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CANONISING CULTURE

Collective Identity Construction in
the Denmark Canon

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Abstract

Inspired by what appears to be a nationalist turn in cultural policy-making across Europe, this thesis is concerned with the recent upsurge in the canonisation of Danish culture as it seems to somewhat contradict the cultural policy priorities pursued by the supranational and intergovernmental bodies of which Denmark is a member. The purpose of the research is to investigate how collective identity is constructed in the Denmark Canon. Moreover, it explores the motivations behind the project. The empirical material – the ten-page Denmark Canon, two newspaper articles featuring the former Minister for Culture Bertel Haarder and a speech given by him at a seminar – is analysed using a hermeneutical approach and a combination of three methods. Thematic qualitative text analysis and social linguistic analysis are used to identify the most dominant narratives on collective identity present in the Denmark Canon. Critical discourse analysis is used to elaborate the resulting identity narratives in the context of the articles and the speech to clarify and explain their latent socio-political motifs. A theoretical framework outlining aspects pertaining to four interconnected pairs – identity and belonging, cultural heritage and collective memory, loyalty and civil religion, ontological security and cultural trauma – substantiates this approach.

The first part of the analysis resulted in three identity narratives. The first two focused on securing a sense of national self and state self, respectively. These two combined to form a biographical identity narrative framing the entire Denmark Canon. In addition to their individual characteristics, they were all concerned with a distinctly national dimension and the establishment of continuity through the activation of selected memories giving meaning to the past, present and future. The second part of the analysis revealed the presence of two discourses in the articles and the speech – a discourse of crisis and a discourse of inclusiveness. It was evident that both, in different ways, tried to create a legitimate context within which the biographical identity narrative could be justified as either a tool for crisis management or a common cultural denominator.

Keywords: Denmark Canon, collective identity, cultural heritage, canonisation, identity narrative, Danish identity, nationalism

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
1.1. Problem and limitation	3
1.2. Purpose and research question	4
1.3. Structure of the thesis	4
1.4. Previous research	5
1.5. Research paradigm	6
2. Sources and Methods	
2.1. Empirical material	8
2.2. Qualitative content analysis	10
2.3. Discourse analysis	11
2.4. Implications and limitations	13
3. Theoretical Framework	
3.1. Identity and belonging	15
3.2. Cultural heritage and collective memory	17
3.3. Loyalty and civil religion	18
3.4. Ontological security and cultural trauma	20
4. Background	
4.1. The notion of canonisation	22
4.2. Danish culture in a historical context	23
4.3. Reactions to social change in Europe	25
4.4. The Denmark Canon project	26
5. Analysis	
5.1. Identifying the narratives on collective identity	30
5.1.1. Definition of the categories	30
5.1.2. Presentation of the results	32
Securing a sense of national self	32
Securing a sense of state self	35
The biographical identity narrative	37
5.2. Elaborating the identified narratives	38
5.2.1. The biographical identity narrative as crisis management	39
5.2.2. The biographical identity narrative as common cultural denominator	42
6. Discussion	
6.1. Canonising culture: a retreat to safety or the basis of a positive outlook?	44

7. Conclusion	
7.1. The three narratives on collective identity	45
7.2. The context shaping the identity narratives.....	46
8. Bibliography	47

Appendix

1. Introduction

Globalisation is arguably one of the key factors in the revival of nationalism that we see in Europe today. This is noted by Stuart Hall who poses the question of what "...is so powerfully dislocating national cultural identities...?"¹ Globalisation, he argues, conveniently sums up the multifaceted processes and forces of change that have the potential to erode national identities. On the other hand, resistance to globalisation could also strengthen national and "...other "local" or particularistic identities."² The same can be said about Europeanisation as it appears that "...the propagation of a new European identity has been accompanied by the emergence or re-emergence of seemingly old, fragmented and unstable national and ethnic identities."³ According to recent research by Peter Duelund, the tendency towards nationalism is increasingly visible through national cultural policy-making where strong emphasis is placed on the politics of collective identity.⁴ Further, his research tentatively suggests that the renewed focus on nationalism manifests itself in various ways which overall reflects a primordial notion of national identity.⁵

By implication, such an approach to identity formation contradicts, if not even undermines, the European Union vision of a Europe for citizens, where individual and active citizenship is the pivot of a multicultural society that respects not only the constitutional rights of all its citizens, but also the individual citizens' cultural and social identities. The tendency is also at odds with the Council of Europe's (CoE) vision for Europe. Even though the CoE does not have any explicitly formulated policies on identity, it does, however, display a progressive approach to identity formation as evidenced by the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (the Faro Convention of 2005) and the European Manifesto for Multiple Cultural Affiliation (2007). In the preamble to the Faro Convention, the concept of cultural heritage is presented as non-static and negotiable, and emphasis is placed on the individual's right of engaging with the cultural heritage of their choice. Likewise, the ten articles of the Manifesto display a move towards cultural dynamism in the promotion of an idea of heritage and identity that transcends the singular.

In a Danish context, 2001 – present, the cultural policy agenda has been characterised by

¹ Stuart Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity," in *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies*, ed. Stuart Hall, David Held, Don Hubert & Kenneth Thompson, (Blackwell Publishing, 1996), 619.

² *Ibid.*, 619.

³ Rudolf de Cillia, Martin Reisigl & Ruth Wodak, "The Discourse Construction of National Identity," *Discourse & Society* 10, no. 2 (1999): 150.

⁴ Peter Duelund, "The Impact of New Nationalism and Identity Politics on Cultural Policy-Making in Europe and Beyond," in *Challenging Identities: European Horizons*, ed. Peter Madsen, (London & New York: Routledge, 2017), 212.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 218.

shifting conceptualisations of identity, heritage, citizenship and nationhood expressed by different governments. From 2001 to 2011 Venstre (the Liberal Party) and Konservative (the Conservative People's Party) along with Dansk Folkeparti (the Danish People's Party) as parliamentary support, formed a coalition government known as the VKO-government. Notwithstanding government reorganisations and cabinet reshuffles, the cultural policy unwaveringly focussed on a revival of the national dimension⁶, which resulted in the canonisation of Danish heritage through the introduction of five major canons in the period 2004 – 2009. After the general election in 2011 changes to the cultural policy was introduced as Socialdemokratiet (the Social Democratic Party), Radikale (the Social-Liberal Party) and Socialistisk Folkeparti (the Socialist People's Party) took over and presented a government platform that was "...based on a modern and non-primordial conception of nationhood, citizenship and democracy."⁷ The Venstre-government that came to power in 2015 (and which after the 2016 reshuffle now consists of Venstre, Konservative and Liberal Alliance (centre-right liberal party)) revived the previous VKO-government's nationally inclined cultural policy agenda by initiating work on the new Denmark Canon a few months after taking office.

The launch of the Denmark Canon, a list of ten values representing the most important intangible cultural heritage, was motivated by a wish to create awareness among all Danes of what "makes us who we are," as the headline of the English version reads. No doubt fuelled, at least in part, by the canon project, the 2016 Danish word of the year was "danskhed"⁸ or "Danishness" – a testament to the big role this elusive concept played in public and political debate throughout the year. Thus, the conclusion to chapter one of the Denmark section of the CoE's *Compendium on Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe* seems equally relevant now, roughly five years after it was published as "[t]he cultural discussion today is to a high degree [still] focusing on what constitutes "danishness", Danish cultural heritage and national identity as coherent narratives in a multicultural world."⁹

⁶ Peter Duelund, Bjarki Valtýsson & Lærke Bohlbro, "Denmark/ 4.1 Main cultural policy issues and priorities," *Compendium: Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe* – www.culturalpolicies.net, published 12 February 2013, accessed 30 January 2018, <http://www.culturalpolicies.net/web/denmark.php?aid=41&cid=1140&lid=en&curl=1>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Jan Dohrmann, "Danskhed er 'Årets Ord 2016'," *Danmarks Radio* – www.dr.dk, last modified 19 December 2016, accessed 30 January 2018, <https://www.dr.dk/om-dr/nyheder/danskhed-er-aarets-ord-2016>.

⁹ Duelund, Valtýsson & Bohlbro, "Denmark/ 1. Historical perspective: cultural policies and instruments," *Compendium: Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe* – www.culturalpolicies.net, published 12 February 2013, accessed 30 January 2018, <http://www.culturalpolicies.net/web/denmark.php>.

1.1. Problem and limitation

If indeed the cultural-policy-as-canons approach is considered indicative of a nationalist turn and there is, as a consequence, somewhat of a mismatch between Danish cultural politics and the cultural policy priorities pursued by the supranational and intergovernmental bodies of which Denmark is a member, then I find it important to explore the issue of canonisation. This will be done by looking into the most recent case in point – the Denmark Canon. An investigation into this project can shed light on how the complex processes and forces of change are being perceived, why they are being accommodated through this type of cultural policy-making and what consequences it might have for the viability of the European ideal of multiple identities and multiple cultural affiliation.

The study is inspired by the fact that the Danish academic community has shown little interest in the Denmark Canon project beyond the points of critique or the occasional argument in its defence voiced in the media.¹⁰ It is, however, my contention that the project deserves further attention because it appears as a political instrument intended to connect cultural heritage and identity politics, thus turning the Canon into a potential means to exercise power. As such, the assumption from which this investigation will evolve is that the Denmark Canon is an expression of identity policy conceived as cultural policy.

Accordingly, I am not concerned here with identifying what is Danish and what is not for the sake of reaching some objective truth. Neither is it the intention to critique the Denmark Canon per se, nor to try to place it within a narrow discourse of national cultural rearmament.¹¹ The media attention the Canon received during the period of development and immediately after its launch will not be discussed either. It could have been interesting to explore whether the media discourse placed the Canon within a familiar nationalist frame or if it on the other hand was encouraging a broader understanding of deeper political and societal issues. However, this lies beyond the scope of the present study.

¹⁰ See for instance articles by Böss, Munk-Petersen, Mynster and Reestorff.

¹¹ Benjamin Krasnik, "Kritik: Danmarks-kanon ligner national genoprustning," *Kristeligt Dagblad*, 19 March 2016.

1.2. Purpose and research question

This thesis attempts to address the canonisation of cultural heritage by exploring the ways in which it is employed in the construction of collective identity in the Denmark Canon. The aim is further to shed light on the underlying motifs of the resulting identity narratives and point to indicators of how they might contribute to or impede the shaping of an environment conducive to multiple cultural affiliation.

The following research question clarifies in one sentence the essence of what this thesis is concerned with by asking: which dominant narratives on collective identity can be identified in the Denmark Canon, and what might be inferred from these in terms of their latent socio-political motifs?

1.3. Structure of the thesis

Following this introduction, chapter two gives an overview of the selected empirical material and the methods used. Chapter three offers a thorough outline of the theoretical framework, where four pairs of key concepts used to inform my analysis are explained. The purpose of chapter four is to provide some background. Starting with a brief explanation of the notion of canonisation, I go on to explain the Danish historical context in light of which the relatively recent upsurge in the canonisation of culture should be seen. Then I present an overview of some of the current reactions to social change in Europe and finally, I give an account of the development process around the Denmark Canon project. This leads chapter five, dedicated to the investigation of the empirical material which is carried out through a hermeneutical approach. The first part of the analysis is aimed at identifying themes and strategies utilised in the construction of collective identity in the Denmark Canon. This provides the basis for a formulation of the dominant identity narratives. Thereby the frame is set for the second part of the analysis which is aimed at gaining insight into the fundamental ideas behind the narratives. This is done by contextualising them in terms of the social reality that shaped them and elaborating them in terms of the power dynamics in which they might be implicated. Lastly, in chapter six, I employ my results in a discussion of the consequences of the canonisation of cultural heritage for the active participation in an increasingly multicultural Denmark and Europe.

1.4. Previous research

The debate over the Denmark Canon started in late 2015 when the Ministry of Culture announced that the Minister wished to start a canon project. The material examined in this thesis was published shortly thereafter and in 2016. Several authors, among them Camilla Møhring Reestorff, Rune Lykkeberg and Bernard Eric Jensen, have touched upon the different Danish canons, but except for an MA thesis from 2017 by a graduate from Aalborg University, there has to the best of my knowledge not been published any scholarly work exploring the Denmark Canon in depth.

