



Dealing with the undesirable:

The contestation of the Danish state's deterrence policy towards refugees amongst civil society in Denmark

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[Refugees walking along the Danish Highway, September 7, 2016]



**Managing the displaced:
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ABSTRACT

This thesis addresses the Danish national responses to the increased influx of displaced people in the eye of the contemporary global refugee crisis. On one hand, it examines the refugee policy implemented by the Danish government with focus on deterrence measures. On the other side of the equation it addresses the contestation of this political line amongst different civil society actors.

Deterrence measures have been absolute central in the way the Danish state has sought to manage the challenge of an increased number of asylum-seekers. The government recently enacted a new Asylum Deal, which entails 34 restrictions and aim at stemming the influx of refugees. Secondly, it published an information campaign in Lebanese newspapers in order to warn to-be refugees about the restrictions and thereby deter them from coming to Denmark. Contrary to the restrictive policies pursued at state level, civil society actors have emerged in support of refugees throughout Denmark engaging in various strategies ranging from discursive disputes to civil disobedience.

By taking point of departure in three different cases this study explores how civil society actors contest the deterrence policy of the state towards refugees by examining the different components and dynamics, which conform the people involved; their motivations, visions and more importantly how they challenge the situation affecting them. Hereby, it becomes possible to explore the contestation of the dominating political discourse and direction when it comes to refugees. The three cases at focus include what I have termed '*The Propaganda War over Refugees*', which covers the intense public debate that emerged as a response to the government's proclamation of running ads in Lebanese newspapers. Moreover, it deals with the phenomenon of the '*civil human smuggler*', which concerns the trend of ordinary citizens transporting asylum-seekers across the Danish borders. Finally, it

includes the network *'Welcome to Denmark'* functioning as a platform for numerous subgroups involved in different activities related to refugee advocacy.

Building upon a theoretical framework involving the management of displaced people, civil society and political activism on social media and using case study as the research method this paper asks why these selected civil society groups contest the Danish state's policies of refugee deterrence and which strategies they use.

The empirical data used to examine the counteractions carried out by the civil society actors is made up by a diverse collection and includes communication and interactions in diverse Facebook groups, which provide the main forum for planning and coordinating their steps. Moreover, it contains secondary interviews with spokespersons to the different initiatives, press releases about the activities carried out as well as different articles concerning the struggle of the activists for a more humane asylum policy. It also involves observations from different demonstrations as well as public meetings.

The main findings suggest that the contestation of the government's deterrence policy is more than a humanitarian concern to help refugees but is multidimensional and evolves around complex struggles over identity, morality and politics. By exploring these struggles in detail, this thesis seeks to contribute both to the literature about civil society and to the current debate on refugees.

Keywords: • Refugee Crisis • Managing Displacement • Deterrence • Civil Society • Political Activism • Social Media • Denmark •

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1. Managing refugees in the name of humanity

“Persecution, conflict, generalized violence and human rights violations have formed a ‘nation of displaced’ that, if they were a country, would make up the 24th largest in the world” (UNHCR 2015b: 5).

The Global Refugee Crisis has been characterized as one of the defining challenges of the 21st century and is currently dominating political agendas as well as saturating most news. During the last years, the dramatic growth in mass displacement has reached unprecedented levels leading UNHCR to warn about a new era of worldwide displacement.

Throughout the last years, the number of refugees has not only increased significantly, it has also accelerated extremely fast. When reviewing the past, most decades have been characterized by displacement figures ranging from 38 to 43 million people on an annually basis. However, in the recent three years the level has increased with 40 per cent going from 42,5 million in 2011 to 59,5 million people in 2014. With this in mind, it is not only the scale of forced displacement, but also the acceleration surrounding it that is disturbing. While the many numbers can be difficult to relate to, it is sometimes easier to grasp the scope when breaking down the figures. In 2014, 42.500 people were forced to flee their home because of conflict and persecution on a daily basis and thereby became either refugees, asylum seekers or internal displaced. This implies that one out of every 122 human beings now belongs to one of these three categories (UNHCR 2015b)¹.

Some of the neighbouring countries to the refugee producing nations have reached their limits and are currently at a breaking point. As result, refugees are now facing tightening restrictions, growing tensions with locals and insufficient support from international aid agencies: *“(…) some have resorted to deeply troubling measures, including denying desperate people entry to their countries and pushing people back into the conflict”* (Amnesty International 2015: 5). As it becomes ever more challenging to find safety in

¹ Figures for 2015 will not be released until June when UNHCR publish their next annual Global Trends Report.

region of origins, many refugees are forced to explore new routes such as attempting the sea voyage across the Mediterranean and Aegean Sea to seek protection in Europe.

As result of the many refugees reaching the shores of Europe, the global refugee crisis has moved from being relatively detached from Europe to being unfold in front of us, which has called for immediate humanitarian response and political solutions. Consequently, the management of refugees has become a top policy priority for most European countries. However, managing refugees is not only a humanitarian question, but also a highly politicised process about balancing the need of refugees against the interests of states (Hyndman 2000). In this game, the discourse of saving is extremely powerful and the humanitarian apparatus fulfils not only moral functions, but also political ones, where governance, power and control are inevitable entangled (Agier 2010).

It becomes more and more evident that host countries are increasingly worried about receiving the large numbers of refugees, who are often perceived as a threat to political, economic and social stability even in traditional hospitable asylum countries. The scope of displaced people has clearly impacted the political will on host communities to continue to offer asylum in the terms seen in the past. In the face of mass displacement and the growing numbers of people in need of protection, a number of states increasingly distance themselves and seek to redefine their responsibilities. Where some states disregard international obligations, others find ways around The Refugee Convention. Furthermore, there has been a resurgence of xenophobia and a harder line against those who come uninvited (UNHCR 2015a).

The increasing influx of refugees arriving at the Southern borders of Europe has put a massive pressure on the remaining EU countries to take part of finding a solution for the many people in need of protection. However, the responsibility is far from being shared equally and internal imbalances are being exposed. At one hand, South European countries like Greece are facing the majority of people crossing the Sea. At the other hand, Germany and Sweden are some of the hardest hit countries when talking about where the asylum seekers end up. The inevitable question asked by critical voices is whether Europe will be remembered as a region that acted in solidarity against the global

refugee crisis or as a region that erected higher walls around Fortress Europe? (UNHCR 2015a).

So far, the growing number of refugees arriving at Europe has mostly revealed the problems of cooperation taking place within the EU. Despite common external borders, EU has to a large extent failed in finding a joint solution to the refugee crisis. Rather than burden sharing and common solutions, tendencies of anti-foreigner rhetoric and xenophobia occupy the agenda. Restrictive policies are implemented and foreign policy is progressively being interlinked with domestic issues (UNHCR 2015a).

1.1 Focus of research

In the eye of the refugee crisis, an infinite struggle between avoidance strategies and legal and moral imperatives to carry out the obligations of the refugee convention has presented itself. This struggle has led to the focus of this thesis, which critically explores the national Danish response to the increased influx of displaced people. The dissertation takes point of departure in a dialectic approach, which shed light on the political response towards refugees as well as the diverse counter actions witnessed amongst civil society groups in Denmark.

The focus of research was highly motivated by the Danish government's controversial strategy of publishing ads in Lebanese newspapers warning about the strict rules for refugees to be enacted in order to deter asylum-seekers from entering the country. The initiative was part of a wider plan to enact restrictions within the area of asylum as a way to limit the influx of displaced people to Denmark. Besides prompting much criticism and being wildly debated amongst political opponents, humanitarian organizations and international institutions, the strategy has given birth to a number of civil society groups and has led to numerous contestations. In September 2015, 50,000 people gathered in front of the Danish parliament under slogans such as "Welcome Refugees" as a response to the political line pursued by the government (Jensen 2015). This demonstration symbolized, in a very visibly way, the forces at play in the debate regarding how to receive refugees. However, the demonstration is only one out of many diverse activities, which has been launched in order to counteract the government's political strategy of deterring

refugees. Since then, a variety of actors operating in the name of civil society have emerged.

1.2 Research objective

By analysing some of the central activities carried out by civil society actors it is possible to examine how ordinary citizens attempt to challenge the political line in relation to refugees. With this in mind, I have decided on the following research question:

How have the Danish state's policies of refugee deterrence been presented and enacted and why have they been contested by selected civil society actors?

In order to be able to answer the research question, I have decided to structure the different sections around the following sub questions:

- 1. How has the Refugee Crisis been depicted and which kind of political action does this encourage?*
- 2. How has the Danish state attempted to manage the increased influx of displaced people in the eye of the refugee crisis through deterrence measures and what are the implications of this strategy?*
- 3. What were the motivations, visions and means behind the contestations carried out by the selected civil society actors?*
- 4. Why is it a challenge for the state and civil society to find common ground when managing refugees?*

The sub-questions will be explained further in relation to their context in section 2.5 concerning the structure of the thesis.

2. Methodology

In the following section, the methodological background of this study will be described. The section starts out with a delimitation of the research topic in order to make clear the boundaries set for the study. It continues by presenting the case study and empirical data, which forms the basis of the paper. Moreover, it argues for the choice of theory and touches upon the limitations of this paper. Finally, the section ends by giving an overview of the structure of the paper and how the different parts connect to each other.

2.1 Delimitation

However global the refugee crisis may be, this world always exists in the local form that we can cross, describe and analyse. With this in mind, the research topic of this thesis is limited to a specific geographical and temporal framework in order to enable a more localized and comprehensive study. First of all, I have chosen to focus on Denmark, as I find this particular context interesting in terms of the substantial measures taken by the government in order to deal with the increased influx of displaced people and the multifaceted initiatives witnessed amongst civil society to contest this line. Secondly, I have decided to study the recent development, which is why I focus on the second half of 2015 and forward. The refugee crisis and its impact on Denmark has naturally been part of the political agenda considerable longer. However, it reached a new level in line with the preceding national election in July 2015, where it became one of the most debated subjects and has remained so ever since.

When looking at the Danish government's response to the increased influx of displaced people, I have chosen to focus specific on deterrence measures. By this term, I refer to the means used to prevent or limit displaced people from entering the country. As result, the focus will be on the new Asylum deal containing 34 restrictions within the area of asylum as well as the ad published by the government in Lebanese newspapers. I identify these two areas as central parts of the way the government has attempted to manage the increased influx of asylum-seekers and therefore argue that they need to be addressed. When considering the other site of the equation, the responses of civil society, I have chosen to focus on three different cases in order to show the diverse strategies used by

civil society actors when contesting the line of the government. The selected cases will be presented in further detail in next section.

2.2 Case study and empirical data

The research design of this thesis is based on the qualitative case study method, which deal with an investigation of a particular entity within a specific timeframe. A case study can be defined as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin 2009). As such, case studies constitute an effective research method to examine contemporary and complex real-life situations, issues and problems within their contexts. Moreover, case studies are ideal when striving after illuminating details from the viewpoint of the participants by using multiple sources of data.

The most prominent critique of case studies is the issue of external validity or generalizability. Critics of the case study method argue that the study of a small number of cases do not offer grounds for establishing reliability or generality of the findings and thereby question how one case can offer anything beyond the particular. However, the case study is defined by interest in an individual case and the object of study is a specific, unique, bounded system (Stake: 2008) This means that case studies are intended to provide a level of detail and understanding that allows for a thorough analysis of the complex and particular nature of a distinct phenomenon.

By taking point of departure in three particular cases amongst civil society it is possible to underline the different components and dynamics, which conform the people involved; their motivations, visions and more importantly how they challenge the situation affecting them. Hereby, the responses to the position of the government become an instrument to grasp the implications at stake from the perspective of civil society. Furthermore, it becomes possible to explore the contestation of the dominating political discourse and direction when it comes to refugees.

When looking at the actions taken by civil society, it becomes clear that there are a multitude of different actors, groups and activities that make up the picture. In some way, they are all connected, as they are all participating in the same debate about how to

manage refugees. At the same time, they are also very independent actors who each have their own visions, strategies and approaches. I have chosen to focus on three selected cases, because they play a central role in mobilizing and organizing people and thereby enable them to take joint action.

First, I want to address what I have termed '*The Propaganda War over Refugees*', which covers the intense debate that emerged as a response to the government's proclamation of running ads in Lebanese newspapers in order to deter asylum-seekers from coming to Denmark. This debate in many ways jumpstarted the formation and organization of people acting together in order to discursively challenge the political line of the government in relation to refugees. Secondly, I want to examine the phenomenon of what have been referred to as '*The Civil Human Smuggler*', which concerns the trend of ordinary citizens transporting asylum-seekers across the Danish borders. This tendency is interesting, because the people involved were willing to violate the law in order to help refugees, knowing that such behaviour could be considered human smuggling and could thus potentially be judged as a criminal offense. Rather than challenging the line of the government discursively, this initiative is an example of how some people have offered direct help to refugees by providing them with a direct service. Finally, I want to include the initiative '*Welcome to Denmark*', which is a newly established network currently functioning as a platform for numerous subgroups involved in different activities related to refugee advocacy. This network is interesting, because it has come to play a central role in challenging the line of the government both through demonstrations, protests and civil disobedience.

By examining those three very different cases it is possible to observe how the activities carried out in the name of civil society are conducted on different levels. Moreover, it illuminates how certain civil society actors challenge the line of the government both discursively and in practice.

The empirical data used to examine the counteractions carried out by civil society is made up by a very diverse collection of sources in order to reach a valid and constructive understanding. First of all, it includes communication and interactions on social media

such as Facebook groups, which provide the main forum for planning and coordinating their steps. Moreover, it contains secondary interviews with spokespersons to the different initiatives, press releases about the activities carried out as well as different articles concerning the struggle of the activists for a more humane asylum policy. It also involves observations from different demonstrations as well as public meetings. The empirical data is selected with the aim of comprehending the resistance from the perspective of the chosen civil society actors themselves. I have chosen not to conduct interviews with the civil society actors in question, as there has been easy access to information about their motivations, visions and measures through their interaction on Facebook as well as through interviews already carried out.

When examining the strategies used in the contestation of the government's deterrence policy, I have chosen three analytical areas of focus. In the first case, the main focus is on the struggle over identity whereas the second case evolves around the struggle over morality and the third case is seen in connection to the struggle over politics. The three cases serve to exemplify how different civil society groups contest the deterrence policy of the Danish government through very diverse strategies. However, it should be pointed out, that the division made is analytical. This means that the strategies used are often intertwined and entail similar components. However, I have deliberately chosen this analytical division as a way to show the diverse components and highlight the different things at stake.

