland in 1979, along with the disposal of Tranquebar in Southern India in 1885 and the Caribbean Virgin Islands in 1917.
5. See the Danish Immigration Service, http://www.nyidanmark.dk/en-us/coming_to_dk/familyreunification/spouses/attachment_requirement.htm
6. An example could be the hypothetical Danish-born son of immigrants from Pakistan, who changed his citizenship from Pakistani to Danish at the age of 12. He will have to wait until he is 40 before the requirement of national attachment

- is annulled. Similarly, a Palestinian refugee, who was granted Danish citizenship at the age of 25, would have to wait until she is 53 before the requirement of national attachment was withdrawn.
7. Seeing national intermarriage as a strategy of kinning echoes former discourses of racial supremacy. In 1921, the cultural anthropologist Franz Boas advocated that intermarriage was the solution to the race question in the USA (Sanjek 1996:104). Later commentators have remarked that the suggestion of the 'paling out of blacks as the ultimate solution' denied 'equality for the black male' and 'ruled out blackness as a firm and rich experience'; basically it remained 'unconsciously bent on genocide' (Sanjek 1996:105).
 8. I write *might* because we do not know for sure. Every decision of national attachment is made individually – which makes the whole procedure blurred and arbitrary. However, legal experts from the Danish Institute for Human Rights and the NGO, 'Dokumentation og Rådgivningscenteret om Racediskrimination', which works with this legislation and its consequences confirm that a couple with a story resembling that of Nadia and Sohail would probably be said to have greater national attachment to Denmark than to any other country.

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