The thesis, titled *The Denmark Canon in a Tourism Perspective*, purely examines the Canon from a tourism and marketing point of view. It is assumed that the ten values presented in the Canon are synonymous with Danish culture and based on this, the author investigates if and how the Canon can be used in a tourism marketing context as a tool to promote Denmark as a vacation destination to the markets of Norway and China.¹² The study found that in a Chinese context, the values presented in the Canon would be of little use to destination marketing organisations as Chinese consumers have limited knowledge of Denmark. Consequently, they would respond better to either specific information on what to experience during a stay, or information tied to a particular kind of fairy-tale discourse, for instance related to H.C. Andersen.¹³ What can be inferred from this is that intercultural exchange clearly has been limited. Interestingly, it emerges that the utilisation of the Canon in a Norwegian context is limited as well, however for another reason. It is concluded that it is of minimal interest in relation to marketing activities because the Norwegians, to more or less the same degree, know, accept and subscribe to the Canon values as their own. The author advises that emphasising similarities in the cultural background could be of more use because the common frame of reference, it is argued, is what attracts the Norwegians.¹⁴

From the perspective of my own study, the revelation that what is supposedly Danish also appears to be Norwegian is quite remarkable, as we see here a hint of cultural interconnectedness which in this case is probably due to the two countries' shared history and proximity. Nevertheless, it highlights a cultural flexibility where exchanges and intermingling seem to be constitutive factors, thus suggesting that a monopolisation of certain cultural characteristics is not practically possible. This finding is obviously something that I must take into consideration, but it is not going to be defining for my outlook.

¹² Ditte Marie Ninn Jensen, "The Denmark Canon in a Tourism Perspective" (Master's thesis, Aalborg University, 2017), 5.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 66, 72.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 64, 72.

1.5. Research paradigm

Lincoln, Lynham and Guba argue that what characterises a research paradigm is its ontology, epistemology and methodology.¹⁵ A research paradigm, then, is a complex of basic ideas guiding the researcher's outlook and actions. As such, stating the underlying logic of research in terms of ontological, epistemological and methodological considerations at the outset is important, because it highlights the researcher's standpoint and serves to orient the reader. The paradigmatic stance in this thesis is social constructionism.

Ontologically, the position subscribed to is relativism. It implies that the way we understand our social world and related phenomena, as well as the categories and concepts we use are constructed through social processes and interaction. Thus, reality is believed to be relative and in a permanent state of flux because knowledge is indeterminate due to the lack of an external objective truth that can be observed and described in definitive terms.¹⁶ Of course this suggests that carrying out research entails the imposition of the researcher's own definition and account of the world on the topic under investigation. Hence, as author of this thesis, this means that I must be aware of my own preconceptions and reflect upon them.

The definition of culture used in this thesis is informed by Alan Bryman's argument drawn from the works of sociologist Howard S. Becker which states that culture can be seen as "...an emergent reality in a continuous state of construction and reconstruction."¹⁷ Even so, it is further argued that culture "...acts as a point of reference but is always in the process of being formed."¹⁸ The relativist position, then, is limited because culture has an observable and defined reality that antedates the present moment. Despite the pre-existence of culture, however, participation in its further construction and reconstruction is not constrained. Culture simply acts as a referent to previous constructs which can be recast to fit a new situation depending on what might be different.

In terms of epistemology, a subjectivist position is adhered to. This of course reflects the ontology and contrary to being objective, taking a subjectivist, interpretative stance means that the researcher plays an active part in the construction of understandings in order to grasp the social reality. Bryman elaborates on this when stating that human action is meaningful and therefore the

¹⁵ Yvonna S. Lincoln, Susan A. Lynham & Egon G. Guba, "Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences, Revisited," in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K. Denzin & Yvonna S. Lincoln, (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc., 2011), 98.

¹⁶ Alan Bryman, "Social research strategies," in *Social Research Methods*, (Oxford University Press, 2004), 17.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

goal should be to "...interpret [human beings'] actions and their social world from *their point of view* (my emphasis)."¹⁹ Yet it is paramount to the validity of the research that the implications of the ontological position for the applied epistemology is acknowledged. Thus, interpretation can only take place with reference to the researcher's own scientific frame, i.e. the theoretical framework, modes of data collection and methods of analysis, all of which will reflect the pre-understandings and prior knowledge of the researcher. Consequently, the empirical material collected for this thesis will consist of others' interpretations of the social world and I will attempt to provide an interpretation of these based on my scientific frame which is influenced by my pre-understandings of the phenomena, categories and concepts deemed relevant for the investigation of the topic. All of this will be outlined further in chapter two on the sources and methods and in chapter three on the theoretical framework.

The applied methodology, here understood as the general research strategy, will be recursive and reflexive, hence the hermeneutical approach mentioned in section 1.3. Hermeneutics assumes that the meaning a text is capable of conveying results from the whole of which it is a part. Likewise, the constituent parts contribute meaning to the whole.²⁰ Thus, to elicit meaning, the researcher must be sensitive not only to the object of inquiry, but also to the context which made its production possible. This requires a repeated movement back and forth between analysis and interpretation of the parts and the whole as illustrated by the hermeneutical cycle. When working with texts this entails going over the material multiple times, for instance scrutinising the language, looking into the sender, the receiver and their relationship, as well as the specific circumstance of communication and its relation to the larger context. Hans-Georg Gadamer adds to the cycle by emphasising that understanding is a process that directly involves the one seeking to understand.²¹ The hermeneutical cycle thus posits that subject and object cannot be separated. The pre-understandings of the researcher are the basis for a dialogue with the text from which new understanding emerges. This progressive development is central to the study and the hermeneutical process is applied throughout.

¹⁹ Ibid., 14.

²⁰ Lars Bo Henriksen, "4. Tre forsøg på løsning af skepticisms problem," in *Kvalitet i kvalitativ samfundsvidenskab – en historie om filosofisk hermeneutik og kvalitative metoder i samfundsvidenskabene*, (Aalborg Universitetsforlag, 2003. E-book, 2015), 10.

²¹ Henriksen, "5. Sandhed og metode – Om filosofisk hermeneutik," 3.

2. Sources and Methods

In this chapter the empirical material is presented and its purpose for the thesis is clarified. The selected data analysis methods are explained, along with their relevance and suitability for this case. Lastly, the limits of using an exclusively qualitative research approach is addressed in terms of specific drawbacks and potential points of critique.

2.1. Empirical material

The empirical material for this thesis consists of documents obtained from the Danish Ministry of Culture through my request for subject access to the case files on the development- and decision-making process regarding the content of the Denmark Canon. The request for files covering the period from the start-up phase in late 2015/early 2016 to the launch of the Canon in December 2016 was partly met, and access was given to six cases. Altogether the six cases comprised 261 case files, of which I was granted full access to 94 and partly access to 3. With reference to Offentlighedsloven (the Public Records Act) of 2014, 46 files were readily given access to and I was granted additional access to the 51 otherwise restricted internal files. After a thorough read-through of all the material, which consists of recommendations for decisions, emails, briefs, notes etc., four documents have been chosen as the primary items to be analysed. These four documents include the finished version of the Denmark Canon, an interview with the former Minister for Culture Bertel Haarder featured on the website of national newspaper Jyllands-Posten, a conversation between Haarder and the Danish author Jens Christian Grøndahl in the online version of the national newspaper Politiken and a speech made by Bertel Haarder at a seminar. Where it is deemed relevant, I will refer to other case files. These will not be subject to analysis but only serve to illuminate special circumstances, for instance relevant aspects of the development process.

The ten-page Denmark Canon, publicly available online, is being studied here because it is the manifest output of a development process initiated by the Ministry of Culture and thus it is assumed to reflect the official political line on the role of culture for society. In relation to the problem, as well as the research question, the Denmark Canon is interesting to examine because its contents and language can reveal how certain societal changes are sought accommodated through cultural policy. Also, the way changes are met could indicate something about how they were perceived in the first place. The Canon will be outlined further in section 4.3., providing background on the development process.

The two articles from *Jyllands-Posten* and *Politiken*, both publicly available through subscription, was sent to a group of eleven central opinion formers within culture as part of an invitation to a meeting in the Ministry of Culture in February 2016. The purpose of this meeting was to test the waters regarding the Minister's thoughts about the development of a canon and to establish the basis for a discussion of potential content and themes at the following idea seminar. The articles were included in the invitation in order for the participants to gain insight into the Minister's thoughts behind the project. They are interesting for this study because the Minister, Bertel Haarder, and his department specifically chose these two articles to represent the ideas behind initiating the project and the fundamental aims to be achieved by canonising intangible cultural heritage. Therefore, it is assumed that the articles present authentic information reflecting not only the disposition of the Minister and by extension the Ministry, but also the context within which the Canon was developed. Furthermore, the interview and the conversation complement each other. The interview in *Jyllands-Posten* solely focuses on Bertel Haarder's view of things, whereas in *Politiken*, Haarder is in conversation with someone else which brings out different nuances to his arguments.

The speech by Bertel Haarder was given at the so-called idea seminar on the Denmark Canon. The closed event, held roughly a month after the abovementioned meeting, was attended by thirty specially invited opinion formers from diverse branches of Danish cultural life. The purpose of the seminar was to discuss and formulate an overarching framework for the development process and the collection of citizen generated content for the Canon. By including this speech, also made in the start-up phase of the development process, the point is again to explore the ideas and opinions that were decisive in forming the context in which the Canon was conceived – a context that potentially could have affected both the subsequent development process, as well as the outcome of the vote for which values to include.

The advantage of this empirical material is that it allows for an investigation of the concrete use of cultural heritage in shaping identity, as well as the background that motivated this political move. In turn, the disadvantage is of course that this approach only takes into account the ten values that made it into the final Denmark Canon. The specifics of the 2425 suggestions for content to include proposed by citizens are disregarded and the work of the six curators condensing the suggestions will only be touched upon briefly. Moreover, the context framing the Canon is analysed with reference to just three items, two of which are articles and thus related to a larger media agenda. Even though these will be related to a wider context, this could be considered a significant limit.

2.2. Qualitative content analysis

In the words of Udo Kuckartz qualitative content analysis “...presents an interpretive form of analysis in which the codings are completed based on interpretation, classification and analysis.”²² In addition, qualitative text analysis, which is a conceptualisation of qualitative content analysis, places great emphasis on understanding and interpretation in the examination of a text.²³ In relation to the paradigmatic position, this fits well with this study because it implies acknowledgement of the researcher in her capacity as a subject progressively constructing meaning through interpretation. Also, it allows for a hermeneutical approach to the empirical material, as working through a text is considered an iterative process. Despite the fact that focus is on breaking the material up and classifying it, the examined texts can be consulted and referred to in their entirety throughout the coding process and the subsequent analysis. This opens for the possibility of going back and forth in the material, for instance when creating categories, and in the actual coding process, i.e. the assigning of categories to text segments.

Category development is a key concept because it is through this process that we “...perceive the world around us and organize what we perceive.”²⁴ In this thesis, a process of alternately reading and interpreting the Denmark Canon will make it possible to identify recurrent themes associated with the construction and defence of collective identity which, in turn, will provide the basis for defining appropriate categories. A relatively high level of abstraction is sought for the formulations of most of the categories, as the intention is to gain insight into which themes and strategies are present in the material.

The specific type of analysis termed *thematic qualitative text analysis* used here, focus on the classification of text segments into thematic categories. Initially the categories are created based on prior knowledge and guided by the research question. Subsequently the categories are elaborated through careful initial readings and interpretations of the Denmark Canon – a process that can be referred to as inductive category construction. This leads to the first coding process where the descriptions of the values are read again, and segments categorised. If needed, additional categories are created or existing categories rearranged and the process of reading, interpreting and assigning categories are begun again. This is the epitome of the hermeneutical cycle.

The coding process is conducted using MAXQDA software. This offers an opportunity for fast

²² Udo Kuckartz, *Qualitative Text Analysis: A Guide to Methods, Practice & Using Software*, (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2014), 33-34.

²³ *Ibid.*, 33.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 38.

assignment of categories and the possibility of achieving a relatively simple, yet comprehensive overview of the data. The summary grid and segment retrieval functions make it easy to summarise the text pertaining to each value and each category. This grounds the analysis firmly in the empirical material, thus limiting the probability of losing sight of the context. Reviewing these summaries allows for the grouping of the strategies and themes under "...broader or more abstract, over-arching categories"²⁵ – in this case narratives on collective identity.

2.3. Discourse analysis

Writing on discourse analysis Bryman refers to Michel Foucault for whom discourse denotes "...the way in which a set of linguistic categories relating to an object and the ways of depicting it frame the way we comprehend that object."²⁶ Nelson Phillips and Cynthia Hardy are somewhat more detailed in their definition of discourse as "...an interrelated set of texts, and the practices of their production, dissemination, and reception, that brings an object into being."²⁷ Both quotes imply that discourse "makes up" a version of a given object and that this particular version in turn is what comes to constitute that object. If this is accepted, it appears that discourse can be thought of as a resource that can be employed to achieve certain outcomes in social interactions. Thus, it holds immense potential for both empowering and disempowering people. Phillips and Hardy further highlight the importance of discourse by stating that "[w]ithout discourse, there is no social reality, and without understanding discourse, we cannot understand our reality, our experiences, or ourselves."²⁸

Discourse analysis, then, echoes the fundamental characteristics of the social constructionist research paradigm by emphasising the interdependence of social reality and discourse and their mutually constructed nature. The focus on language as constitutive of discourse, too, makes the method suitable for this thesis. As examples of material manifestations of discourse, all the documents examined here play a profound role because they contribute to the constitution of one smaller aspect of the social reality. In the endeavour to explore these documents, two distinct types of discourse analysis will be used: *social linguistic analysis* and *critical discourse analysis*.