2.3 Choice of theory

The theoretical framework consists of two main parts and thereby follows the dialectic approach of this thesis, which on one hand is concerned with the Danish government's deterrence policy towards refugees and on the other hand seeks to understand the contestations carried out in civil society. As result, the first part of the theoretical framework is related to the management of displaced whereas the second part evolves around civil society.

When examining the way the Danish government has attempted to manage the influx of asylum-seekers in the eye of the Global Refugee Crisis, it is naturally to consider the

concept of the state and especially how it relates to the notion of refugees. Furthermore, it is essential to have a theoretical framework that can illuminate the dynamisms at play when it comes to managing displacement and entering the humanitarian landscape.

The second part of the theoretical framework aims at creating an understanding of the role of civil society, its relation to the state and what kind of challenges civil society encounters when seeking to gain political influence. When seeking to explore how different actors within the Danish civil society seek to challenge the political direction of the Danish government in relation to refugees, the concept of civil society becomes an essential concept to define within the theoretical framework.

Beside the general theoretical framework, I also include theories related to social media and civil disobedience, when analysing the cases, as these has shown to be relevant in order to understand the contest carried out by civil society. The initiatives carried out by the civil society groups that constitute the focus of this study have all used social media extensively when mobilizing support and organizing their activities. In fact, these civil society responses would most likely be unthinkable in their currently form without Facebook. With this in mind, it is important to assess the role of social media in the creation of those civil society groups that has sought to challenge the line of the government.

2.4 Limitations

The fact that the research question takes point of departure in a very contemporary topic, by examining on-going actions, constitutes a challenge in obtaining a complete understanding of the field, as new developments are unfolding on a daily basis. As an implication of this, the original focus has been changed in order to better match the actual situation. Initially the concern of the thesis was the government's announcement of running ads and their proposal to strengthen the rules in the area of asylum. However, both of theses proclamations have since been implemented and turned into reality. Moreover, new actors operating in the name of civil society have emerged. As this indicates, the landscape seems to be constantly evolving both with respect to the position of the government and the derived responses from civil society. Moreover, it is likely that

the political situation will change as the influx of refugees either intensifies or reduces. Nevertheless, the very present-day research topic also implies a genuine need to raise critical questions and therefore speaks in favour of conducting an academic analysis that can address the issue.

2.5 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is structured around 4 main sections. It starts out by pointing out how the global refugee crisis has been constructed by politicians and through the media. The goal of this chapter is to create a basis for understanding the way the political response has been formed. The way the refugee crisis is represented is intimately linked to the way it is managed and thus become a prerequisite for understanding the political strategies pursued. The section problematizes the coverage of the crisis and the tendency of coining it within a discourse of emergency, crisis and danger by asking the sub question: *How has the Refugee Crisis been depicted and which kind of political action does this encourage?*

In section 2, the point of departure is to address the way the Danish government has responded towards the increased influx of asylum seekers in the eye of the Refugee Crisis. As previous described in the delimitation, the focus is placed on the deterrence strategies pursued by the government, which entails the 34 restrictions enacted with the aim of stopping the influx of refugees. Secondly, it includes the notorious add published by the government in Lebanese newspapers in order to warn to-be refugees about the restrictions to be enacted. Moreover, the section critically problematizes the implications of the strategy pursued by the government. The section therefore takes point of departure in the following sub question: *How has the Danish state attempted to manage the increased influx of displaced people in the eye of the refugee crisis through deterrence measures and what are the implications of this strategy?*

Section 3 focus on how the political direction pursued in the eye of the refugee crisis has been challenged profoundly by selected groups within the Danish civil society. The section starts out by mapping some of the main initiatives taken by prominent civil actors in order to dispute and counteract the line of the government. Building upon this, I analyse how forces in civil society seek to re-politicise the way refugees are addressed by using

different means spanning from discursive disputes to civil disobedience. As result, this section is primary occupied by the following sub question: *What were the motivations, visions and means behind the contestations carried out by the selected civil society actors?*

In section 4, I discuss whether the state and civil society could become companions rather than competitors in refugee protection and look closer on the things that make such a partnership difficult to envision. In doing so, I touch upon the different agendas at play in order to show how the content of humanitarian responses depends on who is acting in the name of humanity. Rather than encouraging the role of civil society in supporting refugees, recent developments point to the fact that, the Danish state view it as a problem, when civil society interfere and show solidarity with refugees. The last section problematizes this tendency. With this in mind, the sub-question of this section asks: *Why is it a challenge for the state and civil society to find common ground when managing refugees?*

3. Making sense of an emergency

When seeking to understand the Danish national response to the refugee crisis, it is vital to be aware of the way the refugee crisis has been described or rather constructed by influential actors such as politicians and the media. When using the word constructed, it is to remind that representations are never just reflections of a pre-existing reality, but rather contribute in creating that reality (Berger & Luckmann 2008). Following this, the refugee crisis is a social construct. It is a special way of talking about displacement that encourages certain political actions. The way the situation is depicted is inherently connected to how the situation is managed and thus become an inevitable prerequisite for understanding the political strategies pursued.

Throughout the project, social constructionism is the underlying framework. This implies that the methodological perspective evolves around the belief that access to reality is always through language because objects simply gain meaning through discourses (Berger & Luckmann 2008). However, the way things are represented is never neutral, and knowledge should not be taken for granted as the objective truth (Berger & Luckmann 2008). Through interaction, common truths are created and some forms of action become natural, while others are deemed unthinkable. Either way the different social understandings lead to certain kind of actions and therefore concepts has social consequences. In the end, concepts matter because they constitute reality. Like everything else, the refugee crisis is mediated and made meaningful through the way we talk about it. The crisis is both mediated through the media, humanitarian organizations, academia and politicians. All these actors come to play a central role in attaching meaning to the situation. With this in mind, it is important to be critical towards knowledge that is taken for granted or established as the common truth. Ultimately, the language used to describe the refugee crisis has the potential to maintain, reproduce or transform the social reality. Because of this, it is vital to understand the way the refugee crisis is depicted. With this in mind, the following section problematizes the coverage of the crisis and the tendency of coining it within a discourse of emergency, crisis and danger.

During the refugee crisis a rather ambivalent story about refugees has been revealed; on one hand refugees are presented as poor victims in dire need of humanitarian assistance by various humanitarian and development organizations. On the other hand, politicians tend to portray refugees as a major cause of increasing internal tensions. This might explain why responses to the refugee crisis have so far oscillated between sentiments of sympathy and concerns for order, between politics of pity and politics of control.

The strong emphasis on crisis, emergency and danger has naturally influenced the reactions as well as the management of the situation. There has been no shortage of dramatic descriptions of the refugee crisis, its scope and potential fatale consequences, which become evident when looking at some of the statements outlined by influential political leaders within EU. The prime minister of Hungary, Victor Orban, stated that *“Everything which is now taking place before our eyes threatens to have explosive consequences for the whole of Europe”* (Traynor 2015). The German Chancellor, Angela Merkel described the refugee crisis as the greatest challenge of her time as chancellor (Barkin 2015), while the Italian minister of foreign affairs, Paolo Gentiloni, has stated that *“Europe will either rediscover its soul or lose it for good”* when he commented on the impact of the refugee crisis (Ritzau 2015c).

In the debate surrounding the refugee crisis words such as swarms, tidal waves and floods have been used when describing the movement of displaced people entering Europe. The Prime Minister of UK, David Cameron, talked about a *“swarm of people coming across the Mediterranean”* (Elgot & Taylor 2015) and a headline in the British paper Daily Mail announced that, *“this tidal wave of migrants could be the biggest threat to Europe since the war”* (Burleigh 2015). Following this line, Danish media described how *“A big group of refugees and migrants have stormed across the Danish border”* (Ingvorsen & Petersen 2015). Members of the Danish People’s party even talked about an invasion of refugees (DR 2015). The general secretary of The Danish Refugee Council, Andreas Kamm, received attention when he warned about an outright Armageddon scenario facing Europe (Rychla 2015). Usually representing the humanitarian side of the debate, advocating for empathy and hospitality, he suddenly reminded us that we are to some extent facing something uncontrollable. In addition, pictures of overcrowded boats and large movements

of people on their way through Europe have accompanied the dramatic stories, giving the dramatic terminology momentum.

However, there are several compelling reasons to be cautious about the vocabulary attached to the refugee crisis, as language influences the way we think and eventually act (Berger & Luckmann 2008). Keeping in mind that floods and tidal waves destroy property and drown people, it can be argued that these characteristics should not be applied when describing refugees, who are above all vulnerable human beings in need of protection. While such statements and descriptions of the situation might help create awareness and highlight the need for immediate response, it also impacts the way the response is formed. When such descriptions are used in the debate about the refugee crisis, language becomes a powerful instrument of control, which calls for immediate defence mechanisms and control strategies.

However, the terminology revolving around the discourse of crisis and danger is not the only problem. The debate is also permeated by uncertain and dubious figures. Even Frontex, EU's own border agency, have admitted that many asylum seekers might have been counted more than once as the numbers are found by adding all the EU countries' registrations. Naturally, this implies that many will be counted in several countries. When Frontex announce that 710,000 asylum-seekers have arrived in Europe in the first 9 month of 2015, this number is not necessarily an accurate representation, but might help create a distorted picture of the reality. Moreover, there is a big difference between the number of people who ask for asylum and the number who will actually receive a permission to stay. However, the media and politicians do not always use this differentiation (Refugees.dk 2015). In line with this, there are a few cases, which indicate that the Danish Media has contributed to distorting the situation by publishing numbers that are highly misleading. An illustrative example is the influential press agency Ritzau, which back in September wrote that at least 16,000 refugees had arrived in Denmark over the last twenty days (Ritzau 2015a). However, they failed to mention that the vast majority of these people had continued their journey to Sweden without even being registered in Denmark. To put this into perspective, the total number of registered asylum seekers in Denmark during 2015 was 21.225, where 10.434 of those cases were preceded. In total, 10.856 people were

granted asylum (Ministry of Immigration, Integration and Housing 2015). This illustrates how descriptions and presentations of numbers can lead to misguidance.

The everyday confrontation with a terminology of crisis and danger, emotional pictures and ambivalent numbers all together contribute to an image of Europe that is facing a massive and unmanageable refugee crisis. Above all, this generates anxiety and results in attempts to demonstrate political empowerment. However, it can be argued that the fear that has been generated by the people arriving at our borders and the pictures of people wandering along our highway are out of proportion with the reality. Critical voices have even argued that it is rather the reactions than the influx of displaced people that are out of proportions. The regional director of EU at the International Organization for Migration, Eugenio Ambrosi, has pointed out that the number of displaced people coming to Europe is not dramatic compared to Europe's economic power and population size: *“Nevertheless, Europe is not under siege by migrants. This is not a “crisis” that the EU can’t handle. The number of migrants and refugees arriving are manageable for a still vast and wealthy EU”* (Ambrosi 2015).

The above examples indicate that the debate about the refugee crisis is in sore need of perspective. This claim is by no means an attempt to ignore the gravity of the situation, but rather a way of problematizing the way the refugee crisis has been constructed. Rather than focusing on how to offer persecuted people protection, it has quite ironic turned into a matter of how to safeguard our-selves. This stresses the importance of challenging those subtle patterns of thinking and thereby create room for another approach where refugees are not only treated as emergencies that requires increased border control and yield for deterrence measures.

4. Managing the displaced

4.1 Theoretical framework

This chapter focuses on how the Danish state has sought to manage the increased number of displaced people through deterrence measures. In doing so, it is naturally to consider the concept of the state and how it relates to the notion of refugees. Moreover, it is essential to have a theoretical framework that can illuminate the dynamisms at play when it comes to managing displacement and entering the humanitarian landscape.

The link between the state and refugees

When examining the way the Danish state seeks to manage the increased influx of displaced people, it is naturally to consider the concept of the state and how it relates to the notion of refugees. In doing so it is important to be aware that there exists a very strong association between the notion of refugees and the notion of states. Political refugees flee their country of origin due to fears of being persecuted by their state or because the state cannot provide sufficient protection. As result, the concept of the state is from the outset a very contingent one. Scholars such as Giorgio Agamben and Nevzat Soguk have shown how the humanitarian discourse tends to produces refugees as those who lack what national citizens have and what only a state can provide; a home, a nation, citizenship, identity, rights etc. (Soguk 1999, Agamben 2000). In opposition to this, the refugee is seen as uprooted, without agency and political rights and often portrayed as a victim. Thereby, refugees become a constitutive outside stabilizing the nation-state-people trinity. Ultimately, the system of nation-states both objectifies and abject those unfortunate enough not to belong to any nation-state. However, states are socially constructed and should never be taken as a given point of departure for analysis: *“If the refugee represents such a disquieting element in the order of the nation-state, this is so primarily because, by breaking the identity between the human and the citizen and between nativity and nationality, it brings the originary fiction of sovereignty to crisis”* (Agamben 2000: 21).

Given the symbiotic relation between the concept of refugees and the notion of the state, it is surprising that research about forced migration has not been associated with any

particular state theory. There is a multitude of different conceptions of what the state is and should be. However, many scholars concerned with forced migration tend to employ implicit notions of the state (Gill 2010). This naturally speaks in favour of making the embedded state concept employed in refugee literature explicit. Much scholarship concerned with refugees tends to see the state as an essential entity, which stands apart from society and acts upon it from a distance. Critics of this assumed separation of state and society argue that the boundary between state and society is much more elusive. In fact, this division leaves important blind spots in the debates about asylum and states. Amongst other things, there is a tendency to downplay the agency of social forces in the governance of asylum and to obscure the agency of social actors in the exclusion of refugees. Social actors are often depicted as inherently resistant to any involvement in policies that exclude refugees. However, it can be argued that *“the law is not so much an imposition upon society as a crystallization of pre-existing exclusionary practices. This undermines the notion that states have to calculate and impose exclusionary practices upon unwilling or in compliant social sphere”* (Gill 2010).

With the above-mentioned implications, it can be argued that it is important to be critical towards the distinction between state and society. Rather the focus should be on the increased participation of non-state actors in the determination and implementation of policy outcome (Gill 2010).