Social linguistic analysis is useful because the focus of this method is on text and it is especially

²⁵ Ibid., 67.

²⁶ Bryman, "Language in qualitative research," 370.

²⁷ Nelson Phillips & Cynthia Hardy, "What is Discourse Analysis?," in *Discourse Analysis: Investigating Processes of Social Construction*, (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc., 2002), 3.

²⁸ Ibid., 2.

concerned with how language is employed in discourse to create a particular view of reality. Thus, it can aid in reaching an understanding of how a social phenomenon such as collective identity is produced by specific discursive actions. The method will be used in conjunction with the thematic qualitative text analysis, to gain a deeper understanding of how the Denmark Canon works to organise and construct collective identity through its presentation of intangible cultural heritage. Additionally, undertaking a close reading of the individual descriptions of the values will make it possible to recognise discursive actions, for example the use of rhetorical devices or other linguistic tactics. This will add detail to the text analysis and provide an even stronger basis for categorising text segments, and accordingly identify the dominant narratives on collective identity.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA), on the other hand, is an approach that focuses more on context rather than text. Phillips and Hardy explains that CDA is concerned with the distal context which means that among other things, focus is on the institutions where discourse occurs and the regional and cultural setting. They further state that the critical approach is concerned with "...the dynamics of power, knowledge and ideology that surround discursive processes"²⁹ and, with reference to Norman Fairclough, that these discursive processes in turn "...structures the social space within which actors act..."³⁰ It appears, then, that discourse and context mutually affect each other. CDA is therefore a suitable method because it can be used here to reveal how discourses found in the interview, conversation and speech help to construct and structure the specific context within which the Denmark Canon was developed. This context, consequently, must have influenced the discursive activity involved in the creation of the Canon, and this should be traceable in the text. CDA will be used to elicit meaning from the three texts in order to contextualise and elaborate the previously identified narratives on collective identity in terms of the reality that shaped them and the dynamics of power they might be involved in. In contrast to the other methods concerned with finding out how Danish collective identity is constructed, applying CDA in this thesis provides an opportunity to answer why.

²⁹ Phillips & Hardy, "The Variety of Discourse Analysis," 20.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.

2.4. Implications and limitations

The research approach in this thesis is constructionist, interpretivist and inductive. While the goal is to produce a fine-grained analysis offering in-depth understanding of the issue under investigation, the qualitative approach also makes the study vulnerable to the possible levelling of criticism.

One such critique point, and possibly the most obvious one, is that the study is too subjective. For one, the investigation relies heavily on the detailed interpretation of words and descriptions to identify relevant themes. Second, there is the requirement for interpretive action on part of the researcher in rendering the themes, the resulting narratives on collective identity and their underlying motifs understandable and credible to the reader. Interpretive understanding undoubtedly carries risks of misunderstanding, however, charges of outright unreliability due to researcher bias or idiosyncrasies should be made with reference to the paradigmatic position. Any criticism of this kind should take into account the impossibility of the researcher in ridding herself of pre-understandings and removing herself completely from the research subject, as they are both constitutive elements of the social reality. This is not to say that the research paradigm should be seen as offering an option for limitlessly stating personal opinions and prejudice. Rather, such subjective derailment is acknowledged as a potential pitfall. To the degree possible, the criticism is accommodated by carefully explaining why attention is focused on certain areas and not others. Especially section 5.1. dedicated to identifying the identity narratives addresses this issue through the explicit definition of the categories.

This study does not promise to deliver on aspects such as transparency and replicability, yet those potential points of critique need to be mentioned because they feed into the “too subjective” claim and is more directly related to the specific methods chosen. In terms of transparency, the methods do not offer any inherent mechanisms by which it is possible for the reader to establish how analysis is conducted and conclusions arrived at. The reliance on interpretation could therefore negatively affect the level of transparency that can be attained. This is a very legitimate criticism and the use of tables in presenting the definitions of the categories as well as the results, will aid in the endeavour to make the process of analysis at least somewhat transparent. Further, the qualitative nature of the methods constrict the study in that they leave no opportunity for reducing interpretative complexity to the point where a systematic, standard procedure can be followed to gain the exact same results. Thus, replication is clearly difficult because no two researchers will share precisely the same conceptions of what is significant. Their interpretations of certain phenomena will most likely differ, too, and therefore different results are almost inevitable. If these

facts are appreciated, then the issue of replicability will have no bearing on the reader's approach to this thesis.

Lastly, the scope of the study could be considered a drawback as well. Attention is directed towards circumstances pertaining to just a single case and only few actors are included. Moreover, it is concerned with eliciting meaning from texts located in a specific setting and time which calls for a contextual understanding. As such, the thesis centres upon a "micro" aspect of social reality. This makes it difficult to say anything definite about the use of cultural heritage, the construction of collective identity or the stance on multiple cultural affiliation in Danish cultural policy in general. One case is not representative of all; however, I would argue that probing beneath the surface of one aspect of Danish cultural policy can reveal certain characteristics that "...can be seen to be instances of a broader set of recognizable features..."³¹ In this case, these features were found in the theoretical literature used. Drawing on such findings by other researchers provides an option for making generalisations, albeit more tentative ones, even from a single case.

³¹ Malcolm Williams, "Interpretivism and Generalisations," *Sociology* 34, no. 2 (2000): 215.

3. Theoretical Framework

Chapter three introduces the theoretical underpinnings of this thesis. Theories and concepts deemed relevant for the analysis are explained in pairs to stress their interconnectedness. The progression of the chapter also makes apparent the link between all the concepts under discussion.

3.1. Identity and belonging

If we accept that identity is not innate, then the sociological conception of the subject as being formed by interactions between the self and its surroundings provide a plausible account for how identity is constructed. The subject is not self-sufficient but relies on relations to “significant others” who mediate to him/her “...the values, meanings, and symbols – the culture – of the worlds he/she inhabit[s].”³² Despite having obvious features that distinguishes “me” from “you,” the individual is continuously formed and modified in a perpetual interaction with the cultural worlds external to him/her and the identities these worlds offer. Stuart Hall further remarks that “...we project “ourselves” into these cultural identities, [while] at the same time internalizing their meaning and values, making them “part of us,” helps to align our subjective feelings with the objective places we occupy in the social and cultural world.”³³ This intertwinement of identity and structure firmly places the individual within the multiple worlds they inhabit which consequently creates a mutual sense of stability and unity.

The process Stuart Hall outlines can be linked to what Ireneusz Pawel Karolewski refers to as collective self-categorisation. Among other things, this term implies a process by which an individual, in perceiving themselves a group member, effectively reduces social complexity, which in turn decreases social uncertainty.³⁴ By being located within group processes, the individual is recognised via social relationships that allow for the formation of personal identity defined by identification with the group. In turn, group structures are sustained through the participation of the group members. In other words, individual characteristics and the characteristics of the group to which one belongs are reciprocally assimilated and thus constitutive of each other. Personal and collective identity are thus connected, the result of which is usually a profound sense of belonging.

Both Hall and Karolewski point out the existence of multiple groups to which an individual

³² Hall, 597.

³³ *Ibid.*, 598.

³⁴ Ireneusz Pawel Karolewski, “Collective identity and its functions,” in *Citizenship and Collective Identity in Europe*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 24.

potentially could belong. Montserrat Guibernau elaborates by arguing that “[t]hroughout their lives, individuals tend to belong to more than one group, each of which is expected to play a significant role and fulfil a distinct individual necessity.”³⁵ It follows that traits pertaining to the various collective identities can be invoked by a person to a greater or lesser extent depending on what is necessary in any given context. Further, membership of a group can be either self-imposed or imposed by others. An individual can choose to belong to a group, in which case belonging becomes an act of free will underpinned by personal commitment. In contrast such personal commitment is absent from assigned forms of membership, where belonging entails an expectation that the individual simply conforms. Guibernau reassures that modern individuals usually enjoy the freedom to choose, however, “...not among all existing groups or communities since many of them set up specific conditions for membership.”³⁶ This suggests that besides belonging, exclusion, and thereby denial of access to a specific collective identity associated with a particular group or community, also plays a part in the construction of individual identity, both for those on the inside and those outside. Upon being either recognised as part of the group or turned down an individual will feel the acute distinction between members and non-members. “...[C]ontinuity of a group is contingent on its ability to maintain [this] boundary,”³⁷ something that is often achieved through symbolic representations of the group’s distinct way of life. This serves to highlight “sameness” while, in effect, highlighting “otherness.”

The modern nation-state is perhaps one of the most prominent examples of a community engaging in such symbolic representation. The duality of the nation-state brings together two forms of membership, offering citizens both a place within the national culture and within the political community. The national identity generally attributed citizens of a nation-state represents the merging of these memberships, the goal of which is “...to make culture and polity congruent...”³⁸ To ensure this and to overcome internal difference, nation-states seek to strengthen the collective sentiment of belonging. By producing and perpetuating meanings about “our way of life” via symbols and symbolic action with which citizens can identify, the reality of difference is sought transformed into apparent unity. As such, national identity can be thought of as a discursive device used to establish the nation-state as an imagined community in the minds of the people.

³⁵ Montserrat Guibernau, *Belonging: Solidarity and Division in Modern Societies*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), 28.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 30.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 36.

³⁸ Ernest Gellner, “The Transition to an Age of Nationalism,” in *Nations and Nationalism*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 43.

3.2. Cultural heritage and collective memory

If indeed national identity emerges from efforts by the nation-state to make culture and polity correspond, it becomes apparent that this type of collective identity, too, is a social construct. Cultural heritage can be understood as the official, national heritage consisting of the tangible and intangible attributes, circumstances, artefacts etc. handed down from precursors. In this regard it is important, because it serves as a repository of potential collective memories waiting to be activated in the pursuit of “building” a single national identity. Heritage, by default, also denotes property which in turn leads to thoughts of ownership. Guibernau states that the “...*image* of the ‘nation’ [is] often based upon the dominant nation or ethnic group living within the state’s boundaries...”³⁹ This suggests that ownership of cultural heritage is ascribed to the majority. It further indicates that heritage is implicated in power structures which could lead to benefits for some and disadvantages for others. Indeed, Peter Howard, noting that heritage is often perceived as nationalistic, exclusive, sexist, elitist and backward-looking, calls it a dangerous concept because when it can be used “...to produce group pride or identity, or to subjugate or exclude someone...”⁴⁰ people will always do so.

Also speaking of heritage, David Lowenthal notes that “[w]hat we inherit is integral to our being. Without memory and tradition, we could neither function now nor plan ahead...heritage distils the past into icons of identity...”⁴¹ Thus conceived, it appears that cultural heritage not only holds “our” distinct legacy, it also serves as a means of orientation in time. In noting the “icons of identity,” Lowenthal implicitly lets us know that heritage, through symbolic representation, must be discernible to the extent that people over time accepts it and feels connected to each other through shared characteristics. In this way they will be conscious of forming an imagined community – a nation-state distinct from others in culture and polity where citizens do not know all of their fellow-citizens but nonetheless feel connected. When this consciousness is first established it remains somewhat constant as Guibernau notices. However, the elements upon which it rests may vary.

Ernest Renan is in line with the above when he speaks against the notion that national identity should be a naturally occurring and static phenomenon. On the contrary, he suggests that the elements upon which it rests – for him this includes the shared glories and sufferings of the past, the perpetuation of heritage and the present-day consent and desire to live together – are in a flux, being

³⁹ Guibernau, “What is National Identity?,” in *The Identity of Nations*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 25.

⁴⁰ Peter Howard, “What is Heritage,” in *Heritage: Management, Interpretation, Identity*, (London and New York: Continuum, 2003), 4-5.

⁴¹ David Lowenthal, “Identity, Heritage and History,” in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, ed. John R. Gillis, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 43.

continually produced and reproduced through narratives responding to the changing needs of time. Such a conception of national identity calls for a view of the past as a common basis for a future together. However, it also shows heritage to be malleable and open to processes of remembering and forgetting to such a degree that images of the past sometimes are invented.

According to Maurice Halbwachs collective memory "...retains from the past only what still lives or is capable of living in the consciousness of the groups keeping the memory alive."⁴² As such, it appears that people and their motivations play a vital role in the definition of what constitutes heritage. If people do not identify with a certain aspect of the past at a given moment in time, then the memory of it is simply not activated because there is no will to recognise it as heritage. Nevertheless, it is still part of the repository and can, therefore, be evoked later if needed. In relation to this, Benedict Anderson remarks that "...[a]ll profound changes in consciousness, by their very nature, bring with them characteristic amnesias. Out of such oblivions, in specific historical circumstances, spring narratives."⁴³ Thus, commemorative or mnemonic tools, for example a canon, not only assimilate specific instances of episodic memory, real or invented, into narratives organised in a sequence of events corresponding to the past, present and future of the community. A very significant feature is that some things are left out in the effort to avoid disruptions to the continuity. Following this line of thought Pierre Nora contends that due to the affective nature of memory, it "...only accommodates those facts that suit it..."⁴⁴ This offers an explanation for the so-called amnesias, but it also exposes the fact that memory is vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation – a vulnerability that arguably makes it a potential tool for anyone wishing to overcome the burden of historical facts.

3.3. Loyalty and civil religion

Loyalty, so far as it is an outcome of free will, can be considered an attitude springing from the personal commitment to and identification with a cause, an ideology, another person, a group or community.⁴⁵ When related to groups or communities, it can be seen as an integral part of the choice to belong. In this way loyalty is also implicated in identity formation because it is an element

⁴² Maurice Halbwachs, "The Collective Memory," in *The Collective Memory Reader*, eds. Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi & Daniel Levy, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 142-143.

⁴³ Benedict Anderson, "The Biography of Nations," in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, 2006), 204.

⁴⁴ Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations*, no. 26 (1989): 8.

⁴⁵ Guibernau, *Belonging: Solidarity and Division in Modern Societies*, 121.

that contributes to an individual's self-definition. Furthermore, it becomes a mental point of reference in terms of interpreting the world and relating to others. Writing on the nation Renan implicitly elaborates by stating that it "...is a large-scale solidarity, constituted by the feeling of sacrifice that one has made in the past and of those that one is prepared to make in the future."⁴⁶ A large-scale solidarity implies that when loyalty is a choice it is founded upon a deep-seated emotional attachment to the imagined community felt by every member. This emotional dimension along with the preparedness suggests that loyalty manifests itself in specific actions showing an individual ready to place the interests of the community above own aspirations. Moreover, speaking of both past and future point towards long-term commitment demanding faithfulness and devotion.

Loyalty is paramount to the survival of national cultures and polities. The commemorative practices and symbols of belonging, unwritten rules and social routines inspired by collective amnesia as well as memory of a shared past and common heritage, define a comprehensive cultural framework providing means of identification and a way for shared loyalties to be maintained. It can be argued that acceptance of- and confidence in the framework essentially constitutes what Jean-Jacques Rousseau has termed civil religion. Contrary to traditional denominational religion this concept encompasses the idea of the belief in the unique character of a given nation and not some deity. The function of civil religion is to serve as the social cement that transcends cultural, religious, ethnic and political divides within society. In this sense civil religion is powerful because it acquires a character of moral authority which upholds the loyalty. However, as we have seen, national identity denotes a cultural and political form of belonging and this makes it biased. Thus, it appears that civil religion also holds power to justify potential subjugation or exclusion of individuals or groups within the citizenry whose moral rules do not correspond to those of the majority.

Guibernau takes note when claiming that "[o]ne of the greatest challenges innate to the construction of a shared identity concerns the degree of internal freedom and diversity to be tolerated within the group."⁴⁷ On the one hand, the nation-state demands loyalty in return for conferring certain rights upon its citizens, i.e. there is a demand for homogeneity present. On the other hand, there might as well be a demand for recognition of difference on the part of minority groups, i.e. there is a demand for the acceptance of heterogeneity present, too. If the perceived equilibrium between rewards and constraints of belonging is believed to be skewed, so that

⁴⁶ Renan, 83.

⁴⁷ Guibernau, 44.

limitations on personal freedom by far outweigh the benefits of membership, individuals may want to seek out new attachments and other sources of collective identity better capable, in theory at least, of satisfying their needs. Inevitably this leads to a decline in loyalty, something that will often be met with distrust as “[l]oyalty is closely connected to trust; only those loyal can be trusted.”⁴⁸

3.4. Ontological security and cultural trauma

To Anthony Giddens trust is important in relation to ontological security because it is like an emotional inoculation against existential anxiety, “...a protection against future threats and dangers which allows the individual to sustain hope and courage in the face of whatever debilitating circumstances she or he might later confront.”⁴⁹ Conceptualised like this and in keeping with the above concepts, ontological security can be thought of as a security and confidence of being derived from an individual’s perception of having a consistent self which is recognised and affirmed by others whom are trusted because of mutual group affiliation. This brings about a sense of safety that reduces the risk of anxiety. Accordingly, identity can function as a mechanism that contains anxiety or insecurity by strengthening the sense of trust, predictability and control.⁵⁰

Applied to the nation-state, ontological security can be considered a type of security-seeking that is pursued with the aim of establishing ontologically who and what the nation-state is or wishes to be with regards to its place within the international community and its internal identity.⁵¹ As with individuals, the nation-state must develop the feeling of a consistent self that provides security of being and ensures an acceptable level of certainty, predictability and order for society. According to Innes and Steele providing meaning for past, current and future actions are vital components in attempts at securing a sense of self. They further argue that “[t]his is accomplished through the discursive articulation of a(n) (auto)biographical identity narrative...”⁵² As a way of seeking out ontological security, narrating identity via the discursive articulation of collective memories provides the nation-state with a biographical continuity that allows for it to conceive of itself as a

⁴⁸ Ibid., 128.

⁴⁹ Anthony Giddens, “The Self: Ontological Security and Existential Anxiety,” in *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 39.

⁵⁰ Catarina Kinnvall, “Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security,” *Political Psychology* 25, no. 5 (2004): 746.

⁵¹ Alexandria J. Innes & Brent J. Steele, “Memory, trauma and ontological security,” in *Memory and Trauma in International Relations: Theories, cases and debates*, eds. Erica Resende & Dovile Budryte, (London & New York: Routledge, 2014), 15-17.

⁵² Ibid., 17.

coherent entity. This perceived cohesiveness reduces unpredictability and feelings of chaos. It follows that if a situation is perceived as community- and identity disrupting or at least having the potential to rupture the previously established sense of a lasting, stable self, that identity and the narratives in which it is embedded are called into question. Such a threat brings with it uncertainty and unpredictability which produces ontological insecurity. A radical form of that type of insecurity is represented by the so-called cultural trauma.

Defining cultural trauma Jeffrey C. Alexander argues that it is the collective feeling of having been subjected to a terrible event. Moreover, for an event or situation to be labelled a cultural trauma the impact of it must be of such severity that the members of a group or community experiences a radical blow to their collective consciousness that irrevocably affects shared memories and identity.⁵³ In addition Innes and Steele further contend that “[t]rauma occurs when something cannot be easily located into [the] collective memory.”⁵⁴ As such, it can be argued that a cultural trauma occurs when the biographical narrative is destabilised by a situation upsetting the social and cultural foundation upon which it rests, through introducing new circumstances that make members feel an acute discomfort to the point where they no longer believe in core assumptions about the collective self. This gives rise to an environment in which “...the biographical narrative can either be contested or reinstalled through narration, which is a political act [that aims]...to bolster national identity and recreate ontological security.”⁵⁵

Alexander further explains that a “...trauma is not something naturally existing; it is something constructed by society.”⁵⁶ Thus, a situation does not in itself constitute a trauma. Rather so-called carrier groups, typically people having a stake in promoting certain representations, try to construct traumas by mediating a situation or memory as such. This is done by creating a trauma narrative stating the nature of the threat, the nature of the victim, establishing a relevance of the trauma beyond those immediately impacted and attributing responsibility. Therefore, a cultural trauma is not the outcome of an actual experience. Arguably then, the ontological insecurity caused by the mediation of a situation as disrupting the biographical narrative could create a seemingly legitimate space for the political act of reaffirming that same narrative, thus solidifying the collective identity.

⁵³ Jeffrey C. Alexander, “Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma,” in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, eds. Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernhard Giesen, Niel J. Smelser & Piotr Sztompka, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 1.

⁵⁴ Innes & Steele, 19.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁵⁶ Alexander, 2.

4. Background

This chapter provides some background establishing the context within which the analysis is placed. The four sections are respectively concerned with the notion of canonisation, the historical context in light of which the recent trend of canonising Danish culture should be seen, contemporary reactions to social change in Europe and the development process around the Denmark Canon.

4.1. The notion of canonisation

In relation to religion canonisation refers to the elevation of someone to the status of a saint. In general, canonisation is a process by which something is elevated to a rule, principle or standard. This suggests that canon formation can serve hierarchical and stratification purposes as something is deemed better or worthier than something else. In the Random House English-English dictionary one of the listed definitions under the entry "Canon" states that it is "a body of rules, principles, or standards accepted as axiomatic and universally binding." This is especially known from religion, for instance Christianity, where the so-called biblical canon or canon of scripture has been decisive for the interpretation and use of the religious message. Bernard Eric Jensen notes that in addition to the strictly religious dimension, the introduction of a literary canon was an important step because it became a resource serving functions related to identity politics.⁵⁷ Indeed, identity politics is a concern for Erling Bjurström. He argues that in contemporary efforts to democratise canons, focus has shifted from cultivation of people to the standards of so-called high culture to identity politics concerned with the representation of social identities, i.e. who constructed the canon and who are represented by it.⁵⁸ Canonisation thus appear to rely on conscious intent on the part of those creating the canons, as well as the symbolic way in which these social identities are depicted. Yet, conscious intent suggests a lack of spontaneity, something which to Bjurström is paramount to canon formation. He states that "[c]ontrary to what seems to comprise proper canon formation, the explicit and politically motivated construction of a canon becomes, in brief, too visible, too transparent and too much of a claim for or critique of power."⁵⁹ This suggests that for a canon to be accepted its creation should not be overt, not even if the intention behind is wholly democratic.

Referring to what he terms "alternative canons," Bjurström further states the these are politically

⁵⁷ Bernard Eric Jensen, "Forvaltning af kulturarv – en demokratisk udfordring," in *Heritage is Commoning*, eds. Albert Scherfig, Daniel Madsen & K-O-N-T-O, (Forlaget Nemo, K-O-N-T-O and Astrid Noacks Atelier, 2015), 77.

⁵⁸ Erling Bjurström, "Whose Canon? Culturalization versus Democratization," *Culture Unbound* 4 (2012): 268.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 272.

motivated alternatives to more established or proper canons. Such a canon is concerned with raising the self-esteem and cultural consciousness of a specific group and as such it confines itself to representing one particular social identity. This way the canon closes itself "...to the trans-cultural influences, in a way that contradicts the transgressive, syncretic or hybrid character of much contemporary culture and art."⁶⁰ This is suggestive of a degree and type of differentiation which could foster notions of "our" culture and "their" culture. Speaking of rational systems allocating persons to differentiated slots on the grounds of increased efficiency, Edward A. Tiryakian notes that this will result in a situation where "...unit members at lower echelons will have less identification with and commitment to the goals of the system and greater passivity and apathy may ensue, even if the system's officials resort to Platonic myths and rituals."⁶¹ When applied to the nation-state as a rational system, the differentiation implied in politically motivated canon formation could prove counterproductive to societal cohesion because negotiation of individual member's identity and culture, by definition, is denied. Both Bjurström and Tiryakian emphasises dedifferentiation as a solution that could counteract the outcomes of differentiation. For Tiryakian this includes a dedifferentiation of social roles and social space that embraces notions of freedom and individuality. For Bjurström the dedifferentiation involved in the canonisation of popular culture can be seen as a counter process that has the potential to break with the notion of cultural hegemony associated with the identity politics of the current politically motivated canon formation.

4.2. Danish culture in a historical context

One of the prerequisites for talking about Danish culture and national identity is the change from state to nation-state. Up until the early twentieth century Denmark was a state consisting of more than one territory. Previously there had been no notion of a single people with a single language attached to this state but that changed little by little through several decisive events in the nineteenth century. Some events reduced territory, for instance when Norway was ceded to Sweden in 1815, when Schleswig Holstein was lost to Germany in 1864 and the independence of Iceland in 1918.⁶² By that time Denmark had effectively been transformed into a small state whose territorial borders and language area corresponded. Ernest Renan claims that suffering unifies more than joy and the

⁶⁰ Ibid., 271.

⁶¹ Edward A. Tiryakian, "Dialectics of Modernity: Reenchantment and Dedifferentiation as counterprocesses," in *Social Change and Modernity*, eds. Hans Haferkamp & Neil J. Smelser (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 90.

⁶² Christian Albrekt Larsen, *Danskernes nationale forestillinger*, (Aalborg: Aalborg Universitetsforlag, 2008), 10.

territorial losses thus appear to have been critical in spurring the thought of one state and one people. The national romanticism trending across Europe in the nineteenth century can also be taken as evidence for this need to emphasise the uniqueness of a given territory and the people inhabiting it.

In 1814 compulsory education was introduced through a national school system. This arguably created an unprecedented possibility for learning a common language and imbuing people with a feeling of a shared national culture. Further, the constitution of 1849 marked a transition from absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy and a more democratic form of government. Along with the introduction of parliamentarianism in 1901, a political community was established which deepened the sentiment of national belonging. Finally, the late eighteenth hundreds saw the tentative beginnings of the universal welfare system with the introduction of social rights guaranteed by law and financed through taxes. These benefits coupled with the obligation to help fellow citizens by working and thereby paying taxes, promoted a sense of solidarity that slowly became embedded in the national consciousness.