Beyond the humanitarian concern

In order to understand how the Danish government has attempted to manage the influx of asylum-seekers in the eye of the Global Refugee Crisis, it is essential to have a theoretical framework that can illuminate the dynamisms at play when it comes to managing displacement and entering the humanitarian landscape. With this in mind, I want to draw upon the work of scholars such as Jennifer Hyndman, Didier Fassin, Michel Agier and Miriam Ticktin, whom have all contributed with useful conceptions and notions within this area.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres, has proclaimed that the refugee crisis calls out for a humanitarian respond and global commitment: *“For an age of*

unprecedented mass displacement, we need an unprecedented humanitarian response and a renewed global commitment to tolerance and protection for people fleeing conflict and persecution” (UNHCR 2015b). However, it is not only humanitarian concerns that guide the measures taken by states when it comes to facing the displaced people reaching their borders.

Jennifer Hyndman has stated that managing refugees are more than a humanitarian question, as it also entails a highly politicised process concerned with balancing the need of refugees against the interests of states. According to Hyndman, an infinite struggle between the restrictive policies and avoidance strategies and the legal and moral imperatives to carry out the obligations of the refugee convention is unfolding (Hyndman 2000). Hyndman proclaims that forced migration is neither passive nor apolitical: *“Borders breed uneven geographies of power and status. Crossing them in the name of humanitarian assistance is a political act”* (Hyndman 2002: 1). Rather states operate with diverse strategies that aim at containing human displacement in a very politicized way. Managing refugees is inextricably linked to refugee containment. The trend of deterring to-be refugees can be seen as a part of a paradigm shift within refugee policy. This change is closely interlinked with a discourse that emphasizes the right of refugees to remain in ones’ country of origin, which stands in opposition to the former discourse of the right to leave when facing danger. Ultimately these kinds of measures prevent states from having to meet the legal obligations and costs of asylum. With this in mind, it can be argued that refugee protection has become less a humanitarian practice and more an effort to contain forced migration and thereby avoid the international legal obligations to people claiming refugee status (Hyndman 2000).

Another interesting notion presented by Hyndman is the observation that the sympathy of displaced persons lies in their location ‘over there’. As they reach the borders of the Global North they turn into foreigners who, to put it gently, face a less enthusiastic welcome (Hyndman 2000). In this way, those whom persecution has turned into the undesirables have also become the undesirables of Europe. The crossing of borders is thus prevented as far as possible and the entitlements linked to refugee status are thereby minimized.

Diddier Fassin also points to the ambivalence in relation to the management of displaced people by stating that the contemporary biopolitics concerning asylum varies between policies of pity and policies of control or what can be explained as an alternation between sympathy and concern for order (Fassin 2005). This oscillation in many ways illustrates the dilemma that exists; the claim of possessing and practicing humanitarian values often conflict with the laws, which at times seem without much humanitarian concern, but rather appears like a tool for managing unwanted immigration. Providing humanitarian assistance to people in need, while at the same time securing the nation against the perceived threats of foreigners is inherently an ambivalent act. In line with this, Lana Feldman and Miriam Ticktin argues that humanitarianism is built on the struggle between conflicting values, while it is: *“(...) marked by an internal tension between rights and needs, between legal forms and ethical practices (...)”* (Feldman & Ticktin 2010: 3). In the end, managing refugees is not only linked to sympathy and compassion, but is also intersecting with fear and security.

In line with this, Michel Agier points to the fact that we need to reconsider the proposition according to which, in principal, humanitarianism excludes the political. According to Agier, the discourse of saving is a powerful one and the humanitarian apparatus fulfils not only moral functions, but also political ones, where government, power, control and assistance are inevitable entangled. Agier describes the humanitarian project as striking with one hand, while healing with another. Within the humanitarian landscape, there is always a desire to control: *“In a context in which some sort of war is constantly brewing, the compassion and the care actually provided by humanitarian projects belong to a politics of ‘containment’ of poor countries and of the migratory flows coming from areas that are politically, socially, or ecologically weakened”* (Agier 2010).

By drawing upon the above scholars, I want to emphasise that managing displaced people is much more than a humanitarian concern about helping vulnerable people. It is also strongly intertwined with desires to control and contain people in order to avoid legal obligations for reasons of security and national cohesion. With these theoretical perspectives in mind, the next section describes the strategy of the Danish government to limit the influx of displaced people and point to some of the implications.

4.2 Dealing with the undesirable: Deterring would-be refugees

The global refugee crisis has naturally influenced the political climate in Denmark like the rest of Europe. During the preceding national election campaign in spring 2015, migration policy was one of the absolute dominant themes discussed and the management of refugees heading towards Denmark was wildly debated. The two largest parties were criticized for having engaged in an inhumane competition about tightening the asylum rules most possible. The results of the national election indicates that concerns about the impact of the global refugee crisis was not only dominant during the election campaign, but also became decisive for the outcome: The right-wing anti immigration Danish peoples party became the second largest in parliament with 21,1 per cent of the votes compared to 12, 3 per cent of the votes at the previous election in 2011 (Thomsen 2015). This indicates that immigration policy was one of the top priorities when voting.

Since the election, deterrence measures have been absolute central in the national political response to the increased influx of asylum-seekers and the Danish government has attempted to make Denmark less attractive for refugees by imposing various restrictions. The restrictions have been criticized by a number of humanitarian organizations and international institutions such as UN and the European council (Therkildsen 2016). Besides enacting restrictions, the government has also made a great effort to inform about those in order to deter refugees from coming to Denmark. This chapter examines the political strategy of deterrence pursued by the state and look into the consequences of the measures taken. It also takes into account some of the criticism raised by political opponents, humanitarian organizations and the international community.

4.2.1 Sending a clear message: Evicting the unwanted

In September 2015, the Danish government launched a controversial information campaign in order to deter refugees from entering Denmark. The campaign consisted of an ad, which was published in 4 Lebanese newspapers and distributed on Lebanese social media. Furthermore, the ad was circulated around the Danish asylum centres (Gormsen 2015). The initiative was announced shortly after the unveiling of a document

supposedly used by human smugglers to help asylum seekers compare the different levels of benefits in Europe. In the document, conditions such as the waiting time for family reunification and the financial benefits available to refugees were allegedly compared amongst different European countries. According to the Danish minister of Integration, Inger Støjberg, the aim of the ad was to inform factually about the conditions for asylum-seekers in Denmark and the many restrictions to be enacted (Lauridsen 2015).

In the ad it is first and foremost announced that Denmark has decided to tighten regulations concerning refugees and a number of affected areas are listed. First of all, the ad informs about a significant cut in social assistance for newly arrived refugees. It continues by stating that those granted temporary protection do not have the right to family reunification for the first year of their residence. Furthermore it highlights that foreigners can only obtain permanent residence permit after 5 years and risk getting their permit evoked before. Additionally, it is stressed that refugees are required to be able to speak and understand Danish in order to obtain a permanent residency and it is emphasized that asylum applications that are manifestly unfounded will be rejected immediately. Finally, the ad points out that there will be a special return centre for rejected asylum seekers to ensure that they leave Denmark as quick as possible (Immigration Service 2015).

While the minister of Integration has claimed that the ad is both factual and objective, experts and NGO's have criticized it for being misleading and for giving refugees a wrong impression of the existing rules regarding asylum in Denmark. The general secretary of The Danish Refugee Council, Andreas Kamm, has stated that it is impossible not to interpret the information as though family reunification has very long prospects for refugees, which he deems unfair as it only concerns a small part of the Syrian refugees (Frich & Abrahamsen 2015). In practice, the rule only applies to refugees who fall under the Aliens Act section 7, paragraph. 3 adopted by the previous government in 2014. However, only a very small percentage of those who is granted asylum in Denmark receive their permit through the new rules regarding temporary asylum. On the other hand, the vast majority of refugees are granted asylum under the Refugee Convention and thus have the opportunity to apply for family reunification immediately. In the same way, it has been pointed out that the information about getting the residence permit revoked is

misleading since this also primarily concerns refugees who have temporary residence through the Aliens Act section 7, paragraph 3, and will have reassessed the basis of their residence permit annually. The risk is much lower for the vast majority of Syrian refugees who are granted convention status, as there is no practice to reassess their stay unless there are significant changes in the home country. The fact that the ad states that asylum applications that are manifestly unfounded will be rejected immediately has been criticized for being completely irrelevant to the Syrian refugees in Lebanon since 98 percent of Syrians who come to Denmark are granted asylum and no one are going through the manifestly unfounded procedure (Frich & Abrahamsen 2015).

As result of the critique, the parliamentary *ombudsman*, Jørgen Steen Sørensen, initiated an official inquiry of whether the Danish government's controversial advertising campaign was in fact misleading (Ritzau 2015b). In the survey conducted, it is concluded that the ad gave an incorrect view of the conditions for asylum-seekers in Denmark, which could very easily have made Syrian refugees decide where to seek asylum on a wrong basis (Sørensen 2015). Even though the information was factually correct when seen in isolation, the report ruled that it appeared misleading in an overall context and left refugees from Syria with an incorrect perception of what their situation would be if arriving in Denmark.

In general, the critique raised highlights that the ad does not represent the Danish conditions in an accurate way, as it indicates that the mentioned conditions apply to a much broader segment. The most of the information in the ad have no relevance to the vast majority of Syrian refugees, who are the primary target of the campaign. While the ad may not state any information that is factually wrong, it is neither a neutral way of communicating about the conditions in Denmark. The authorities are obliged to ensure that information is easily accessible and accurate so people are able to seek information about the opportunities that are relevant to their situation. In this particular case, misleading information becomes a serious problem because it affects people who face vital decisions that can have a significant impact on their future.

This notion of containing the displaced, as outlined in the theoretical framework, seems highly relevant in relation to the ad published by the Danish government as a mean to deter asylum-seekers to enter the country. Following thus, the ad can be seen as a strategic way to constrain 'would-be' refugees in their home country and thereby keep a distance to the displaced.

From controversial to tendency

Even though the deterrence strategy, pursued by the Danish Government, has received much criticism and has left Denmark with an ambiguous reputation, it has also become an inspiration to the other Nordic countries, as both Sweden and Norway seem to have copied the idea to some extent. This development is interesting, because it indicates a slide in the normative framework. What was described as a very controversial and inhumane way of responding to a humanitarian crisis is now far from an isolated example, but rather the beginning of a tendency where national agendas seems to surpass international obligations.

In Sweden, the second biggest party of the opposition, *demokratarna*, distributed flyers to the many refugees who are stuck in the hard hit Greek island Lesbos. The outlined message is not far from that of the Danish ad as it tells refugees to stay away. Only this time, the place they should keep away from is Sweden. In the flyer, it is stated that forced marriages and polygamy will never be accepted and that wearing niqab and burqa in public will be banned (Ritzau 2015d). The flyer reveals that there are some very well founded stereotypes at play based on what to eat and how to dress when living in Sweden. Things that are by no means connected to whether a person is entitled to asylum. However, it sends a clear signal that people who are different will not be accepted. Norway has followed a similar approach, however using a somewhat more contemporary platform. Rather than publishing ads in newspapers or handing out flyers, they have created a communication campaign on social media in order to keep asylum seekers at distance. On the Facebook site 'Stricter asylum regulations in Norway', the government inform about the restrictions that will be enacted in the area of asylum. "*On the site, we want to give correct and sober information. But it's not exactly a Welcome to Norway*", the state secretary Jøran Kallmyr has pronounced (Raabæk 2015). Apparently,

the site is a respond to the growing number of asylum seekers who have recently arrived in Norway.

As the above section indicates, the ad published by the Danish government, is not a unique case, which only makes it more important to address the potential consequences of such deterrence strategies. Before discussing the larger impacts, the restrictions recently enacted by the Danish government will be addressed.

4.2.2 Imposing restrictions: Making Denmark a less attractive destination

The warning in the ad about the restrictions to be enacted for asylum-seekers in Denmark soon became reality. In November 2015, the Danish Government announced 34 restrictions intended to make Denmark less attractive for asylum seekers and thereby minimize the influx of displaced people. One week later, the first 13 restrictions were already passed with less than 24 hour for the public hearing. In January 2016, the next set of restrictions was enacted under what has been called The New Asylum Deal (Refugees.dk 2016).

In the Asylum Deal, it is argued that the conditions within the area of asylum are closely connected with how appealing it is to choose Denmark as the destination for seeking asylum, which calls for tightening the rules:

The government has been convinced for a long time that the conditions connected to asylum matters in relation to how attractive it is for people to come to Denmark. Therefore, the government introduced - as one of the very first initiatives - a new and lower integration allowance. In line with this, the government will now tighten further the conditions for asylum and access to Denmark (The Prime Minister's office 2016).

Like the controversial ad, the bill that aims at making Denmark a less attractive destination for asylum seekers has received widespread critique and disapproval from politicians, NGO's, and international institutions such as UN and the European court of human rights. While international outrage has focused on a proposal allowing the police to seize cash and valuables from refugees in order to help pay for their initial stay, activists have criticized the proposed three-year delay for family reunifications for clashing with international conventions and human rights (Ritzau 2016a).

In general, the restrictions in the new Asylum deal include 4 main areas; the conditions for asylum-seekers, deportation of rejected asylum-seekers, the opportunities for the government to expand the capacity of accommodation and detention and finally the possibility of the police to control the influx of foreigners into Denmark and to uphold order (The Prime Minister's Office 2016).

The first set of restrictions that was passed in November 2015 mainly affected rejected asylum-seekers. It includes extended access to detain rejected asylum seekers as well as a shorter time limit for them to leave the country. Moreover, there will be increased control with foreigners in deportation centres through electronic access control and extended use of frequently duty to register. Additionally, the state will have access to deviate from the normal Danish civil law when accommodating asylum seekers. Fewer rooms are accepted when housing refugee families and rules about noise and environment are suspended. Moreover, municipalities can be forced to run asylum camps and private entrepreneurs can be used to perform tasks concerning foreigners. Additionally, it will be allowed to detain asylum seekers on the ground of establishing their identity and the restrictions also include the limitation of the right to be put before a judge within 72 hours of detention for foreigners. Finally, the state has access to stop busses, trains and ferries in order to carry out ID control (The Prime Minister's Office 2016).

The next set of restrictions passed in January 2016, primary impacts the conditions of asylum-seekers who have been granted asylum. First of all, asylum will be granted for a shorter time. Where convention status was previous granted for 5 years, it will now be reduced to 2 years and protection status will be given for one year. The restrictions also contain a further delay of the right to family reunification. In the future, refugees with a residence permit under §7,3 in the Danish Alien Act regarding general protection will have to wait for 3 years before they can apply for family reunification, whereas the rule used to be 1 year. Moreover, self-payment of transport for family reunified members is introduced, which means that refugees now have to pay the transportation costs of those family members they bring to the country (The Prime Minister's Office 2016).

The restrictions also have various economic implications. For instance, the cash-allowance for asylum seekers will be reduced and fees for certain types of applications and complaints are reintroduced. Moreover, it is now possible to withdraw the funds of asylum-seekers. In practice this means that the police has access to search asylum seekers and confiscate means with a value above 10.000 DKK, except items of personal value, to cover expenses for accommodation, food and health service.

Finally, there are now stricter rules for obtaining a permanent residence permit. First of all, Danish language requirements have been raised. Additionally, there are requirements of ordinary full time job for minimum 2 1/2 years out of the last 3 years compared to 3 out of 5 years and education and part time jobs will no longer count. Criminal offenses will lead to a penalty period and more types of crime will lead to permanent exclusion. Moreover, foreigners will first be able to apply for permanent residency after six years in the country instead of the current five. However, this period can be reduced to four years if you fulfil two out of four supplementary conditions such as displaying 'active citizenship' by participating in civic organizations, passing a citizenship test, steady employment for four of the past 4.5 years, receiving an annual salary of 270,000 DKK for two years prior to application, or the completion of the highest Danish language level (The Prime Minister's Office 2016).

The recent laws enacted by the Danish government can be interpreted as being at least as much concerned with the interest of the Danish state as it is about assisting displaced people in need. In this way it supports Hyndman's claim that managing displacement is a matter of balancing the interest of state with the needs of refugees. Moreover it exemplifies Fassin's claim that asylum policy varies between sympathy for the displaced and concern for order.

4.3 The consequences of deterrence

The measures taken to address the increased influx of displaced people both affect the access to the country as well as the conditions for refugees who are already here. When considering the strategy behind the policy, the tactic is to degrade the living conditions of people that have already been granted protection in Denmark to such an extent that it

sends a clear message to would-be refugees that result in them refraining from coming. This policy is worrying, in particular, because it contains an explicit normative argumentation of using vulnerable people that we already agreed to protect, that is genuine refugees, as means to deter other people. In the following section, the deterrence strategies pursued by the government is critically assessed. First of all, I want to problematize the process of reducing a complex global humanitarian issue into a matter of limited national interest. Moreover, I want to address the dubious role Denmark has taken on by paying tribute to the conventions meanwhile avoiding obligations. Finally, I want to point to the possible effects of the domestic refugee deterrence policy on the larger international response.

Reducing a humanitarian issue into a matter of limited national interest

The strategy of deterrence, which is pursued by the Danish government, is first of all problematic because it blurs the real problem by pretending that the situation can be solved through domestic politics. What we witness is thereby a reduction of a complex, international political and humanitarian issue transformed into being a matter of limited national political and economic interest. Politicians might have an interest in actively pursuing this line because it makes the problem more manageable in a domestic, electoral context. However, the real problem remains. In the short term, the 'nationalization' may make both the problem and solution more manageable to cope with, however it risks ending up having an unwanted boomerang effect. In other words, the policy pursued is in risk of creating just the opposite of what is intended. If the ambition is to reduce the number of asylum seekers coming to Denmark as stated by the Minister of Integration, the question is not so much how to keep refugees away. The decisive aspect is rather what will make regions of origin such as Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey and the hardest hit South European countries willing and capable to stay committed to the global refugee regime and live up to their core commitments under the refugee convention. The real problem occurs when the neighbouring countries to the conflicted areas close their doors and pursue domestic affairs like Denmark. The result of this policy is quite inescapable; every time a country refuses to take responsibility or simply collapse under the pressure, there will be one less country to participate in the game of distribution and burden-sharing. It is highly doubtful that refusal of taking responsibility in Denmark and among other European

countries will make the regions of origin more keen on remaining the primary host of people fleeing war and persecution.

Paying tribute to the conventions meanwhile avoiding legal obligations

The Refugee Crisis has to a great extent revealed the schizophrenia characterizing the European response towards international refugee protection. Paying tribute to the conventions meanwhile avoiding obligations, Denmark has, along with other EU countries, adopted a role of duplicitous commitment to the international refugee regime.

Developed states have what might charitably be called a schizophrenic attitude towards international refugee law. Determined to remain formally engaged with refugee law and yet unwavering in their commitment to avoid assuming their fair share of practical responsibilities under that regime, wealthier countries have embraced the politics of non-entrée, comprising efforts to keep refugees away from their territories but without formally resiling from treaty obligations (Hathaway & Gammeltoft-Hansen 2015).

Despite the common European asylum system based on the Dublin agreement, the Danish state has attempted to handle the situation on their own by adopting unilateral policies that are attended to push the burden on to other countries. The policies are designed to achieve the goal of keeping refugees away and at the same time avoid any legal liability. Behind these strategies is a wish to be perceived as formally respecting the international law while in practice avoiding taking significant part of burden sharing when it comes to providing protection. In this way, developed states like Denmark can continue to push the obligations of less wealthy states to respect the Refugee Convention. Thereby developed states are in a position where they can continue to place the burden on the countries that host the vast majority of the world's refugees (Hathaway & Gammeltoft-Hansen 2015).

It is vital to highlight, that the current refugee crisis is not just a natural phenomenon in the sense that it solely reflects the numbers of violent conflicts in the world. It is also a product of the failure of the policies pursued to manage displaced people. Seen in the light of this, there is a need for a more honest approach to the issue of international refugee protection that can break with the institutionalized schizophrenia, which allows western countries to

avoid their responsibility under the refugee convention by actively pushing people away (Hathaway & Gammeltoft-Hansen 2015).

The effects of domestic refugee policy on the global humanitarian response

In addition to the above stated consequences of the refugee deterrence policy, it is relevant to discuss the greater effects of these recent changes in domestic policy in relation to the general response of the international community. The question at stake here is how the recent anti-refugee policies in Denmark, a country with a reputation linked to international justice and human rights, will affect the global humanitarian response to the on-going refugee crisis.

When looking at the bigger picture, more than 1,3 million asylum seekers entered EU during 2015 (Eurostat 2016). As most scholars, politicians and humanitarian organizations can agree on, the problem is much larger than the policies or the capacity of any given country can manage. This also means that the problem needs to be addressed at its source, rather than merely treating its symptoms. Even if Denmark rolled back the deterrence policy and openly welcomed all asylum seekers at its borders this would not solve the crisis. However, the recent laws perceived as anti-immigration make up a dangerous precedent for the future handling of refugees across other European countries. Along with other Scandinavian countries, Denmark is often described as an ideal-typical example of egalitarian values and respect for human rights. Recent trends towards policies aimed at discourage refugees might justify similar policies across Europe as traditionally accepting humanitarian countries follow this line.

In fact, there are already signs of other countries' adopting similar policies resulting in a race to the bottom regarding the minimum acceptable treatment of refugees. Both Switzerland and Germany have enacted policies regarding seizing assets from migrants (Huggler 2016). As this implies, the recent policies enacted in Denmark make up a negative precedent in relation to the future treatment of refugees. Moreover, it arms far right groups as they can now legitimize their own anti-immigrant policies by citing the steps taken by Denmark.

Finally, Denmark is not the only country facing a refugee capacity issue. It might happen sooner because of the number of refugees in relation to the domestic population. As other countries reach the threshold at which refugees are perceived to constitute a burden, enacting anti-refugee policies to stem and reduce the number of refugees may be a less-condemnable option than closing the borders to all refugees. However, this compromise will push many refugees right back into the conditions they seek to escape and can thus have fatal consequences as well.

Sub-conclusion

In the above section, I have described how the Danish government has sought to manage the increased influx of displaced people in the eye of the global refugee crisis through various deterrence measures. Focusing on the anti-refugee ad and the New Asylum Deal containing 34 restrictions within the area of asylum, I have shown how the Government has aimed at making Denmark a less attractive destination. Where the official aim of the ad was to inform factually about the new conditions for asylum-seekers in Denmark, the parliamentary *Ombudsmand* ruled that the ad gave an incorrect view of the conditions for asylum-seekers in Denmark, which could very easily have made the Syrian refugees decide where to seek asylum on the wrong basis. However, the restrictions were also met with extensive criticism for clashing with international obligations and human rights. Adding to this criticism, I have pointed out, that the tactic of degrading the living conditions of people that have already been granted protection in Denmark is worrying, because it contains an explicit argumentation of using vulnerable people that ought to be protected as means to deter other people. Moreover, I have pointed out, that the strategy of deterrence is problematic because it blurs the real problem by pretending that the situation can be solved through domestic politics. This reduction of a complex, international political and humanitarian issue risks ending up having an unwanted boomerang effect. When wanting to reduce the number of asylum seekers coming to Denmark it is not only a matter of keeping refugees away. Rather, the significant question is what will make regions of origin and the hardest hit South European countries willing and capable to stay committed to the global refugee regime. However, Denmark has, along with other EU countries, adopted a role of duplicitous commitment to the international refugee regime by paying tribute to the conventions meanwhile avoiding obligations. In an attempt to handle the situation on their

own, the Danish government has adopted unilateral policies. Behind this strategy is a wish to be perceived as formally respecting the international law while in practice avoiding taking significant part of burden sharing when it comes to providing protection. This could make up a dangerous precedent for how other European countries will handle displacement in the future.

5. The Rise of Civil Society

5.1 Theoretical framework

This chapter focuses on how different actors within the Danish civil society seek to challenge the political direction of the Danish government in relation to refugees. As the concept of civil society plays a major role in this thesis, it is an essential concept to define within the theoretical framework. Before diving into the empirical data, the concept of civil society is explored. The focus is placed on the role of civil society, its relation to the state and what kind of challenges civil society encounters when seeking to gain political influence.

Civil society – a contested concept

The concept of civil society is on various agendas. It has become a fashionable buzzword and is widely used as a concept, perhaps even overused. According to some scholars, civil society is one of the most misunderstood and misused concepts and ambiguity still surrounds the concept (Laine 2014). Due to its highly complex nature and resistant to being categorized or interpreted through a singular theoretical lens, the concept of civil society is difficult to define. There is no universal definition of civil society but in most definitions, the concept refers to the structure outside governments and public administration. The term thus refers to a wide array of non-governmental organizations that can be based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific or religious considerations. The definition of civil society is by no means a static concept. Rather its meaning constantly evolves (Banulescu-Bogdan 2011). The concept of civil society is both traditional and modern, as it's meaning has fluctuated considerably through time. There is no classical conception of civil society, but different interpretation of it, and what is meant by civil society still remains open to diverse interpretations (Laine 2014).

The civil society and the state

It is difficult to define civil society without defining its relation to the state. Civil society has never been a concept that stands alone. Historically, it has often been paired with the

concept of the state. More than being linked they have helped define each other: *“Society and state act as two necessary elements that are separate but contiguous, distinct but interdependent, internal articulations of the social system as a whole”* (Laine 2014: 12).

In contemporary practice, civil society is presumed to form the antithesis of the state. However, some scholars have moved beyond this traditional binary division by arguing that civil society is not necessarily against or supportive of the state. It may also be in dialogue or forming a partnership with the state. There is increasingly awareness of the need to rethink the undisputed linkage to the concept of the state. After all, civil society is a social construct:

No matter what the linkage is – be it juxtaposition, symbiosis, or something in between – it restricts the concept of civil society within the frame of a particular nation state. In doing so, it limits civil society’s characteristics intent of building an association of free, equal, and like-minded persons united not by citizenship but by ethos (Laine 2014: 15).

There are good reasons for the state to include the voice of civil society in decision-making. For instance, it can increase the political legitimacy of the government: *“Civil society engagement may benefit governments by contributing to enhanced deliberation and more effective implementation of policies and delivery of public services, and increased ‘legitimacy’ for governments actors”* (Banulescu-Bogdan 2011: 13). However, some of the critical voices of greater civil society involvement argue that such partnerships risk compromising the independence of civil society and thereby the ability to hold governments accountable. Despite the benefits of state-civil society collaboration such as improving policy and retaining legitimacy, civil society organizations have had a limited role in policy debates so far (Banulescu-Bogdan). One of the most illustrating examples of this is the first set of restrictions in the new Asylum Deal, where civil society was given less than 24 hours for contributing with hearing statements. In this case, the government lacked willingness to engage with civil society in a meaningful way. Ultimately the state determines what political opportunities are available and therefore the ability of civil society to engage is dependent upon the willingness of the government to include them in decision-making. However, there are situations where the goals and priorities of governments and civil society clash (Banulescu-Bogdan 2011).

The plurality of civil society

There are much good to be said about the potential role of civil society. Civil society groups are known to infuse policy debates with new perspectives and critical on-the-ground knowledge. From civil dialogue come great ideas that can lead to important solutions. Moreover, they have potential to play an important role in pointing towards right-based principles that can guide policymaking. Because they operate outside the government, they are uniquely positioned as watchdogs and can ensure that governments are held accountable for their actions. In line with this, civil society is a potential place for critical opinions and a control resource of the government (Banulescu-Bogdan 2011). However, it is important to stress that most of the established NGO's in Denmark receive funding by the state, which naturally influence their possibility to be critical towards the government. With this said, the focus in this study is placed on civil society actors that can be characterized as smaller grassroots organizations that do not receive funding by the state and are thus more inclined to be independent and critical towards the position of the government.

In general, civil society plays an important role in bridging the state and the society by connecting the state with its constituents: *“Civil Society provides a crucial link between governments and the communities they represents – infusing policy processes with grassroots knowledge to which governments may not otherwise have access and lending legitimacy to government action”* (Banulescu-Bogdan 2011: 1). Civil actors enable interest groups to have a voice and include marginal groups, which deepen the possibilities for citizen participation. However, it is important to stress that civil society does not necessarily link with democratic and socially just outcomes. It can also be unrepresentative, biased or illegal. In other words, not all civil society organizations necessarily pursue the common good (Laine 2014).

Civil society organizations are characterized by a great diversity, which connects to their different functions and visions, the resources available to them, their capacity, their influence and reach. With this in mind, civil society cannot be regarded as a homogenous size that is speaking with one coherent voice. Rather, different groups within civil society

have diverse objectives that might be complementary but could potentially also be conflicting (Banulescu-Bogdan 2011).

Accepting that the concept has different meanings makes it possible to move forward and beyond broad generalizations and normative thinking: *“Recognizing that civil society does mean different things to different people is one of the keys to moving forward, because it gets us beyond false universals and entrenched thinking”* (Laine 2014: 13). With this in mind, a more contextualized approach is needed to better understand the role of various civil society organizations. Using the concept in a universal context easily obscures more than it illuminates.