Christian Albrekt Larsen argues that the relative success with which Denmark transitioned from state to nation-state made Danish national identity into something almost self-evident to the point where the population collectively forgot that it had not always been so.⁶³ Until the labour shortage in the late 1960s the national culture and identity had remained largely unchallenged because Denmark was a rather homogenous country without notable ethnic divides. However, that changed in the following decades due to an influx of migrant workers and refugees fleeing conflicts around the world. Especially the arrival of refugees in the 1980s and 90s called the permanence of so-called “Danishness” into question which made it clear that it was not an undisputable concept. Considering this rough sketch, it hardly seems surprising that the VKO-government that came to power in 2001, having also noticed the change in the ethnic make-up of the country, took an approach to cultural policy-making that focused on the introduction of canons. Hence, among the canons introduced from 2004 to 2009, the five major ones – the Literature Canon (2004), the Cultural Canon (2006), the History Canon (2006), the Democracy Canon (2008) and the Nature Canon (2009) – could be viewed as attempts at reversing the transformation of the Danish national community by introspectively insisting on a consensus around its self-evident nature.

Indeed, Bernard Eric Jensen contends that this type of cultural policy aims at a politico-cultural assimilation of the many newcomers in an effort to accommodate to the emergent multi-ethnic- and

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 12.

multicultural society that has caused a radical culture shock among many ethnic Danes.⁶⁴ An experience of culture shock or ontological insecurity appears inevitable when considering that 66 percent of the population has a low level of intercultural competency, defined as “an individual’s insight into and ability to understand the everyday cultural complexity, as well as to communicate open-mindedly with people from other cultures.”⁶⁵ 29 percent have competencies somewhere in the middle and only 5 percent has a skillset equivalent to a high level of competency. With this as a basis there might be good reason for pursuing a canon approach to cultural policy. Not only could it alleviate the state of shock, it could simultaneously aggravate the sense that something needs protecting. This could potentially lead to the backing of a certain political line on other areas such as immigration, integration and education policy. The cultural heritage being commemorated in the canons are, as such, pieces in a heritage management process where identity is a most sensitive issue.

4.3. Reactions to social change in Europe

As established in the introduction, globalisation and Europeanisation can be thought of as umbrella terms encompassing a complex of processes and forces driving social change in Europe. Recently, 2001 – present, there have been several reactions to these changes and efforts made to minimise the influence of globalisation and Europeanisation as transformative agents. Peter Duelund uses “new nationalism” as an umbrella term to cover the various ways in which these reactions manifest themselves, their common denominator being a nationalist inclination. The range of reactions include among others “...a move from integration to assimilation, despite political rhetoric to the contrary...primordial transformation of culture and identity...at the expense of a cosmopolitan view of identity formation” as well as “... priority to static anthropological concepts of shared traditions, lifestyles, and values...”⁶⁶ Accordingly, the establishment of a Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Co-development in France in 2007 (reorganised in 2010), the preoccupation with national identity and the importance of *Leitkultur* in Germany since 2010 and the introduction

⁶⁴ Jensen, 77+84.

⁶⁵ “Et individs indsigt i og evne til at kunne forstå dagligdagens kulturelle kompleksitet samt at kunne kommunikere fordomsfrit med mennesker fra andre kulturer.” - Undervisningsministeriet, “9. Interkulturel Kompetence,” *Det National Kompetenceregnskab – Hovedrapport*, (Copenhagen: Undervisningsministeriet, 2005), last modified 12 December 2005, accessed 8 April 2018, <http://static.uvm.dk/publikationer/2005/NKRrapport>.

⁶⁶ Duelund, 218.

of cultural canons in both Denmark and the Netherlands⁶⁷ can be seen as examples of intensified efforts aimed at highlighting the unalterable significance of values, symbols, myths and national narratives for the creation of collective identity and feelings of belonging.

Montserrat Guibernau notes that rapid adaptation to social dislocation provoked by a constant challenge and revision of the cultural foundation is required in order to survive. Not everyone, however, is affected equally by the consequences of change – some people might lack the means or ability to cope and this “...tend to fuel a growing divide between those competent to move around and benefit from living in a global age and those on the margin.”⁶⁸ It is further argued that this leads to reactions against immigrants, refugees and asylum-seekers as they are among the concrete and visible agents perceived to contribute to the transformation of the receiving societies. Yet the above examples also suggest that “new nationalism” does not only appeal to those negatively affected by globalisation and Europeanisation. Among the OECD countries Denmark ranks second highest in life satisfaction, 75 percent of people report high trust in others compared to the OECD average of just 36 percent, the overall population poverty rate is the second lowest and gross public spending on social protection is the fifth highest.⁶⁹ All of this should make it possible to compensate those potentially vulnerable to changes. However, keeping in mind the concepts outlined in the previous chapter, it can be argued that the above reaffirmations of national ties should not be understood from a socio-economic point of view but instead in the context of ontological insecurity. Thereby the reactions can be seen as attempts at re-establishing ontological security in the face of a real or imagined threat, regardless of the relative affluence of the individual or the nation-state.

4.4. The Denmark Canon project

The Denmark Canon is the latest in the succession of canons and the only one to consist of intangible cultural heritage alone. The official project ran from June 2016 and the Canon was launched on 12 December 2016. Over the course of ten pages it outlines ten important cultural underpinnings or values pertaining to the Danish society. The values are the welfare society, freedom, trust, equality for the law, gender equality, the Danish language, associations and voluntary work, liberality/tolerance, *hygge* and the Christian heritage.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 213-215.

⁶⁸ Guibernau, “Reactions to the End of ‘Pure’ National Identities,” in *The Identity of Nations*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 139.

⁶⁹ “Society at a Glance 2016,” *Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)*, 2016, accessed 2 April 2018, <http://www.oecd.org/denmark/sag2016-denmark.pdf>.

From the documents obtained from the Ministry of Culture it emerges that the Denmark Canon was a policy project initiated at the request of the Minister with the aim of raising awareness of Danish culture and values among the population. The project was run as a campaign headed by a steering group overseeing the work of a project group. Working from a campaign secretariat within the Ministry, the project group was responsible for the overall project coordination and management. External partners were hired for the execution of campaign activities when necessary. The campaign had an informative and educational perspective and indicators of long-term and short-term success was tied to these two aspects. A specific short-term success indicator was the campaign's ability to create public debate (positive and negative) around Danish culture. In the long run, the Denmark Canon should serve to profile Danish culture in the broadest way possible. It should make known the values, traditions etc. which have particularly contributed to the shaping of Danish society, so as to provide a basis for the Danes to become more culturally aware and consequently more culturally explicit. Moreover, use of the Canon across the educational system and use of it as inspiration for integration efforts were also among the objectives.

In a draft for the motivation it was noted that culture manifests itself in habits and unwritten rules that create a frame of interaction between people. Within the same culture behaviour is often predictable and meaningful. In a globalised world, however, individuals and society are exposed to complexity of the kind that challenges the ability to navigate the surroundings, both locally and globally. Considered against this background the above goals appear rational. Yet, from the project's short assessment of potential weaknesses, it is evident that such an interpretation carried certain risks. It was deemed that it would be difficult to popularly convey the concept of intangible cultural heritage. If this was achieved, however, the desired impact would be diminished if the Canon was interpreted by the public as an elitist project. In addition, the project was at risk of being misconstrued by critics as a nationalist move to rein in the Danes as a special people to the detriment of others – an assessment that later turned out to be true as can be seen from the articles referenced in section 1.1.

The documents indicate a very strong focus on debate and public participation in the making of the Canon as means to reach the project objectives. This of course required the creation of an overall framework for the development process and public involvement. Work on this was kickstarted with a closed event – an idea seminar – in March 2016, hosted by the Ministry of Culture and attended by various opinion formers and experts. This group consisted of thirty specially invited people with diverse professional backgrounds from historians, anthropologists,

actors, writers and journalists to cultural managers and representatives from equally diverse organisations, for example Copenhagen Pride, the National Museum of Denmark and the Think Tank Europe – essentially what could be considered people belonging to the elite of Danish cultural life. Nonetheless, it shows that the element of participation was present right from the beginning.

From 1 June to 1 November 2016 public involvement was at its highest. In this period private individuals, organisations, clubs etc. could send in their suggestions for content to include in the Canon through various online platforms or physically at different events. Forty-seven debate events were held locally across the country, the Ministry of Culture hosted five events and the campaign went on a so-called “bicycle safari” around the country, making stops at local events which otherwise were not involved in the project. For a suggestion to be accepted three criteria had to be adhered to – 1) it should concern intangible cultural heritage, 2) it should be backed up historically and be significant for many people, 3) it should be relevant for the present and future society. This indicates that stating the reason for a suggestion had to be done within a historical and temporal frame. The same criteria were used when six curators selected by the Ministry were tasked with condensing and qualifying the submitted suggestions into twenty values. 2425 suggestions were submitted and most of them came from the capital region.

In a press release dated August 2016 the team of curators were presented: Marianne Holm Pedersen (senior researcher, Ph.D.), Mehmet Ümit Necef (associate professor, Ph.D.), Jørn Lund (professor, then chairman of the Danish Language Council), Eva Steensig (sociologist), Mads Mordhorst (associate professor, Ph.D.) and Michael Böss (associate professor). This line-up shows that the element of participation was continued, only this time the focal point was academic or specialist knowledge. The work of the curators lasted a little under three months. In this period, they each had to write motivations for ten values based on the submitted suggestions. Following this deliverable early in the process, discussions ensued and the joint drafting of motivations for the final list of twenty values began. Lastly, the curators' motivations were rewritten and shortened in the Ministry according to a template which the curators had received too. For this last part of the process the curators were still consulted, and they had to give their consent before the final list was put to vote. From the template it appears that emphasis was to be put on the historical background in a comparative before-and-now perspective. Less space, about one third of a page, was to be allocated to the aspect of future. Nothing in the template indicates a specific national or, for that matter, global perspective. Unsurprisingly, however, a distinctly Danish point of view can be detected in all drafts.

From 15 to 22 November the public could vote online for which ten values to be included in the Denmark Canon. In addition to the ten values mentioned above which made it into the final Canon, the other ten up for vote were: general education, participatory democracy, Denmark in the world, short power distance, co-operatives, landscape and architectural culture, craftsmanship, public/popular movements, room for difference and humanity/compassion (my translation). It was possible to vote for one or more values, but only once per value. 326,298 votes were cast divided between 66,301 unique users visiting the voting website. It should be noted that the voting process was subject to criticism from researchers stating that the Ministry of Culture did not follow the standard procedures associated with conducting surveys. As such, they disputed the representativeness of the vote.⁷⁰ The documents from the Ministry make no mention of the details of the voting process. It appears not to have been considered a risk since the goal was to create debate and not a representative result. Yet, the last sentence in the first page of the introduction to the final Denmark Canon reads “[i]n this publication you can read about the ten values *which the population* find to be the most important for the future society” (my translation and emphasis).

⁷⁰ Ivan Mynster, “Befolkningen har stemt på en Danmarkskanon...eller har den?,” *Ugebrevet A4*, 24 November 2016.

5. Analysis

Chapter five is dedicated to the analysis of the empirical material. The first part examines the Denmark Canon to identify the dominant narratives on collective identity. In the second part the narratives found are elaborated in the context of the articles from Jyllands-Posten and Politiken, as well as Bertel Haarder's speech given at the idea seminar.

5.1. Identifying the narratives on collective identity

In this section the thematic categories are defined. Information is provided on what each category refers to and examples from the data are given to further explain and support the definitions. Afterwards the results of the coding process are presented, and the identified narratives named.

5.1.1. Definition of the categories

A total of twelve thematic categories have been defined through the reiterative process of reading, interpreting and assigning categories. The below table gives an overview of the final main categories, the sub-categories, their definitions and examples from the Denmark Canon.

Main category	Definition	Examples from the data
Time	Indicates time as a structuring element providing orientation through chronological boundaries, clear-cut periodisation, continuity and progress.	200-800 AD, sixteenth-, seventeenth-, eighteenth hundreds, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, the Constitution of 1849, legislation from different periods.
Sub-categories		
Past	The past conceptualised in terms of social change, often positive, as the basis for the value as it is known today.	The first social legislation of 1891, the social reform of 1933, expansion of the welfare system in the 1960s.
Present	The present conceptualised in terms of current uniqueness, often as the product of unproblematic progress.	Special Nordic welfare model, Denmark at the top of surveys, a special kind of tolerance, "hygge," associational life.
Future	The future conceptualised in terms of justification for a value's continued existence as it is known today.	Preserve Danish culture, pass on norms, accommodate to new times/changes, continued development of- and active participation in the civil society.