In this thesis, civil society will be conceptualized as a public space where diverse societal values and interests interact and where people associate to advance common interests. The boundaries of this space are both complex and blurred. Moreover, they are negotiable and easily penetrable as people seek to influence the society. It does not belong to the distinct area of the market, the state or family, but exists where these merge (Laine 2014). When using such a conceptualization, I thereby use a framework that places less emphasis on organizational forms and a stronger focus on the functions and roles of informal associations, movements and collective citizen action.

5.2 Presenting a counter-narrative

The restrictions imposed by the government and the controversial ad warning refugees about entering Denmark has not only been subject of much debate and met with extensive criticism. Furthermore, a variety of reactions from a wide range of actors operating in the name of civil society have targeted the strategy of the government. While the government has been focusing on imposing restrictions and deterring would-be refugees, initiatives disputing these signals have spread. Apparently, many Danes have reached a point where they feel a need to address the way the government is handling the refugee situation. Refusing to be passive, they have taken action.

What started as a few initiatives taken by citizens fed up with the policy pursued by the government has now developed into a broader sort of movement existing of many different

subgroups. When observing the landscape made up by different civil society groups, it becomes clear that this has grown into being both a very rich and diverse one. At one hand the different groups and initiatives are connected to the extent that they are all occupied with ensuring a human treatment of refugees in one way or another. On the other hand, they are very diverse when it comes to their functions, influence and reach. In relation to this, it is important to stress that the different initiatives do not in any way make up a homogenous group or speak with one coherent voice. However, they are in many ways complementary to each other.

This section explores how some of the most prominent civil society actors have challenged the line of the government by looking into the motivations, means and visions of these contestations. In doing so, the focus will be on three very different types of civil society actors that engage in the area of refugees in highly diverse ways. On one end of the spectrum they are providing direct services to asylum-seekers and on the other end they are lending their voice to change the policies affecting refugees.

5.2.1 The Propaganda War over Refugees

One might argue that the tension between the government and certain civil society actors that was created by the anti-refugee ad has developed into some kind of 'propaganda war' over refugees in Denmark. One of the first counter-actions witnessed was when the head of Refugees Welcome, that gives legal advice to asylum seekers, Michala Bendixen, forestalled the government's plan to run advertisements in order to deter refugees. As a reaction to the proclaimed ad she published an article in the British Newspaper, The Guardian, stating a number of reasons why refugees should head for Denmark. According to Bendixen, the aim of the article was to offer a more nuanced picture of the rights of refugees in Denmark: "*The Danish government is warning migrants not to apply for asylum – but we are not a xenophobic nation, in fact, there are compelling reasons to come here*" (Bendixen 2015).

In the article, Bendixen does the exact opposite of the government's announcement of deterring refugees, as she issues an invitation to refugees by telling them to come to Denmark and lists a number of reasons why Denmark is an attractive place for refugees.

In her argumentation she points to the fact that Denmark is a rich and stable country, which have the capacity for more refugees. Moreover, she highlights that Denmark has one of the highest recognition rates for refugees in Europe, which indicates good chances for receiving protection. Finally, she argues that the case-processing time is among the fastest in Europe and points to benefits such as free education (Bendixen 2015).

Bendixen was amongst the first people who publicly challenged the government's campaign and thus became a central figure in the following debate about refugees. Her appeal was shared more than 13.000 times on Facebook and thereby came to signal the widespread disapproval of the government's approach of deterring refugees amongst the population (Refugees Welcome 2015).

In the following time, the announcement of the government's plan to run refugee-ads in foreign newspapers gave birth to several other groups. One of the initiatives that gained widespread support was the Facebook group "*Welcome refugees – No to Støjberg's deterrence-campaign*", which became the rise of yet another central opponent to the deterrence measures carried out by the government. The group was established by three ordinary citizens who felt discontent with the inhumane image of Denmark being painted in the ad (Enevoldsen 2015). The group soon experienced tremendous support and grew considerably in size.

According to the spokesperson, Marianne Rosenkvist, the Facebook campaign was motivated by a sincere wish to question the way refugees were talked to and about. Moreover, it was meant to address the premise of the government's ad built upon the assumption that people who are fleeing war cynically calculates where welfare benefits are highest: "*It is simply obscene. People are fleeing because they fear for their lives, not because they want to go to Denmark in order to receive high benefits from the state*" (Facebook 2015a). In this way, the movement was fundamentally about disputing the suspicion of refugees that the government, according to this group, had engaged in and signal that people fleeing war should be helped instead of being held under suspicion. Finally, the campaign was build upon a wish to signal that there is another voice in Denmark than the one represented by the government, which welcomes refugees:

“It is outstanding that so many people have come together because they want a decent Denmark. A Denmark that does not turn its back on people fleeing from bombs and torture! A Denmark that is ready to help people in need. Let all of Europe and the rest of the world hear that there is another voice in Denmark. A voice that says WELCOME TO REFUGEES - NO TO SCARE TACTICS” (Facebook 2015a).

The initiative ultimately became the stepping stone for a wider struggle against the restrictions facing refugees and a call out for a more humane treatment: *“What we would love to accomplish is to see Danish politicians stop making life harder for the refugees coming here, but we also think that it’s important to let people know in Denmark and abroad that many Danes want to stop this de-humanization of refugees”*, Marianne Rosenkvist stated in an interview in Jyllands-Posten (Redder 2015).

Soon after the establishment of the Facebook group, the initiators launched a fundraising campaign with the aim of gathering enough money to run pro-refugee ads as a way to counter the government’s announced anti-refugee ad. The group succeeded in gathering sufficient money to run a pro-refugee advertisement in the British newspaper The Guardian extending a warm welcome to refugees. Later, the ad was also published in the German newspaper Die Tageszeitung and in the Danish paper Politiken. According to the initiators, the aim of the ad was to let refugees and other countries know that not everyone agree in the perspectives presented by the Danish government. This perspective is also stated in the pro-refugee ad:

(...) we're not all like minister Støjberg and the rest of the Danish government. Many of us are bidding refugees a warm welcome. And many of us want to help those who are fleeing torture, bombs and persecution. We do not believe that families in war-torn countries should learn that a Danish cabinet minister is planning an advertising campaign based on the ill-conceived and erroneous logic that families calculate where they may profit the most from settling as refugees. Not in our name! (Pro-refugee ad 2015).

With this counter-narrative, the movement denounced the government’s intention to discourage asylum requests. Moreover, they made clear that many people in Denmark disagree with the government’s official line: *“So dear fellow human being, there is another voice in Denmark – a voice respecting peace, solidarity and human decency. That’s why*

we extend a warm welcome to Denmark and denounce the government's scare tactics" (Pro-refugee ad 2015).

When taking a critical look on the pro-refugee ad one can wonder if it will make any difference and whether the money collected would have been better spend directly on people in need. As response to this, the spokesperson stresses the importance of working against the dehumanization of refugees and towards influencing the way the government addresses the situation. In her opinion, there is a need for a new agenda, which is ultimately a prerequisite for making a difference. Yet another objection is the fact that a majority of the population agrees with the line of the government and the need to control the influx of refugees coming to Denmark. As a response to this, Rosenkvist points out that the perception of refugees is linked to the way we talk about them, which can only be changed if contested:

Opinions are not fixed. I think many Danes feel that we can and must help. If we start to see refugees not only as numbers and people who want to take advantage of our welfare system, but instead see them as people who need help and ultimately wish to live a life like us with a job and a family, then I think many want to help (Go' morgen Danmark 2015).

The Facebook initiative soon became an inspiration for other activists sharing the same dissatisfaction with the government's approach. A group called *People Reaching Out* eventually initiated a similar campaign, which led to a second set of ads apologizing for the government's approach. The new advertisements was replicas of the original ads with one important postscript telling readers that many in Denmark disagree with the government's official line: *"A statement from people to people: Sorry for the hostility towards refugees expressed here. As ordinary Danes we wish to extend our sympathy and compassion to anyone feeling war and despair. #PeopleReachingOut"* (Facebook group 2015b) According to the initiator, Lotus Turell, it is important that the original ad does not get to represent the Danish response alone as it does not give a righteous picture of the Danish spirit: *"We hope this will spread as drops in the ocean, so refugees worldwide will be met with sympathy and human compassion - just as we would like to be met, if we were fleeing from war and misery"* (Facebook group 2015b).

It can be argued that the ad ends up repeating and restating the position of the government and thereby in some way strengthening it rather than offering an alternative narrative contradicting the policy of the government. Offering an apologize for the position of the government renders civil society rather helpless and powerless. In general, one can question whether the propaganda war challenged or rather reproduced the political discourse of the government. The counter-actions amongst civil society in many ways placed even more focus on the position of the government by bringing more attention to the government's controversial ad.

A struggle over identity

After having outlined how different civil society actors sought to challenge the government's anti-refugee ad, the next section will be centred on analysing the things at stake in the propaganda war over refugees.

When looking at the statements linked to the counter-actions of the ad, it becomes clear that the uprisings from these civil society actors are based on more than a mere humanitarian wish to help desperate people in need or ensure better conditions for refugees. It is also a very clear contest of the image linked to the Danish population, which the policy pursued by the government has created. An image the activists refer to in terms such as xenophobic and inhumane: *"We will not give in to this narrative without a fight. Denmark is not a xenophobic country – we are known to be happy, easy going and generous"* (Bendixen 2015). Some even express a feeling of being taken hostage in this fight over the right to define Danish culture: *"The small group of Danes for who humanity does not reach further than the border shall not label Danes as a xenophobic population. Those people shall not make a hostage of what defines the Danish people"* (Facebook 2015a).

When considering the fact that neither Bendixen's article nor the pro-refugee ad was published in Lebanese newspapers, it is worth rethinking who the responses were framed to. Bendixen's article was published in the British newspaper The Guardian, whereas the pro-refugee ad was published in the Danish national newspaper Politiken and later in the Guardian and the German newspaper Die Tageszeitung. If the purpose had been to

ensure that the message got directly through to refugees, these newspapers would probably not have been the prime choice. Rather than being pointed directly at refugees, this indicates that both the article and the ad were also intended to target the international society. They were not only a matter of reassuring refugees that they were welcome in Denmark, but indeed also a question connected to the struggle over national identity. Following this, I hereby argue, that the resistance, to a large extent, can be viewed as a response to the way Danish people were indirectly being represented as unfriendly and self-centred.

When framing the propaganda war over refugees as a struggle about identity, it is interesting to consider the characteristics that are believed to be central for Danish identity. Naturally, it would be misleading to speak of one homogeneous Danish identity. However, there are certain characteristics, which the majority of people recognize as important elements of being Danish. Egalitarianism is often considered fundamental to Scandinavian societies (Bruun et. al 2011). An ideal that maintains that all humans are equal when it comes to their fundamental worth or social status and should therefore be treated as equals with the same political, economic, social and civil rights. The anti-refugee ad can be said to represent a threat to this egalitarian ideology as the xenophobic image tribute opposite values and is build upon fear and contempt of foreign people from different cultures.

Choosing newspapers such as The Guardian and Die Tageszeitung as their platform for communicating can furthermore be seen as a way to put pressure on the government by displaying them as inhumane to the international society. It might be that the government's strategy of making Denmark a less attractive place was only meant to target displaced people and keep would-be refugees from entering the country. However, it can have severe consequences if the international community starts perceiving Denmark as a xenophobic country that do not take international conventions, in this case the right to protection, seriously. When speaking through international newspapers, the civil society actors made clear that campaigns such as the anti-refugee ad does not only scare to-be refugees from coming. It also risks compelling citizens from other European countries to consider investing, working or studying elsewhere. In other words, open-mindedness,

tolerance, equality and solidarity are not only a matter of treating refugees properly, but also a matter of the international reputation linked to Denmark. I hereby argue, that the resistance also contained an aspect of discontent with the potential harm the image could inflict on the broader society.

The propaganda war over refugees indicates that refugee policy has a much wider impact than on refugees themselves. It also touches upon essential concepts such as identity and nationalism, which in many cases has been and continues to be a political point of dispute. This might help explain why so many Danes felt compelled to participate actively in condemning and disputing the anti-refugee ad. In the end, the way vulnerable people such as refugees are treated reflect much more than how to manage displaced people. It also put to the very frontline the general values perpetrating society. Put differently, it touches upon core values of how to treat fellow human beings in need of help. In doing so, it suddenly concerns everyone and not just activists worried about the treatment of refugees in particular. The parent might start asking himself what kind of society he wants his children to grow up in. The socially marginalized may start wondering if they will be the next public enemy. Following this, one can argue that the figure of the refugee has become a symbol of a much broader debate.

Political participation on social media: Activism or slacktivism?

The civil society actors who engaged in the dispute of the government's anti-refugee ad managed to infuse the policy debate with new perspectives by arguing that there is another voice in Denmark. In line with this, they played an important role in pointing towards moral funded principles by demanding to show solidarity towards people in need. Through Facebook groups, the initiators succeeded in establishing a room where people could express their discontent with the government's deterring measures and scare tactics. The pro-refugee ad became an easy accessible way for citizens to participate in the dispute over the position of the government in a very concrete way. In mobilizing and organizing the resistance towards the government's ad Facebook played a central role. It made it possible for the few initiators to effectively advocate for change and resulted in a quite responsive group of activists amongst civil society. Through the Facebook group, people had easy access to voice their discontent with the controversial strategy pursued

by the government. In the end, this fostered conversation across people who might not encounter each other in their ordinary social life and ended up unifying people in a struggle they felt the need to engage in. However, one can question whether their efforts lead to any real political change.

Where the Internet has earlier been viewed as a potential remedy for the decline in political participation (Ayres 1999), scholars have in recent years grown sceptical about the positive impact of the Internet in relation to political change. Few scholars dispute that social media is a great platform for drawing attention to a political cause. Moreover, it enhances participation by facilitating the distribution of information on activities and events to a broader public and makes coordination easier for activists (Ayres 1999; Bennett, et al. 2008). However, a number of scholars question whether it makes a significant, lasting impact. In line with this, they have pointed towards different tendencies, which downplay the impact of online activism and state that its ability to generate real engagement is overstated (Christensen 2011).

One of the negative tendencies mentioned is that the increased opportunity for being political active through the Internet is a pointless showcasing that evolves around making the activists feel good about themselves rather than to address urgent political matters (Shulman 2005; Hindman 2009). In other words, they claim that the Internet activates citizens in a politically ineffective way, since the activities do not have any impact on outcomes in the real world.

One of the more recent critiques raised against virtual participation is that online activism is typically nothing more than *slacktivism*. The term refers to political activities that have no impact on real life political outcomes, but mainly serve to increase the feel-good factor of the participants (Morozov 2009). The concept generally refers to activities that are easily performed such as joining a Facebook group or signing an online campaign, and is used as a critical stance against activities that do not express a full political commitment. In this way, the term slacktivism has become a counterweight to the otherwise positive connotations of social media. *Slacktivism* are seen as unwilling to get their hands dirty and do the efforts required to achieve their goals. It refers to those who happily click the Like

button on Facebook or make other similar supportive gestures, but do not create real change.

When the viral social issue of the hour permeates social media it often occurs to be deeply felt social activism. However, one can question whether the simple act of copying, pasting and sending something forward constitute real activism. In some cases, participants are not even asked to come up with their own words, and it is not always clear if they have read the entire content of the information they share. In line with this, one can argue that the propaganda war over refugees was an easy way for people to show their discontent, but did not in itself create any real political change. In this view it can be seen as a way to reclaim another image and disassociate from the enforced xenophobic identity that the anti-refugee ad, according to some activists, led to.

Additionally, worries have been expressed that political participation through social media can potentially derail political participants away from the more effective forms of participation that have traditionally been used (Putnam 2000). Traditionally, effective movements evolved from personal connections and strong ties. In contrast to this, activism associated with social media is dependent on weak ties like Facebook users that have never met and can thus be characterized as loose networks. However, one can argue that the people involved in the online campaign against the government's scare tactics and the online fundraising leading to the pro-refugee ad might have been actively involved in political activism that stretches beyond the viral world such as the demonstrations against the restrictions enacted by the government. Following this, one can argue that activism on social media by no means have to exclude other types of political activism.

The concept of slactivism challenges the limits of activism by questioning when an action should be considered real activist. In line with this, political participation through social media challenges the more classic understandings of activism. However, one can question why attending a demonstration should be considered more activist than reposting viral content on social media or joining a Facebook group. In both cases, it is very difficult to measure whether these kind of actions lead to real political outcomes and when it does not incline political change. Degrading activism through social media to slactivism is both used

by opponents with different political opinions as well as other self-identified activists who feel a need to distinguish themselves as real activists from the slactivists.

Another critical stance against social media point to the fact that it is first and foremost a platform where people engage in personal branding. Social media are popular stages for self-expression and self-promotion (Van Dijk 2013). In other words, individuals present their identity by sharing news articles, 'liking' pages, or re-posting other people's writings. Whether consciously or not, the profiles created on social media often become a self-promoting narrative. As result one can argue that, social issues become labels of political alignment and provide people with an appearance of social awareness. They become a means to the end of social gain, rather than of social change. Through joining the Facebook Group against the deterrence measures of the government and supporting the pro-refugee ad, people had the possibility of showcasing their opinion and promoting their political and moral beliefs. With this in mind, the initiative was not only about pursuing political change, but must also be viewed as related to self-presentation.

Social media might be said to revolutionize political activism by connecting people to like-minded in previously inconceivable ways. But along with these technologies, a few challenges arise. When examining the relationship between the rise of social media and the emergence of new forms of protests, it is vital to pay attention to both the possibilities and the risks that social media brings to the contemporary forms of protests. When it comes to assessing the impact of these new politics of dissent, there remain different opinions to whether activism through social media should be dismissed as *slacktivism*, or considered a genuine platform for citizens to vent their political opinions. However, as the above shows, there is reason to be sceptical when it comes to assessing the potential of real political outcomes of political campaigns fluctuating through social media. Not at least when it comes to cases such as joining Facebook groups, where the primary aim may be to signal preferences to friends and family rather than achieving real-life political changes. Moreover, one should note that the end-goal of online activism is often limited to raising awareness. As valuable as it is to widen people's understanding of the world, no tangible change flows from awareness alone. On the other hand, it can be argued that we need to rethink our conceptions of what counts as political. Following the women's movement of

the 60's, one can argue that the personal is indeed political. Additionally, it can be argued that raising awareness is the first step in achieving change. Pointing to the inhumane acts of the government and the negative implications might encourage people to vote different next time and thereby change the political power.

Sub-conclusion

In the above section, I have first of all argued that the counter-reactions of the government's anti-refugee ad evolved around more than a humanitarian wish to help refugees. It was also a contest of the image linked to the Danish population and a resistance against being portrayed as xenophobic. Put differently, it was not just a matter of reassuring refugees that they were welcome in Denmark, but indeed also a question connected to the struggle over national identity. Secondly, I have argued that the counteractions were intended to target the international society rather than directed at refugees and that the resistance contained an aspect of discontent with the potential harm the image could inflict on the broader society. Finally, I claim that refugee policy has a much wider impact than on refugees themselves. The ways vulnerable people such as refugees are treated reflect much more than how to manage displaced people. It also put to the very frontline the general values perpetrating society. Put differently, it touches upon core values of how to treat fellow human beings in need of help. In this way, the refugee has become a symbol of a much broader debate.

5.2.2 The Civil Human Smuggler

In the wake of the propaganda war over refugees a quite specific and rare episode became the beginning of a very different kind of response from civil society. On the 6th of September 2015, 200 asylum-seekers crossed the Danish border from Germany (Ejsing 2015). Soon, Danish media was permeated with exceptional pictures showing a large group of asylum-seekers walking along the highway. In the following week, 5000 asylum-seekers and migrants came to Denmark (Maach 2015). All of a sudden, the refugee crisis moved closer to Denmark and became highly visible in a sense not experienced before. While the policy priority had so far focused on keeping away refugees, the politicians had ultimately neglected and rejected any discussion of what to do when refugees arrived at the border, which resulted in a situation of chaos and disorder. In the following days, many

Danes showed a remarkable willingness to provide various kinds of help and assistance to the desperate refugees (Sand 2015). While some quite innocent provided food and clothing, others helped the asylum-seekers cross the border to Sweden. This trend of transporting people across borders is of particular interest, because these people were willing to violate the law in order to help refugees, knowing that such behaviour could be considered human smuggling and could potentially be judged as a criminal offense.

The episode described above put forward the question of what makes ordinary people willing to go to such length for people they have never met. For some of the people operating as human smugglers, the involvement was based on an impulsive decision when the opportunity presented itself. It became a better alternative than to simply follow the situation passively through the news. Other people participating in the smuggling have expressed a feeling of being forced to act as human smugglers by the Danish politicians who in their eyes refused to take responsibility and instead responded to the situation by publishing ads warning refugees about coming to Denmark (Nyeng 2015). What was perceived as an inhumane treatment of refugees became the stepping-stone for the activism: *“Today, the inhumane refugee policy of Fortress Europe made me a human smuggler (Lynard 2015)“*.

Some of the people involved argued that the poor conditions for asylum seekers in Denmark let them to help people on their journey towards Sweden: *“We do it because of the refugee situation in Denmark. Being a refugee, one cannot expect a life in luxury, but you should be treated like a human being, and I do not think that’s the case in Denmark”* (Lynard 2015). Others refer to the experienced void of political action as an explanation for their involvement. In a time where the government appeared paralyzed to many, actors within civil society simply took over: *“When has it become acceptable, that civil Danes must take responsibility for such a huge disaster. It’s absurd that Denmark has become a country that people flee from”* (Nyeng 2015). Some people reacted on the ambivalence, which according to them, characterized the government’s response: *“In my opinion it is absolutely abominable that we have a situation where on the one hand we do not want them in Denmark, but on the other hand we do not want to let them travel onward”* (Nyeng 2015). The ambivalence is also highlighted in relation to the Danish involvement in some

of the conflicts that produce refugees and the opposed action of refusing to take care of the victims: *“It can’t be right that we fight Isis in order to save people - but meanwhile we let the same people on the run lie in the roadside without taking care of them”* (Nyeng 2015).

Many of the involved admit that they were worried about breaking the law and having to face the potential consequences. However, a fine was considered a low price to pay compared to the help they could offer people in need. In other words, they were ready to be held accountable for their actions and considered the potential consequences a small price to pay when fighting for a greater good. One of the civil human smugglers even considered the possible stain on her criminal record a hallmark witnessing an attempt to help fellow human beings in need (Nyeng 2015). Other people pointed to the fact that they only risked a small part of what the refugees have risked on their journey and argued that the joy and gratitude they received were worth the risk.

In the following section I want to address why some citizens chose to engage in such an extreme activity as human smuggling. Moreover, I seek to highlight some of the limitations connected to this kind of activism and point to some of the counterproductive effects.

Filling out the void of political leadership

The indignation leading civil people to act as human smugglers must first of all be viewed in the light of the chaos that surrounded the situation of the sudden visible influx of displaced people. In other words, the reaction was a confrontation with the drama, which all of a sudden unfolded in front of people. When analysing why some people suddenly chose to act as human smugglers, it makes sense to distinguish between two dimensions.

Assisting asylum-seekers across the borders can first of all be understood as a way to offer immediate humanitarian support to specific people in need. Following this line, the people involved were compelled to act because they felt immediate empathy and solidarity with those fleeing war and persecution and longed after being reunified with relatives. This reaction might be connected with the fact that the destiny of human lives was no longer so distant. It could no longer be reduced to headlines or abstract numbers but became visible

in a new way, which lead civil society to gather in the name of solidarity to find another way to deal with the displaced.

However, the organized way of helping refugees by illegally transporting them across borders also has a more complex political dimension. More than being a spontaneous humanitarian response carried out by civil Danes, it can also be viewed as a form of civil disobedience against the government's asylum policy. Civil disobedience became an efficient instrument to express the general dissatisfaction towards the government's way of dealing with refugees. Smuggling refugees simply became a protest against the hesitation and lack of action, which according to some of the civil human smugglers characterized the government's response to the displaced people crossing the Danish border. For many it appeared as though it was not just the government, but the entire political system that collapsed when facing the group of refugees on the Danish highway. Many Danes experienced a complete lack of political leadership, where the responsibility to deal with the refugees instead fell in the hands of the administrative system and the individual police officer. From this perspective, the reactions from the civil society can be viewed as an attempt to fill out the void of political leadership. Beyond being an act of civil disobedience it also functioned as a normative framework guiding the political direction towards taking responsibility and showing solidarity. Smuggling refugees can thus be seen as both an immediate humanitarian help to specific people in need and as an action of civil disobedience against the government's asylum policy. As such, it was not just another humanitarian response to suffering people that reifies the construction of the crisis as purely humanitarian and non-political. It was also highly political in the sense that the human smuggler was defying and challenging the government's void of action.

The emergence of the civil human smuggler has profoundly challenged the dominant image of the "cynical smuggler" who operates in order to exploit people's misery for profit. In opposition to this, the civil human smuggler is a symbol of the humane lifesaver. While the cynical smuggler has in many ways been blamed for the problems related to the refugee crisis, the making of the civil human smuggler has managed to restore a focus on the politician's responsibility for addressing the situation, because the civil smugglers to a great extent displayed the vacuum that defined the political response.

The fact that people deliberately decided to violate the law and risk being penalised indicates that this is not a matter of narrow interests but rather revolves around fundamental values, which were considered at risk by the people involved in the smuggling. In the light of this, the civil disobedience can be seen as an appeal to fellow citizens and their sense of justice. Moreover, it points to the fact that the more traditional ways of influencing decision makers was considered exhausted. Despite the fact that the activists obviously challenged the law, they still express an overall loyalty to the rule of law, since the actions were carried out in public, and the activists were willing to take their punishment.

In general, the civil smuggling has been characterized by transparency. The deliberate violations of the law have been openly organized and coordinated through Facebook groups and in some cases it has even been documented through photos of refugees in the back seat of the car. Moreover, several people have come forward and told about their involvement in interviews in multiple newspapers and in live television thereby encouraging other people to join their course. This implicates that an important aim of the disobedience was to draw attention to the problem. By using this form of civil disobedience, it became possible for a small group of people to tell the rest of the population and those in power that fundamental values are at risks. Civil disobedience thus constituted an effective way of communicating because it made it possible to point out problems to both the remaining public and political decision makers. Due to its controversial nature, it succeeded in attracting severe public attention. However, it is important to realize that this kind of activism has some clear limitations and that there might be some undesirable and even counterproductive effects.

Limitations and counterproductive effects

There are some clear limitations in relation to the role of the civil human smuggler. The biggest constraint might be that the protest did not have any concrete demands, which limits the chance of it having a persistent political effect. It is thus unlikely that the protest could create any major political changes. The civil disobedience was thus primarily a protest against the existing practices, and cannot be regarded as an attempt to offer

constructive plans for political or institutional solutions. The ultimate challenge for thus consists of transforming the protest into more specific demands, so the efforts can become a catalyst for real changes.

One might question whether the civil disobedience of transporting non-registered refugees to Sweden is in fact suitable for the political purpose of protesting against the government's asylum policy and response to the crisis. There seems to be a conflict between the immediate humanitarian inclination to help refugees in reaching Sweden and then the political aim of the civil disobedience. In other words, it seems counterproductive to protest against Denmark taking to few refugees by transporting refugees out of the country.

In this way, the civil disobedience has to some extent exposed the confusion and ambivalence characterizing the response to the refugee crisis. In general, the usual points of orientation in the migration debate have been dissolved. It is quite contradictory, that the Danish Peoples Party demands about increased border control and registration of all refugees will probably lead to an explosion of refugees entitled to asylum in Denmark. On the other hand, the people involved in the fight for better conditions for asylum seekers in Denmark, are actively involved in helping refugees to get away from Denmark.

Those ambivalent reactions indicate that the general political considerations come second when facing a person of real blood who is hungry, tired and traumatized. The focus is suddenly to help this human being to meet the most basic. With this in mind, the civil disobedience enacted by the Danish civil society might reflect a more fundamental and perhaps less political protest, which prioritizes a specific human being's hope of safety and security over a system that according to those civil actors does not allow this.