Main category	Definition	Examples from the data
Belonging	Indicates an educational focus on “our way of life.” Can also relate to norms, principles and formative aspects and ways of internalising the culture of the national community.	Explanations of what the value entails, expectations of compliance with norms, how to “hygge”, learn about traditions, trust, community, participation, democracy, language, show tolerance.
Sub-categories		
Benefits	Belonging conceptualised in terms of the benefits (rewards) related to membership of the national community.	Welfare benefits, constitutional rights, equality, protection from dangers, right to decide over own life/how to live.
Obligations	Belonging conceptualised in terms of the obligations (constraints) related to membership of the national community.	Participation in the labour market, freedom with responsibility, limits on what one can say in public, acknowledgement of other people’s right to live as they choose, no religious arguments in political debate.
Main category	Definition	Examples from the data
Value as basis or precondition	The value is conceptualised as either dependent on-, an element/expression of-, or a prerequisite for other concepts providing stability, predictability and consistency to society.	National identity, solidarity, equality, trust, sense of community/security, social cohesion, cultural heritage, democracy, low level of corruption, accommodation to change.
Main category	Definition	Examples from the data
State as provider and protector	The state is conceptualised as the mainstay of society, having the power to provide for, protect and impose limits on the citizens.	Reforms, legislation, social security, universalism, state obliged to protect the constitutional rights, rule of law, protection of people/national security.
Main category	Definition	Examples from the data
Foreign influences	Includes changes, conditions and trends originating outside Denmark that have had an impact on Danish society.	Bismarck’s Germany, John Stuart Mill, Mary Wollstonecraft, language impacts - German, English, French, Latin.
Main category	Definition	Examples from the data
Diversity	Indicates internal variety related to differences of opinion and cultural, ethnic, religious differences. Can also relate to the display of tolerance and openness towards diversity.	Debate on gender equality, associations facilitate meetings between different people, tolerance of minorities, demography marked by different cultural backgrounds/traditions.
Main category	Definition	Examples from the data
Threats	Includes personal and societal threats and hardships.	Hard to access communities where “hygge” unfolds, trust can be undermined and wane, exclusion.

In the Denmark Canon each value is described in one page consisting of two columns and five to seven paragraphs. The categories are assigned to text segments the size of paragraphs and sentences. The only exception is the category “value as basis or precondition.” This is assigned to sentences and within those sentences words conveying specific concepts in keeping with the category definition are categorised themselves. Where a theme occurs in two or more successive sentences within a paragraph these are categorised together as one unit. Where multiple themes occur in the same text segment all relevant categories are assigned to it. This also applies to instances where characteristics of both the main category and its sub-category are present.

5.1.2. Presentation of the results

The presentation of the results of the coding process relies on numbers and frequencies and the appended visualisations provide different overviews. Appendix 1 presents a visually simple figure of the twelve thematic categories, including the “value as basis or precondition” concepts, as well as the frequency with which they occur in the Canon in its entirety. Appendix 2 is a matrix showing the entire coding system along with the number of text segments coded with each category for each description of the Denmark Canon values. Appendix 3 is a visualisation of the intersections of the categories and Appendix 4 is a figure illustrating the most significant relationships between selected categories. It should be noted that this is not a quantitative study and that the themes, which the categories are expressions of, are more complex. Even so, the frequency of occurrence and co-occurrence have indicated the relative level of importance of the themes, as well as revealed recurrent patterns and interesting relationships between the categories. Paired with a theoretically informed interpretation of the content, it has been possible to identify two narratives that are constitutive elements of a third one. The first revolves around *securing a sense of national self* and the second one focuses on *securing a sense of state self*. Those two combine to form a *biographical identity narrative* that frames the entire Denmark Canon.

Securing a sense of national self

The first narrative takes as its point of departure the category “belonging.” As can be seen from Appendix 4, this category has six important relations. All but “state as provider and protector” forms the basis of this narrative. “Belonging” is the most frequently assigned main category occurring thirty times in total. It is present in all descriptions of the values and in eight out of ten descriptions it occurs more than once. This suggests that the theme is a rather important part of the

Canon. The content of these text segments is instructive in the sense that it communicates to the reader the culture of the national community. There is a distinct focus on concisely explaining the meaning of the value and the expectations that follow from this specific outline. Recalling Stuart Hall's remarks on identity, it appears that the intended reader is thought of as not being self-sufficient in Danish cultural awareness. The Canon imparts this cultural knowledge and thus offers an identity bound to the national into which the readers can project themselves if they so wish.

Some segments, for example in the descriptions of *hygge* and associations and voluntary work, come across as "how-to guides." For instance, it is described how one can create the atmosphere associated with *hygge*, which is further described as a social activity that can create a sense of community. Being a member of an association can also create a fundamental sense of community and an understanding of active participation in the civil society. Both concepts and other concepts connected to the "value as basis or precondition" category co-occur with "belonging" multiple times. The strategy of connecting the educational aspect with concepts usually providing predictability, stability and order appears to establish an incentive for the intended readers to internalise the values and their meanings and makes alignment or re-alignment with the outlined culture appear as common sense.

The sub-categories of "belonging," "benefits" and "obligations," exemplify the conditions of membership. These conditions are referred to nineteen times divided between seven descriptions and co-occur with "belonging" sixteen times. This significant overlap underscores Montserrat Guibernau's assertion that belonging is intimately connected with boundaries. The fact that the frequency with which the conditions occur is rather high considering that they are only present in seven categories, suggests a need to clearly establish what membership of the Danish national community entails. By spelling out the national self in terms of conditions of membership the distinction between members and non-members becomes apparent. As we have seen, this can make members more secure about their own affiliation to the community. For non-members belonging comes to depend upon the individual's willingness and personal commitment to fulfil the outlined obligations. The benefits, not only those explicitly mentioned but also those following from access to the collective identity of the community – predictability, stability and order – add an extra incentive to accept the constraints attached to membership.

In relation to boundaries the category "diversity" is quite significant. It co-occurs with "belonging" twice in the description of the value freedom, where two proposals for canon values from the public are quoted. These quotes emphasise that the Danish society is one where there is

room for difference and a place for everyone. This suggests that tolerance of internal difference is believed to be high. In the description of liberality/tolerance, “diversity” and “belonging” co-occur three times. All three text segments stress the importance of acknowledging everyone’s right to live as they want and think, believe and speak freely. However, it is pointed out that liberality and tolerance does not mean that all values and ways of life should be accepted as equally good. Clearly there is a limit to the level of acceptable internal difference. In stating that the concept of tolerance has been extended to include people with a different cultural identity, sexual orientation or ethnic background than the majority, difference is ascribed to the minority and tolerance becomes a characteristic of the dominant group. Thus, the conjunction of “belonging” and “diversity” that we see here, point to yet another distinction between two groups. The accepted way of life is that of the majority and the way of life to be tolerated but not necessarily accepted is that of the minority.

The category “present” gives a clue as to why the majority’s way of life should be accepted. It occurs in all descriptions of the values at least once and co-occurs with “belonging” three times. This is comparatively little considering the other related categories, nonetheless it is relevant because the category reflects current uniqueness. In the text segments referring to Denmark ranking high on certain parameters in international surveys, the special welfare model or the rule of law, another layer is added to the boundary. Focus shifts from internal circumstances to an external dimension emphasising the exceptionalism of the national community in comparison to others. In other text segments this comparison is less explicit, but the notion of exceptionalism is still detectable. Presenting such an image of exceptionalism prompts the readers to identify only with outcomes of unproblematic progress and aspects that set the national community apart. As evidenced by the theoretical outline, such identification can strengthen the belief in the unique character of the nation and raise awareness of forming an imagined community distinct from others.

What emerges from “belonging” and its distinct relationship to other categories is a narrative that appear to serve a formative purpose aimed at encouraging people to project themselves into a collective identity firmly grounded in the national culture. The intertwining of the individual with the collective produces loyalty towards the community which strengthens the social cohesion and provides unity and stability. The articulation of boundaries further ensures that the community perceives itself a single unit and provides a basis for its continuity. These vital elements point towards the presence in the Denmark Canon of a narrative on collective identity focused around securing a sense of national self.

Securing a sense of state self

The second narrative takes as its point of departure the category “state as provider and protector.” Despite having only been assigned to thirteen text segments, it is a relevant starting point because of the categories it co-occurs with. All of these, except for “belonging,” combine to establish a narrative revolving around securing a sense of state self. The only two descriptions where “state as provider and protector” has not been assigned to any text segments are those of the Danish language and *hygge* – two values where cultural rather than political impacts appear to have been decisive for their development. In each of the other eight descriptions the category has been assigned to at least one text segment, suggesting that some degree of political action in one way or another has shaped the values and that the state is involved in upholding them. This is underscored by the content which informs the reader of reforms, laws, the passing of legislation within areas related to the given value, as well as the rights and obligations of the state in its capacity as organising civil rule.

“State as provider and protector” is closely connected to “time” and its sub-category “past,” all three occurring together six times in the beginning of five of the descriptions. In these text segments the reader is presented with a clearly demarcated temporal frame within which the social changes of the past, i.e. the background for the values as they exist today, are portrayed as outcomes of state action – reforms, laws etc. This suggests that memory is structured such that specifically selected historical events in conjunction with positive political intervention creates an image of the state as purveyor of half of the values in the Denmark Canon. Thus, the state’s legitimacy is located in the past and by calling to mind the cultural heritage through the activation of certain collective memories, its present authority is justified. Moreover, activating specific aspects of the past can bring about an awareness needed to keep memories alive. To the extent that this strategy works, the image of the state can then live on in the future. In this way, a sense of permanence and stability is created and by leaving out undesirable memories, disruptions to this continuity is avoided.

The categories “present” and “future” are only peripherally connected to “state as provider and protector.” However, if the above interpretation is accepted, explicit connections to the present and the future are not necessary for achieving temporal continuity. When the state has already been established as the source responsible for having shaped the values into what they are today, then it is enough to juxtapose a given value with indications of the present or the future in order to attain a sense of state self extending through time. As Appendix 3 reveals, “future” co-occurs with “value as basis or precondition” more than any other category, suggesting that the values indeed are juxtaposed with temporal indicators. Appendix 2 further shows that “future” is an important

category for the entire Canon as it occurs in all descriptions. It was assigned to the entire last paragraph of each description – the only paragraph to be separated from the rest by an orange box with the headline “This is why (value) is important for the future” (my translation).

“Time” and “past” themselves are also closely connected as they co-occur seventeen times. They were consistently assigned to the first two paragraphs after the introduction in all descriptions but that of *hygge* where they do not occur at all. The content is marked by a historical contextualisation of the values, tracing their origins up until today. First, references are made to those events or historical periods reaching farthest back. Then continuous and unproblematic progress is outlined through a selection of memories calling to mind a positive past. Thus, chronological boundaries are set up and it appears that the values are justified through memories accommodating only the historical facts that suit them. By reducing historical complexity to the bare minimum in this way, existential complexity is by extension reduced too. The image of the common past with which the reader is left is therefore one imbued with simplicity.

The category “foreign influences” has been assigned to six text segments in total and co-occurs with “time” and “past” all six times. “Foreign influences” appears in four of the same descriptions as “state as provider or protector” and in all but one instance where both categories were assigned to the same text segment, the former precedes the latter. That these two categories occur in the immediate vicinity of each other is interesting in relation to the state, because it points to an acknowledgement of the fact that global trends and impacts served as inspiration for the political action driving the social change which over time contributed to the shaping of the values. Timewise these segments explicitly refer to the seventeen or eighteen hundreds, i.e. around the period of the transition from state to nation-state. This suggests the presence of a certain paradoxical openness towards the world in the pursuit of establishing a single consistent self-image. Nonetheless, the episodic memories called upon in the four descriptions also show the state to be the catalyst of internal progress, which adds to the image of the state as in control and ensuring predictability and order for society. Thus, simplicity is maintained.

The relationships between the categories outlined above indicate the presence in the Denmark Canon of a narrative where securing a sense of state self is achieved by using cultural heritage and activating selected memories to give meaning to past, present and future action. This continuity is paramount for the construction of the self-image as a coherent entity and thus equally important for establishing the state as the political mainstay of the imagined community.

The biographical identity narrative

The last vital connection is that between the categories “belonging” and “state as provider and protector.” They co-occur six times and in these text segments the educational aspect related to “our way of life” extends to the state, which is shown to be an integral part of belonging to the national community because of the functions it performs in service of the citizens. In combining the above narratives, those two categories and all their connections together represent a biographical identity narrative that frames the entire Denmark Canon. It becomes evident that the nation and the state each are icons of identity. They both encompass different aspects vital for the construction of a shared identity and when joined, collective identity is conceived as national identity.

In this third narrative it is quite clear that every description, except that of *hygge*, is framed by a very strong orientation in time. This is achieved by structuring national memory in a simple linear narrative with beginning, middle and end. The beginning, usually one or two of the paragraphs after the introductions, corresponds to the past. It traces the history of the value by way of episodic memories. These positive collective memories function as evidence giving weight to the argument that the Canon represents the most important intangible cultural heritage underpinning Danish society. This articulation of the past prepares the ground for the middle section. Here most of the text segments concerned with the present and belonging are found. This part contextualises the outlined history in terms of its relevance for the individual now, as part of the larger imagined community. The descriptions all end with a paragraph stressing the importance of the values for the future Danish society, thus implicitly showing that there is in fact no ending to the national memory. As such, the structure of the descriptions gives the impression that each is a self-contained unit with a structure ensuring a sense of both orientation and continuity. Nevertheless, the shared structure is what weaves together the seemingly separate parts, making each a constituent element of the greater biographical narrative.

The claim that the intangible cultural heritage presented in the Canon should be the most important is thus supported by national memory throughout. It can therefore be argued that the past becomes a precondition for the present which then turns out to be the middle point from where an attachment to a distinct past is discursively connected to the future in order to maintain the status quo. That the past is the foundation for the present is hardly ground-breaking, however, when that past is made up of specifically selected events, memory is being used to create a particular view of reality. Because of the concern with securing self-images in the other two narratives, it appears that the cultural awareness the Canon tries to raise is linked to a reality where the national is seen to take

precedence over any other cultural affiliations or attachments. By implication, the collective identity into which the readers can project themselves must be attached to the national as well. Accordingly, the way the Denmark Canon is structured appears to indirectly govern the construction of national identity. For the individual this implies that when choosing to belong and accepting everything that membership entails, she or he is somewhat limited in terms of their possibilities of creating meaning for themselves. In so far as group membership fulfils an individual necessity, the fact that the Canon does not offer any chance of negotiating individual meaning in time is not a problem. In fact, this is precisely what forms the basis of the construction of existential meaning beyond that of the individual. From a nation-state point of view, defining a shared identity that limits the possible ways in which to define oneself as Danish provides an opportunity for overcoming the reality of difference and transform it into apparent national unity.

What emerges is a narrative that structures the socio-political and cultural foundation of the Danish society in a linear fashion. Historical distance is overcome by re-embedding certain cultural phenomena in the national consciousness via memories coordinating the past with the present and the future. Thereby biographical continuity is established, and this provides the basis for a specific view of reality understood in terms of national chronology effectively dispelling cultural heterogeneity. On the one hand this limits individual agency, but on the other, it offers an opportunity for constructing the type of shared existential meaning associated with national identity.

5.2. Elaborating the identified narratives

This section explores only the biographical identity narrative as this encompasses both the national- and the state perspective. The articles and the speech showed several recurrent patterns representing two central discourses, one of crisis and one of inclusiveness. The narrative will be elaborated in relation to those, respectively.

Regarding the articles it should be noted that well over half of the content consists of quotes by Bertel Haarder and Jens Christian Grøndahl. The little presence of either journalist in the texts help structure the quotes so that a natural flow is achieved. The few times a question is posed it is related to whether the Denmark Canon should be considered an expression of cultural rearmament and, if so, against what? Aside from this both articles display a matter-of-fact approach and appear relatively impartial. Nonetheless, it should be remembered that the interviews were edited and at the time they formed part of a media discourse influenced by the influx of refugees in 2015.

5.2.1. The biographical identity narrative as crisis management

The first half of the crisis discourse centres around a feeling of decline in cultural awareness. Two phenomena are identified as contributing to this decline, namely the loss of belief in Danish culture and globalisation. In Jyllands-Posten former Minister for Culture Bertel Haarder refers to a tendency in Denmark and Europe where people, perhaps inadvertently and in an effort to show consideration, either withdraw or compromise on their own values in the meeting with immigrants. The reason for this is that "...we have lost faith in ourselves and our values, but also because we are trapped in a kind of Western self-hatred and sense of guilt about our historical actions."⁷¹ Here Haarder identifies a problematic past as an impediment to embracing the Danish culture, the implicit message being that this needs to be overcome if faith is to be restored. The question of restoring faith appears an urgent matter when connected to the issue of globalisation. In the article in Politiken Jens Christian Grøndahl contends that globalisation has led to insecurity and that this has implications for the nation-state. He notes that "[t]he nation-state is exactly that space where the lowest in society, the weakest groups got access to a better life and the possibility to realise themselves."⁷² When faced with the impacts of globalisation, Grøndahl mentions the closing or moving of businesses, these groups feel threatened and reach for security in the national culture. Haarder concedes and adds that "[t]hose who are afraid of foreigners are the ones, who are unsure of what they are themselves."⁷³ However, when belief in the national culture is virtually non-existent as Haarder explains, then the people have nothing to which they can hold on and consequently no means of alleviating the feeling of insecurity. Together the two articles thus construct a context where the political act of reaffirming the national culture can be justified with reference to it providing the necessary security for people and society.

By establishing a context where the Danes, burdened by history and globalisation, are regarded as culturally unconfident, weak in the face of change and fearing foreigners due to a lack of a strong sense of self, they appear as victims. If indeed the goal of the crisis discourse is to warrant political action this move seems necessary. Discursively aggravating the feeling of insecurity provides the foundation for intervention and minimises the risk of opposition so far as the discourse is accepted.

⁷¹ "...vi har mistet troen på os selv og egne værdier, men også, at vi er fanget i en form for vestligt selvhad og skyldfølelse over vores historiske handlinger."

⁷² "Nationalstaten er jo netop det rum, hvor de underste i samfundet, de svageste grupper fik adgang til et bedre liv, fik mulighed for at folde sig ud."

⁷³ "De, der er bange for fremmede, er de, der er usikre på, hvad de selv er."

The headline to the interview with Bertel Haarder in Jyllands-Posten, is a statement by him that reads “[w]e must have zero tolerance for intolerance.”⁷⁴ Zero tolerance denotes dissociation with and action against unwanted behaviour, in this case intolerance. In the paragraph from which this was taken, Haarder refers to a case from 2015 where asylum centres denied access to pastors, imams and other clergy on the grounds that the centres should be neutral in matters of religion. He points out that the presence of clergy would bring potential prejudice to light and states that

...should there be any Muslims who do not want to behave properly because there are Christians present, then it is good to nip it in the bud the first week they are here... It is only good that the intolerance and the anti-Danishness comes to light because then it can be accommodated.⁷⁵

This quote epitomises the second half of the crisis discourse which is most present in the article in Jyllands-Posten. This part identifies more phenomena that potentially could undermine Danish culture. It is also more concerned with attributing responsibility to those believed to engage in behaviour associated with these phenomena. Aside from intolerance and anti-Danishness the other phenomena mentioned in Jyllands-Posten include terrorism, radicalisation, division in society, and parallel societies. In Politiken they include objection to gender equality and to freedom of speech. The people deemed responsible are those who come from other cultures, “...who despise us and our values,”⁷⁶ immigrants, refugees and Muslims.

In the quote it is quite clear that intolerance and anti-Danishness is unwanted behaviour attributed to Muslims coming to Denmark as refugees. Throughout the article Muslims are referred to explicitly several times, not in overtly negative terms, but it is significant that no other types of immigrants are mentioned. Thus, when problems with for example parallel societies are mentioned there is an implicit connection to Muslims. In contrast to this, Haarder repeatedly refers to Denmark as a Christian country by mentioning the Christian heritage, Christian religious education, singing of psalms in schools and Christmas services. By conflating Denmark with Christianity and Muslims with intolerance, anti-Danishness and other issues it seems that the characteristics of society and people somehow are connected to religious affiliation. Additionally, such conflation marks a distinction between an in-group imbued with accepted traits and values and an out-group devoid of

⁷⁴ “Vi skal have nultolerance overfor intolerance.”

⁷⁵ “...skulle der være nogle muslimer, som ikke vil opføre sig ordentligt, fordi der er kristne tilstede, så er det da godt, hvis det bliver taget i opløbet den første uge, de er her... Det er kun godt, at intolerancen og antidanskheden kommer frem i lyset, for så kan den blive imødegået.”

⁷⁶ “...som foragter os og vore værdier...”

respect and loyalty to the society in which they live. The juxtaposition of a Christian country and Muslims as individuals is also a juxtaposition of majority and minority which illustrates that the power relations between the two groups are skewed in favour of the in-group.

Referring to a well-known local conflict in 2012 involving a Christmas tree in an area where a large percentage of the residents are not ethnic Danes, Haarder states that "...sometimes we must take up the battle if suddenly there is a new majority in the housing association who demand that the Christmas tree be done away with. One should not yield to that. This is Denmark."⁷⁷ In addition to the distinction between "us" and "them," the notion of a clash is introduced to the relationship between the groups suggesting their apparent incompatibility. It also shows the former Minister's willingness to discuss the setting aside of majority rule when it affects Danish cultural traditions negatively, even if the example is rather small-scale. Responsibility for the clash is indirectly attributed to Muslims, however, because the Danish society has not been explicit enough in stating which values are compatible with living in Denmark, the problem has been worsened. In the speech a similar though much less confrontational remark is made on the fact that due to the homogeneity of the Danish society the intangible cultural heritage has been internalised to the extent that the demands of multiculturalism has not been met. Accordingly, taking measures to accommodate this and becoming more culturally explicit appear as common-sense.

By establishing a context in which Muslims are attributed certain negative characteristics, the possibility of regarding them as concrete, visible agents contributing to an undesirable transformation of the Danish society is created in effect. Again, if the goal is to create a seemingly legitimate space for the political act of bolstering the national identity, discursively constructing the manifest result of globalisation as in opposition to Danish culture seems an essential move.

In its entirety the discourse of crisis exhibits the same characteristics as those pertaining to Jeffrey C. Alexander's trauma narrative. The nature of the threat and the victim, as well as the relevance of the trauma and the circumstances believed to have caused it are stated. The responsible carrier group is the former Minister and, by extension, the Ministry of Culture. In mediating a situation as a crisis, the carrier group creates a legitimate context within which the biographical identity narrative can be justified as a means to manage the crisis. Backed by the fact that 66 percent of the Danish population has low intercultural competencies, the element of crisis or the experience of ontological insecurity might very well be present. Still, the discourse offers only a simplified reading of an

⁷⁷ "...indimellem må vi tage kampen op, hvis der pludselig kommer nyt flertal i boligforeningen, der kræver juletræet afskaffet. Det skal man da ikke bare bøje sig for. Det her er Danmark."

actual situation where over half of the population are having difficulties navigating the cultural complexities of everyday life. Discursively simplifying this problem denies the extent of it and provides for an equally simple solution – reinstallation of the biographical identity narrative through the canonisation of intangible cultural heritage. The political motivation is clear, and emphasis is put on differentiation rather than dedifferentiation.

5.2.2. The biographical identity narrative as common cultural denominator

The discourse of inclusiveness is present in both articles and the speech. Of the two discourses, elements of this one occurs more frequently in the documents from the Ministry of Culture, suggesting that it might reflect the most official and least confrontational discourse. It is concerned with two aspects. First, the idea of a common cultural denominator – a shared cultural foundation that everyone subscribes to and which provides the basis for an openness towards the world. Second, the inclusion and participation of the public in the creation of the Denmark Canon.

In Politiken Bertel Haarder and Jens Christian Grøndahl agree that a common cultural denominator is fundamental if a society is to be inclusive and maintain social cohesion at the same time. However, they do not seem to agree on what such a common denominator should entail. In relation to the inclusion of immigrants, the most important part for Grøndahl is to distinguish between those “...cultural characteristics that are specifically national and that which is the common denominator for all Danes regardless of whether they are Muslims, Jews or Christians.”⁷⁸ In keeping the national as well as religion out of the equation, Grøndahl instead focuses on the common denominator as an element that can curb difference – something that can unite rather than split the population. He adds that the democratic values, which are European, are the most vital values for new Danes to be familiar with and subscribe to if they want to belong to the national community. Thus, it seems that Grøndahl believes that these values should form the basis of the common cultural denominator.

In his response Haarder is vaguer, mentioning only equality for women and freedom of speech. This is hardly surprising considering that objection to these two democratic values were identified as potential threats in the crisis discourse. For him it seems that the common cultural denominator first and foremost should meet the needs of the so-called old Danes because having a strong

⁷⁸ “...at skelne mellem det, der er specifikt nationalt i sin kulturelle særegenhed, og det, som er fællesnævneren for alle danskere, uanset om de er muslimer, jøder eller kristne.”

awareness of one's own national culture is a prerequisite for embracing others. Again, this is not a surprising stance in view of the first part of the crisis discourse. It is also elaborated in the speech where Haarder states that the Denmark Canon project should identify the cultural characteristics that are specifically Danish. He acknowledges the cultural impacts and trends from the Nordic countries and Europe, but he continuously stresses the distinctly Danish aspects. Ending the speech, he nonetheless expresses a wish for the Denmark Canon to be a formative project making both new and old Danes aware of "...who we are and what we can be proud of, so we have a basis for telling others about it."⁷⁹ This is echoed in Jyllands-Posten where Haarder comments that the project is important "[n]ot because we are better than others, but because it is important to know oneself."⁸⁰ In Politiken he further asserts that the intention is not for the Canon to be used as a rod to beat anyone with.