Sub-conclusion

In the above section, I have argued that the act of assisting asylum-seekers across the borders can be understood as a way to offer immediate humanitarian support to specific people in need. A reaction connected with the fact that the destiny of human lives was no longer so distant and could no longer be reduced to headlines or abstract numbers but

became visible in a new way as refugees suddenly walked along the Highway. However, I have also argued that the phenomenon of the civil human smuggler furthermore has a more complex political dimension as it can also be viewed as a form of civil disobedience against the government's lack of action. It became an effective way to express the general dissatisfaction towards the government's void of action. Smuggling refugees simply became a protest against the hesitation and lack of action, which according to some of the civil human smugglers characterized the government's response to the displaced people crossing the Danish border. The reactions from the civil society can be viewed as an attempt to fill out the void of political leadership. In this way, it was not just another humanitarian response to suffering people, which reifies the construction of the crisis as purely humanitarian and hence non-political. It was also highly political in the sense that the human smuggler is defying and challenging the government's way of managing refugees. Finally, I have argued that the emergence of the civil human smuggler profoundly challenged the dominant image of the "cynical smuggler" who operates in order to exploit people's misery for profit. In opposition to this, the civil human smuggler was regarded as a humane lifesaver. The making of the civil human smuggler has managed to restore a focus on the politician's responsibility for addressing the situation, because the civil smugglers to a great extent displayed the vacuum that defined the political response.

5.2.3 The People's Movement for Refugees

It is not just the controversial ad published by the government that has been met with scepticism by civil society groups. Nor were the refugees walking on the highway the only occasion leading to action amongst civil society. The many restrictions, which has since been enacted, and thereby the more general political direction has also fostered resistance.

Welcome to Denmark is one of the prominent actors, which play a central role in challenging the line of the government and displaying disapproval of the new restrictions. The group emerged on the basis of an open public meeting held in Copenhagen in September 2015 where more than 500 citizens participated. According to the initiators, the group was formed as a response to the lack of political action and the harsh tone against newcomers (Facebook Group 2015c):

We have emerged as a people's movement based on two things: An individual and collective sense that refugees and immigrants deserve to be met with open arms and a frustration that European asylum policy is not working, and that the political leaders both in the EU and Denmark are not taking on their responsibility (Facebook Group 2015c).

Since their first meeting, the group has gained support from many like-minded and now has more than 7800 followers on Facebook. Rather than being a group, Welcome to Denmark consider themselves a network existing of different subgroups:

Welcome To Denmark is a diverse, volunteer-driven network that works across a wide range of groups and voluntary initiatives to support and help refugees. We are a fundamentally democratic, open and diverse initiative: Those who take part in Welcome To Denmark drive it forward (Facebook Group 2015c).

In their relative short lifetime, the network has grown into being a platform for numerous subgroups involved in very different activities. A short time after their creation, Welcome to Denmark managed to gather approximately 50.000 people in front of the parliament for a demonstration showing solidarity with the newcomers. The demonstration received more support than any demonstration regarding refugee or migration policy has gained in many years and thereby sent a clear message to the politicians. *"We are here to show our indignation with the system that are not welcoming, and we are here to show our anger over the European system, which kills thousands of people at the borders of Europe,"* one of the initiators, Bue Rübner Hansen, stated in her welcome (Jensen 2015).

In the following month, one of the subgroups called *'The Welcome Committee'* managed to gather approximately 30.000 Danes for a protest in favour of a humane treatment of refugees on the opening day of the parliament. According to the initiators, they wanted to emphasize that everyone have the right to be treated fair and equally and that people who are fleeing from war and persecution have the right to asylum:

We believe that we are moving in the wrong direction in terms of the way we treat people who are fleeing war and persecution. We want to live in a country where we treat each other properly. Therefore, we invite everyone to take part of the demonstration in favour of humanity and respect (Facebook Group 2015d).

Despite their success of mobilising a historical number of people for their demonstrations,

Welcome to Denmark felt a need to change their strategy and find new means to counteract the line of the government. As result, they held a public meeting introducing civil disobedience as a way to step up the resistance. At the meeting they made clear that demonstrations were not going to change anything in itself:

During the autumn there have been many demonstrations with tens of thousands people on the streets against the government's immigration policies, but all protests have been totally ignored. It is obvious that it takes more than this to stop the government's attack on the rights and lives of the refugees (Welcome to Denmark 2015).

According to the network, the fact that the successful demonstrations did not encouraged the politicians to rethink their political line towards refugees rendered visible the need for a new and enhanced approach:

Petitions, demonstrations and appeals to the politician's inhumane side can no longer stand alone. The government has proven that they are indifferent. If we want to stop the government from destroying the lives of numerous refugees we have to do better. We need to protest in a way the politicians can no longer ignore. Therefore, we propose strategic and diverse use of civil disobedience as a mean to defend the rights of refugees (Welcome to Denmark 2015).

According to Welcome to Denmark, using civil disobedience means to act in contradiction to orders, recommendations or expectations from political, cultural or social authorities in society. This implies that one acts according to own reasoning and moral. The philosophy behind the new approach is to interfere with the governments plan to such a degree that it does not have any choice but to rethink it:

The goal is to develop a movement that gradually becomes more expensive, more troublesome and more politically difficult to relate to. If we do it right, it will eventually be easier for the government to comply with our requirements than to enforce their inhumane policy. This is how we will stop the government's attack on the world's refugees (Welcome to Denmark 2015).

Despite encouraging people to act disobedient, Welcome to Denmark however encourage people to follow a few ethic guidelines. These recommendations points out that violence or vandalism will not be accepted and thereby makes clear that disobedience does not need to be illegally nor violent. However, it can be a challenge to find a balance of acting

disobedient and meanwhile not disturbing ordinary citizens and thereby create more resistance towards refugees than support.

On the 9th of January 2016, Welcome to Denmark used disobedience as a way to protest against the newly established border controls between the Danish-German border as well as the transporter's liability imposed in Sweden. The new rules implied that people travelling from Denmark to Sweden, who do not hold valid identity papers, as well as travellers from Germany to Denmark, who do not have passports, will be denied to travel across the border. Consequently fewer refugees will have the opportunity to reach Scandinavia and seek asylum here. In a protest against this, 800 activists showed up at Copenhagen Airport and tried to board the train to Sweden while refusing to show identification (Skjødt 2016). The goal of the disobedience was to put pressure on the government to work for a joint European solution rather than pursuing national interests:

Together, we will ride the train without showing any ID, to put pressure on the Danish and Swedish governments to work for a common European solution instead of limiting the refugees ability to cross borders. Border controls and transportation liability does not solve the real problem: that we live in a time where people are forced to flee (...) The politicians can try however they want to push the so-called "refugee problem" around from country to country, but our protests will follow wherever necessary! (Facebook Group 2015c).

In the following section I want to look closer on Welcome to Denmark's strategic use of civil disobedience and the tendency of people acting upon their moral beliefs in defiance of the law.

From talking about change to acting

Welcome to Denmark has become a platform where critical opinions regarding the line of the government can be exchanged and transformed into action such as protests, demonstrations and acts of civil disobedience. While having different expressions, those actions have one thing in common; they all serve to display the discontent felt amongst people in a very tangible way. Through their voluminous demonstrations they have managed to unite activists and create a stir that shows that the asylum policy of the government will not be left uncontested. The network has succeeded in standing out from

the mass by using alternative measures such as strategic use of civil disobedience that has the advantage of being difficult to ignore.

In the initial stage of their existence, Welcome to Denmark managed to successfully gather people for demonstrations. Despite the fact that the network has later expressed a feeling of being ignored, these happenings however had one important effect. It united people who felt dissatisfied with the position of the government and made very visible that they were not alone, but rather part of a relatively big group. In this way, it rendered visible the possibility of taking a stance against the asylum-policy pursued. Put differently, the demonstrations exposed to people that it is possible to act upon the disapproval. In this way, welcome to Denmark offers a platform for those who wish to influence the situation and grant people the opportunity to show their compassion through concrete actions instead of being passively supportive. The 50.000 people gathered in front of the parliament remain a strong image of likeminded coming together in order to pursue change through joint effort.

Welcome to Denmark explicitly state that they consider civil disobedience an effective tool to counteract the position of the government and uses it both purposively and strategic. The idea of civil disobedience was introduced by David Thoreau in 1848. Since then civil disobedience has been considered a mechanism of democracy and one of the ways citizens can express disagreement with the authorities (Kimberley 2007). For Thoreau, civil disobedience is an act of wilful resistance achieved by not obeying the law. He believed that people's first obligation is to do what they believe is right and not to follow the law mandated by the government (Thoreau 1991). However, the concept was profoundly developed by John Rawls, who defined civil disobedience as a public, nonviolent, conscientious political act contrary to the law, which is used with the aim of bringing about a change in the policies of the government (Rawls 1971).

Civil disobedience is characterized by being political, public and nonviolent by nature. It is political, because it addresses the ruling majority and because it is motivated and justified by political principles such as the principle of justice, which regulates the political structure and social institutions. Moreover, civil disobedience is targeted the public and is performed

openly in the public as the aim is to make the public more conscious in order to change the desired law or the policies. As nonviolent, these actions respect the given political system in general and recognize other people's sense of justice (Kimberley 2007).

Civil disobedience can thus be understood as a temporal, public and demonstrative suspension of commonly accepted social rules and regulations in the context of usual obedience. As such, civil disobedience is a form of democratic opposition and offers the opportunity to resist injustice in adherence to the law. It is an instrument of social change that can be justified when other means of political struggles have failed.

Welcome to Denmark use civil disobedience as a mean to challenge the particular rules and policies of the government regarding refugees. Their strategic use of civil disobedience can be perceived as an attempt to move from symbolic protest to actual change. Disobeying involves moving pass simply talking about politics and beginning to act instead. Where demonstrations and protests are about speaking up, acting disobedient is about making real resistance in order to change the conditions affecting you.

Welcome to Denmark constitute an example of how people have started to take the law into their own hands in objection to what is believed to be an inhuman asylum policy. It exemplifies how some activists are now using their own judgment of compassion and acts upon their moral believes in defiance of the law. Practicing civil disobedience build upon a belief that hiding behind the masses or behind laws and norms of society cannot be justified morally. By using civil disobedience, Welcome to Denmark challenges the commonly accepted laws and norms and keeps the politicians alert and in constant dialogue with the changing public opinion. Moreover, Welcome to Denmark, to some extent, succeed in reintroducing ethic and moral questions in the political realm. However, one can question how much the law can be bend in the name of ethics and humanity?

The notion of solidarity is invoked as one of the main reasons for people's engagement. However, solidarity is not regarded in terms of a shared burden, but rather as a common commitment both to the refugees but also to the political culture in general and the potential future development of Denmark. Once again, the debate about refugees is

symptomatic of a much broader discussion about politics and humanitarianism.

Sub-conclusion

In the above section, I have argued that Welcome to Denmark has become a platform where critical opinions regarding the line of the government can be exchanged and transformed into action such as protests, demonstrations and acts of civil disobedience. Welcome to Denmark has become a place where people have a voice and thereby offers an alternative to those feeling powerless and left without the possibility of influencing the situation. People get the opportunity to show their compassion through concrete actions instead of being passively supportive. I have also argued that the strategic use of civil disobedience can be perceived as an attempt to move from symbolic protest to actual change as disobeying involves moving pass simply talking about politics and beginning to act instead. Welcome to Denmark constitute an example of how people have started to take the law into their own hands in objection to what is believed to be an inhuman asylum policy. It exemplifies how some activists are now using their own judgment of compassion and acts upon their moral believes in defiance of the law. By using civil disobedience, Welcome to Denmark challenges the commonly accepted laws and norms and keeps the politicians alert and in constant dialogue with the changing public opinion.

After having examined the tree different cases, I want to use the knowledge obtained to discuss the barriers existing when it comes to envision a partnership between civil society and the state in relation to refugee protection.

6. The state and Civil Society

As the previous two chapters have highlighted, the Danish society is marked by a stark contrast, which has also evolved in many other European countries in the face of the refugee crisis and the increased influx of asylum-seekers. At one hand, it is marked by a radical, but yet influential political rhetoric perceiving refugees as a potential threat to national values, identities and security, which has led to anti-immigration policies. On the other hand, there is also an enormous number of people volunteering and welcoming refugees through civil society initiatives, which indicates that the refugee crisis has also encouraged a wave of solidarity. While the weaknesses of national and supranational policies has been displayed in the eye of the refugee crisis, the strength of civil society groups has come to the forefront. One can argue, that the void of political action is being partially filled by civil society (Bojovic 2016).

The civil society actors, examined in this paper, have shown much support of the newcomers arriving in Denmark. While some groups have provided direct assistance to refugees, others have focused on advocating for their rights. These initiatives brought forward by civil society groups are important because they fill gaps that the state is not capable of. First of all, civil society groups are able to provide support in relation to the arrival of the newcomers and more important they play a central role when it comes to long-term inclusion in society.

6.1 Competitors or Companions in Refugee Protection?

The rise of civil society actors can be interpreted as a direct reaction to states and supranational institutions that have not been able to respond adequately to the refugee crisis. However, civil society is meant to be complementary to the state and not a substitution. Acknowledging the important role of civil society in the initial response to the refugee crisis should not be a crutch for the states nor the EU. The potential of the solidarity shown within civil society can never make up a substitution for institutions and organizations (Zugasti 2016).

Following this line, it can be questioned whether the approach occupied by the idea of filling out the gap is constructive when envisioning the role of civil society actors in the eye of the global refugee crisis? One can argue that this negative standpoint against national governments is not the best way forward. Rather than viewing civil society and the state as opponents, the focus should be placed on how the two of them could partner up. Not as opposites but as benefactors.

Both the Danish government and the many civil society groups have pointed to the gravity of the situation and the need for a humanitarian response anchored in respect for human rights. At first glance, many of the civil society groups and the government share similar humanitarian values and goals such as protecting human rights and therefore could become partners fighting a common cause. However, it does not take much to see that the Danish government and many civil society groups differ considerably in their objectives. The divergences display that the content of humanitarian responses depends on who is acting in the name of humanity. Even though the same language is used it does not necessarily reflect a common vision.

In order for civil society initiatives to achieve a desired and continuous effect, support from the policy environment is necessary. However, a symbiosis between state and civil society does not come without challenges. This becomes obvious when juxtaposing the humanitarian engagement of the state and the civil society. While civil society is in a position where they can prioritize the human rights of refugees, the state also have to prioritize security and sovereignty. While the responses of civil society actors dispute the lack of focus on refugees' rights and protection, the national response focuses on stemming the flows and strengthening the borders. This in many ways makes it hard to envision a symbiosis between the two. A great number of the civil society groups examined in Denmark are directly against the government's political line and are not merely revolving around humanitarian issues, but positioned in a highly political borderland. The contradictory objectives and priorities between moral funded and security-focused agendas will probably continue to constitute a barrier in terms of collaboration. Due to the different agendas, civil society plays a significant role in ensuring that the state's response do not overlook human rights on behave of the security perspective. In

this way civil society initiatives becomes buffer actors between the state and the people in need. They mediate the shortcomings of policies responding to displaced people's needs.