Involvement of the public in the creation process is referred to several times as an invitation to take part extended to the entire population. Everyone should have a say and together decide on "what makes us who we are." As a measure to counter potential criticism of the sort above, public participation seems ideal. However, despite the democratic effort to use an inclusive "we" encompassing both new and old Danes, it appears that there is not a genuine commitment to dedifferentiation present in the idea of a common cultural denominator on part of the former Minister. The culture "we" should be proud of is still the culture of the majority and not the universal or democratic values that everyone possibly could agree with without hesitation. That some of these values later found their way into the final Canon seems rather a coincidence that can be attributed to the participation of the public – something which suggests that their involvement in the creation process carried at least some significance. Yet, as we have seen, the focus of the Canon is nevertheless on the national dimension.

The context established by the crisis discourse justifies the common cultural denominator being based on the biographical identity narrative rather than on some overarching principles. This might create a strong cultural foundation for part of the population and lessen the alleged uncertainty related to the everyday complexities of living in a multicultural society. For another part, it could potentially lead to a search for alternative sources of collective identity if the biographical identity narrative is seen as unrepresentative or as an outright constraint. Thus, the idea of the common cultural denominator as the social cement that cuts across divides is limited by its very construction.

⁷⁹ "...hvem vi selv er, og hvad vi kan være stolte af, så vi har et grundlag for at fortælle andre om det."

⁸⁰ "Ikke fordi vi er bedre end andre, men fordi det er vigtigt at kende sig selv."

6. Discussion

Chapter six discusses the findings of the previous chapter in light of the cultural-policy-as-canon approach to deeper political and societal issues. It also offers a perspective on the consequences of canonising cultural heritage.

6.1. Canonising culture: a retreat to safety or the basis for a positive outlook?

Calling to mind Stuart Hall's questions of what is "so powerfully dislocating national cultural identities?" the findings of the previous chapter echoes Hall's own answer: globalisation. Some issues are aggravated by globalisation. The problematic past and the loss of faith in the national culture, becomes urgent issues to reconcile in the face of globalisation. Moreover, the issue of immigration becomes the everyday manifestation of globalisation. The proposed solution was to create a canon and thereby raise cultural awareness through debate. As we have seen, Bjurström argues that the explicit and politically motivated canon formation makes the workings of the canon too visible. Yet, when one of the objectives of the project was to create debate, this does not seem to matter. However, when the former Minister expresses his wish for the Canon to be used in the educational system and for integration efforts, then two very different objectives collide.

In relation to Peter Duelund's research, the findings of this thesis gives further proof to his assertion that the national cultural policy-making across Europe shows a tendency towards an increased focus on the politics of collective identity. Such a move seems to impede the shaping of an environment conducive to multiple cultural affiliation. For a society in which over half of the population has low intercultural competencies the move could be a good thing as it could decrease feelings of anxiety. However, in an increasingly multicultural country as Denmark it might prove counterproductive.

7. Conclusion

Concluding the thesis, this chapter offers an overview of the most important research results. The two sections are respectively focussing on the identified narratives on collective identity and the context which shaped them.

7.1. The three narratives on collective identity

Recalling the introductory chapter, the first part of the research question asked the following: which dominant narratives on collective identity can be identified in the Denmark Canon? As the first part of the analysis revealed, the defined categories and their most significant connections led to the formulation of three narratives. These are termed *securing a sense of national self*, *securing a sense of state self* and *the biographical identity narrative*.

Securing a sense of national self is, as the name suggests, concerned with establishing a stable self-image firmly grounded in the national. The strong educational aspect tied to the narrative is significant because it implicitly suggests that the intended reader lacks in cultural awareness – a belief corroborated by the documents from the Ministry of Culture. Nonetheless, the narrative imparts the needed knowledge of the national community's way of life as well. Thus, it serves a formative purpose meant to inspire the intended reader to project herself or himself into a collective identity focused around the national culture. Internalisation of the national culture is also emphasised by text segments formulated as how-to guides, for instance how to *hygge*. The intertwining of the individual and the collective is important because, as the theoretical framework suggests, this can establish loyalty to the community which, in turn, strengthens social cohesion and provides for unity and stability. In addition, the narrative clearly outlines the benefits and constraints of membership of the national community. Thereby it is involved in the articulation of boundaries and, besides internalisation, this too ensures that the community perceives of itself as a coherent entity.

The narrative *securing a sense of state self* is focussed around establishing the state as the political mainstay of society. The aspects of time and the state as provider are crucial in this narrative. Political impacts in the form of legislation, reforms etc. over time suggest that some degree of political involvement in one way or another shaped the values, and that the state is involved in upholding them today. To overcome the historical gap, the sense of a state self is achieved by using specifically selected memories to give meaning to past, present and future action.

The biographical identity narrative encompasses the above narratives and all their connections, and in this way, it frames the entire Denmark Canon. It is characterised by a strong orientation in time and the socio-political and cultural foundation of the Danish society is presented in a linear manner. It overcomes distance in time by re-inserting specific cultural memories into the national consciousness such that the past is coordinated with the present and the future. This establishes a biographical continuity which forms the basis of a specific view of reality understood in terms of national chronology effectively dispelling cultural heterogeneity. This might limit the individual because it restricts agency, however, this is exactly what offers an opportunity for constructing the shared existential meaning associated with national identity

7.2. The context shaping the identity narratives

The second part of the research question asked the following: what might be inferred from the resulting identity narratives in terms of their latent socio-political motifs? In answering this question, only the biographical identity narrative was contextualised and elaborated seeing as it encompassed the other two narratives. The two analysed articles and the speech showed a number of recurrent patterns, which resulted in the identification of two discourses – a discourse of crisis and a discourse of inclusiveness.

The crisis discourse creates context in which the Danes are seen as culturally unconfident and lacking a strong sense of self. The other part of the discourse establishes a context in which Muslims are regarded as the visible agents forcing change and challenges upon the Danish society by their presence. Discursively pitting these two groups against each other creates a situation within which the biographical identity narrative can be justified as a means to manage the crisis.

The discourse of inclusiveness centres around the notion of a common cultural denominator – a shared cultural foundation that everyone agrees with and which provides the basis for an open-minded approach to the world. Yet, for the former Minister it appears that the common cultural denominator should, above all, meet the needs of the Danes first, because having a strong awareness of one's own national culture is a precondition for accepting and welcoming others. This echoes the crisis discourse and in doing so, it implicitly justifies why the common cultural denominator should be based on the biographical identity narrative rather than on overarching principles.

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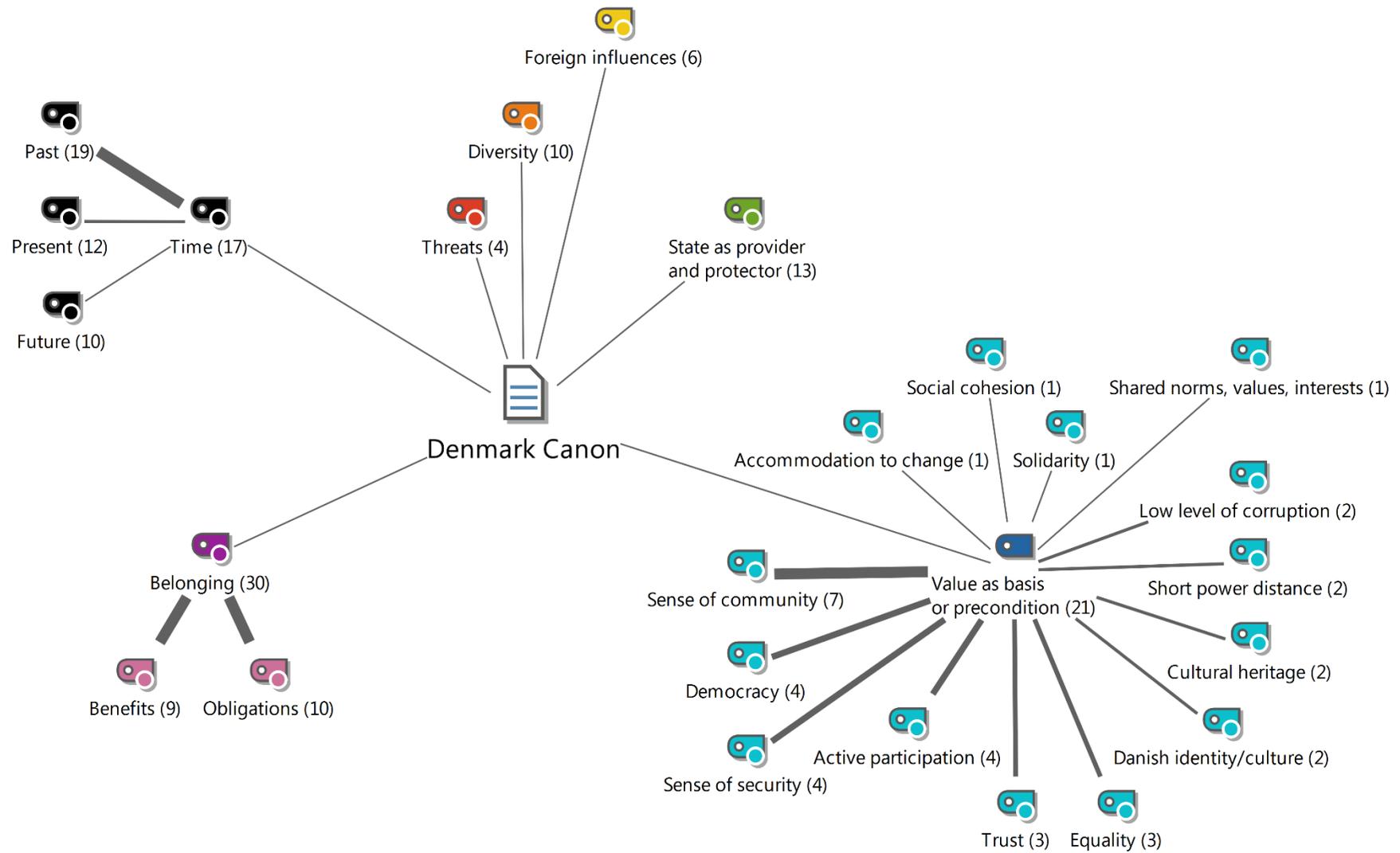
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Overview of the twelve thematic categories and the frequency with which they occur

Including "value as basis or precondition" concepts



Line width between main category and sub-category reflect the frequency of co-occurrence

Overview of the number of text segments coded with each category for each Canon value

Code System	1. Welfare society	2. Freedom	3. Trust	4. Equality for the law	5. Gender equality	6. Danish language	7. Associations and voluntary work	8. Liberty/tolerance	9. Hygge	10. Christian heritage	SUM
Threats			1			1			1	1	4
Diversity		2			2			5		1	10
Foreign influences	1	1			1	2				1	6
State as provider and protector	3	2	1	2	1		1	1		2	13
Value as basis or precondition	3	2	3	2	1	3	2	1	3	1	21
Accommodation to change						1					1
Cultural heritage						2					2
Active participation					1		3				4
Short power distance				1		1					2
Low level of corruption				2							2
Shared norms, values, interests			1								1
Democracy		2		1				1			4
Sense of security	1		1	2							4
Social cohesion	1										1
Sense of community	1		1			1	2		1	1	7
Trust	1			2							3
Equality	1						1		1		3
Solidarity	1										1
Danish identity/culture	1								1		2
Belonging	2	5	3	3	1	1	3	5	4	3	30
Benefits	2	2		2	1			1		1	9
Obligations	1	2	1	1	1			3		1	10
Time	3	3	1	2	2	2	1	1		2	17
Past	3	3	1	2	2	3	1	2		2	19
Present	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	12
Future	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
SUM	27	26	16	25	15	19	16	23	13	18	198

Overview of the relationships between the categories

Code System	Threats	Divers...	Forei...	State ...	Belon...	Benefits	Oblig...	Time	Past	Present	Future
Threats											1
Diversity				1	5		1	1	2	4	2
Foreign influences				1				6	6		
State as provider and protector		1	1		6	2	1	6	6	1	2
Value as basis or precondition	1				6			1		1	10
Accommodation to change											1
Cultural heritage											1
Active participation					1						3
Short power distance								1		1	
Low level of corruption											1
Shared norms, values, interests					1						
Democracy					2						1
Sense of security											3
Social cohesion											1
Sense of community					2						4
Trust											2
Equality					1						2
Solidarity											1
Danish identity/culture											1
Belonging		5		6		7	9		1	3	
Benefits				2	7			1	1		
Obligations		1		1	9					1	1
Time		1	6	6		1			17	1	
Past		2	6	6	1	1		17			
Present		4		1	3		1	1			
Future	1	2		2			1				

Overview of the most significant relationships between selected categories

Including category definitions