Rather than encouraging the role of civil society in supporting refugees, recent developments point to the fact that the Danish state view it as a problem rather than a help, when civil society interfere and show solidarity with refugees. The last section problematizes this tendency.

6.2 Criminalization of solidarity with refugees

The figure of the civil human smuggler has not only been praised for showing acts of solidarity and humanity. On the contrary, people involved in the act has been both charged and sentenced with a criminal offense. From September 2015 to February 2016, 279 people have been charged under people trafficking laws in Denmark (Ritzau 2016b). Apparently, these charges seen within Denmark are part of a wider trend. Recently, the Greek police pressed charges involving prison sentences of up to 10 years to three Spanish lifeguards from the group "ProemAid" and two Danish volunteers from the group "Team Humanity" for rescuing refugees on Lesbos (Micallef 2016). In another case, that has gone viral, a British man was accused of smuggling a four-year old Afghan girl from Calais refugee camp to her relatives in the UK (Ward 2016). The most radical example seen comes from The European union, who put forward a proposal of criminalising volunteers who helps refugees on the Greek islands (Waterfield 2016). Tony Bunyan, the Statewatch Director of Europe, has stated that the proposal of the European Council will *"criminalise NGOs, local people and volunteers who have worked heroically to welcome refugees when the EU institutions did nothing, while other plans would incorporate those who "register" with the police to work under state structures. In a humane and caring EU it should not be necessary to "register" to offer help and care to people who have suffered so much already"* (Bunyan 2016).

Now the first rulings in the cases of people being charged of human smuggling in Denmark, in relation to the episode of refugees walking on the highway back in September 2015, has been executed. In January, a man was fined 5,000 DKK for driving an Afghan family from the German border (Secher 2016). In March, a known Danish author and child

rights' activist, Lisbeth Zornig, was together with her husband convicted of people smuggling for helping a Syrian family to get to Sweden. As result, they were each ordered to pay a fine of 22.500 DKK (Nøhr 2016). Common for the two cases is that what was carried out as an act of kindness and compassion has now been convicted as a criminal offence.

The court rulings have prompted responses from many Danes, who deem it unfair, that citizens with the intentions of helping people in need are now punished for their acts. For instance, a subgroup of Welcome to Denmark called "Medmenneskesmuglerne" has organized a protest in front of the court in Copenhagen against people charged for human smuggling while claiming that "*only a cynical system prosecutes those who help people in need*" (Facebook Event 2016). According to the group, their mission is to stop the criminalization of people who help refugees (Medmenneskesmuglerne 2016). By showing up in front of the court, the people involved showed that they stand together with the accused and urge that they are not punished. Helping people who are on the run is viewed as an act of compassion and on their Facebook group they call for a society that encourage that kind of actions rather than discourage them.

We want a society that encourages compassion. A society where the state and the politicians support humanity. Today, Denmark does the opposite. Instead of supporting the volunteers who help refugees in our country, the state and the police uses punishment to scare people from showing compassion (Medmenneskesmuglerne 2016).

The protest is one of the ways, in which people have shown solidarity with the prosecuted and build upon the belief that it is the law that is wrong rather than those who helped refugees in distress. Following this line of thoughts, it should not be illegal to help people who flee from war and persecution, but rather a human and moral obligation: "*Let us show that it is not a criminal offense to help fellow human beings fleeing war. We are many who believe that those who are accused of trafficking acted according to humanity*" (Facebook Event 2016).

Another example of the solidarity with people judged for human smuggling is a very popular fundraising carried out to cover the fines. Within hours of the verdict regarding

Zornig and her husband, ordinary Danes started raising money to cover their fines and support others convicted of smuggling. The fundraising was organized through the online fundraising site, Caremaker, where the title states that honorary awards are collected to people who has been or will be convicted with fines for acting decent and with humanity (Caremaker 2016). On the site it is furthermore argued that it is unacceptable that help between human beings is being criminalized and that people who offer their help is considered and convicted as human smugglers. After the court ruling, politicians have started to comment on the ruling. Pelle Dragsted from the Danish Party Enhedslisten tweeted that he was ready to contribute financially to the fine imposed on Zornig and thanked her for helping children on the run (Christiansen 2016).

Scholars have previous pointed out how it is not only irregular migrants who are subject of criminalisation. In fact, there is also a corresponding criminalisation of those who express solidarity with migrants (Provera 2015, Neville et. al 2015). While the EU Facilitation Directive regulates criminalization of facilitating undocumented migrants' entry and stay, it gives member states the possibility to exempt humanitarian assistance from criminalisation, especially when it is not carried out as an activity for financial gain. However, this exemption does not seem to be applied much (Neville 2015).

The criminalisation of acts of solidarity with refugees and acts motivated by humanitarian instincts risks ending deterring civil society from getting involved. In the end, it is a clear political signal that could potential end up discouraging citizens to help refugees. Some have questioned whether intimidating volunteers is a way to undermine the support for a more humane solution to the crisis and ultimately weaken one of the most explicit actors against EU's tough line on irregular border crossings (Sigona 2016). On the other side, one can argue that this strategy could potentially backfire, while the rulings in Denmark shows that it has only fostered yet a new wave of solidarity and more initiatives from civil society aimed at counteracting what is thought to be criminalisation of highly appreciated values such as solidarity, compassion and humanity.

7. Conclusion

The research of this paper has dealt with the Danish national responses to the increased influx of displaced people in the eye of the contemporary global refugee crisis. On one hand it has examined the policy responses implemented by the Danish government with focus on deterrence measures. On the other side of the equation it has addressed the contestation of this political line amongst civil society by focusing on three different cases.

In order to understand the way the Danish state has sought to manage displacement, the paper initially examined the construction of the refugee crisis critically. As result, it was highlighted how there has been a strong emphasis on crisis, emergency and danger, where words such as swarms and floods has been used to describe the movement of people crossing the borders into Europe. This tendency is disturbing because those words are normally associated with destruction and death and are therefore not appropriate characteristics of refugees, who are above all vulnerable human beings in need of protection. The construction has inevitably influenced the way the political response has been formed. First of all, the language used has become a powerful instrument of control calling for immediate defence mechanisms and control strategies. As result of this, displaced people are first and foremost treated as emergencies that require increased border control and calls for deterrence measures. Ultimately, this implies that safeguarding our-selves has become the top priority at the expense of helping those in need of protection.

By looking at the Danish government's response to the increased influx of displaced people, it has become clear that deterrence measures have been absolute central. The Danish government has first of all attempted to make Denmark less attractive for refugees by imposing various restrictions and thereby minimize the influx of displaced people. Additionally, the government has made a great effort to inform about those changes through the controversial information campaign aimed at deterring refugees from entering Denmark. When looking critically at the strategy pursued, it is in particular worrying because it involves degrading the living conditions of people that have already been granted protection in Denmark as a mean to refrain would-be refugees from coming and is

build upon a normative argumentation of using vulnerable people that we agreed to protect, that is genuine refugees, as means to deter other people.

Considering the consequences of the deterrence policy pursued by the government it is primarily problematic because it blurs the real problem by pretending that the situation can be solved through domestic politics. What is inherently a complex international, political and humanitarian issue is thus transformed into being a matter of limited national political and economic concern. Even though this 'nationalization' may make both the problem and solution more manageable to cope with, it risks ending up creating just the opposite of what is intended. The ambition of reducing the number of asylum-seekers is not just a matter of keeping refugees away. Rather, the decisive aspect is what will make regions of origin and the hardest hit South European countries willing and capable to stay committed to the global refugee regime and remain the primary host of people fleeing war and persecution.

Denmark has, along with other EU countries, adopted a role of duplicitous commitment to the international refugee regime by paying tribute to the conventions meanwhile avoiding obligations. The Danish state has attempted to handle the situation on their own by adopting unilateral policies that are attended to push the burden on to other countries. The policies are designed to achieve the goal of keeping refugees away and at the same time avoid any legal liability. Behind these strategies is a wish to be perceived as formally respecting the international law while in practice avoiding taking significant part of burden sharing when it comes to providing protection.

The recent laws, which can easily be perceived as anti-immigration, make up a dangerous precedent for the future handling of refugees across other European countries. The recent trends towards policies aimed at discouraging refugees might justify similar policies across Europe as traditionally accepting humanitarian countries follow this line. Moreover, it arms far right groups to legitimize their own anti-immigrant policies by citing the steps taken by Denmark. Even though enacting anti-refugee policies to stem and reduce the number of refugees is seen as a less-condemnable option than closing the borders, this compromise push many refugees right back into the conditions they seek to escape and can thus have fatal consequences as well.

In stark contrast to the weakness of national and supranational policies that has been displayed in the eye of the refugee crisis, the strength of civil society groups has come to the forefront. Contrary to the anti-refugee approach at the state level, the big group of people volunteering and welcoming refugees through civil society initiatives indicates that the refugee crisis has also encouraged a wave of solidarity. The three cases at focus in this thesis illustrate how contestations of state policy can take on many faces. Initiated by different motivations, aimed at different visions and using different strategies, the initiatives show the diversity of civil society actors. When analysing how different civil society actors have contested the line of the government, I have highlighted how the contests amongst other things evolved around struggles over identity, morality and politics.

When looking at the *'Propaganda War over Refugees'*, I have argued that the contestation of the government's anti-refugee ad was more than a humanitarian wish to help refugees, but can also be seen as a struggle over identity. It was also a contest of the image linked to the Danish population and a resistance against being portrayed as xenophobic. As such, it was not just a matter of reassuring refugees that they were welcome in Denmark, but indeed also a question connected to the struggle over national identity. Following this, my claim is that refugee policy has a much wider impact than on refugees themselves. The ways vulnerable people such as refugees are treated reflect much more than how to manage displaced people. It also put to the very frontline the general values perpetrating society. It touches upon core values of how to treat fellow human beings in need of help. In this way, the refugee has become a symbol of a much broader debate.

When analysing the phenomenon of *'the civil human smuggler'*, I have reasoned that the act of assisting asylum-seekers across the borders must first of all be viewed as a struggle over morality in the term of being an immediate humanitarian support to specific people in need. It was a reaction linked to the fact that the destiny of human lives was no longer so distant and could no longer be reduced to headlines or abstract numbers but became visible in a new way as refugees suddenly walked along the Highway. Besides its humanitarian aspect, I have also claimed that the origin of the civil human smuggler contains a more complex political aspect as it can also be seen as a form of civil disobedience against the government's void of action. Smuggling refugees simply became

a protest against the hesitation and lack of action, which according to some of the civil human smugglers characterized the government's response to the displaced people crossing the Danish border. The reactions from the civil society can be viewed as an attempt to fill out the void of political leadership. In this way, it was not just another humanitarian response to suffering people, which reifies the construction of the crisis as purely humanitarian and hence non-political. Ultimately, the emergence of the civil human smuggler severely challenged the dominant image of the cynical smuggler who operates in order to exploit people's misery for profit. In opposition to this, the civil human smuggler was regarded as a humane lifesaver. The making of the civil human smuggler has managed to restore a focus on the politician's responsibility for addressing the situation, because the civil smugglers to a great extent displayed the vacuum that defined the political response.

When analysing the network '*Welcome to Denmark*', I have argued that their contestation is first and foremost build upon a struggle over politics. Welcome to Denmark constitute a platform where critical opinions regarding the line of the government can be exchanged and transformed into action and where people can voice their dissatisfaction. Through concrete actions, the activists have the chance of displaying their compassion instead of being passively supportive. Moreover, I have reasoned that the strategic use of civil disobedience is an attempt to move from symbolic protest to actual change as disobeying involves moving pass simply talking about politics and beginning to act instead. Welcome to Denmark form an example of how people have started to take the law into their own hands in objection to what is believed to be an inhuman asylum policy. It exemplifies how some activists are now using their own judgment of compassion and acts upon their moral believes in defiance of the law. By using civil disobedience, Welcome to Denmark challenges the commonly accepted laws and norms and keeps the politicians alert and in constant dialogue with the changing public opinion.

When discussing the potential of the state and civil society becoming companions rather than competitors in refugee protection, certain challenges arise. While civil society is in a position where they can prioritize the human rights of refugees, the state also have to prioritize security and sovereignty. While the responses of civil society actors dispute the

lack of focus on refugees' rights and protection, the national response focuses on stemming the flows and strengthening the borders. Due to the different agendas, civil society plays a significant role in ensuring that the state's response do not overlook the human rights on behave of the security perspective. In this way, civil society initiatives become buffer actors between the state and the people in need. They mediate the shortcomings of policies responding to displaced people.

However, this thesis points to a worrying development where people motivated by humanitarian instincts and acting in solidarity with refugees are criminalized. The figure of the civil human smuggler has not only been praised for showing acts of solidarity and humanity. On the contrary, people involved in the act has been both charged and sentenced with a criminal offense. What was carried out as an act of kindness and compassion has now been convicted as human smuggling. However, this development seems to be part of a wider trend. Ultimately, the practice of criminalising people who acts in solidarity with refugees risks deterring civil society from getting involved.

It might be said that a spectre is haunting Europe. Whether this ghost is believed to be the invasion of displaced people or the derived anti-foreigner policies depends, like everything else, on the eye of the beholder.

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9. Annexes

Annex 1: Refugee ad, published by the Danish Ministry of Immigration, Integration & Housing

7/9-2015

The Danish immigration authorities are informing about changes of conditions regarding residence in Denmark being implemented by the new Danish government

Denmark has decided to tighten the regulations concerning refugees in a number of areas.

The Danish Parliament has just passed a regulation to:

- Reduce the social benefits significantly. The social benefits for newly arrived refugees will be reduced by up to 50 percent.

The government will maintain and ensure that:

- Foreign nationals granted temporary protection in Denmark will not have the right to bring family members to Denmark during the first year.
- Foreign nationals can only be granted a permanent residence permit after 5 years at the earliest. Prior to this they risk having their residence permit revoked.
- In order to obtain a permanent residence permit in Denmark there are language requirements in terms of the ability to speak and understand the Danish language.
- When an application for asylum is regarded manifestly unfounded it is refused in accordance with a particularly expedited procedure.
- All rejected asylum seekers must be returned quickly from Denmark.
- There is a special return centre to ensure that rejected asylum seekers leave Denmark as quickly as possible.



Ministry of Immigration,
Integration and Housing



Ministry of Immigration,
Integration and Housing

The Danish
Immigration Service

Source: Immigration Service (Immigration Service 2015)

Annex 2: Pro-refugee Ad: “Dear Refugees, We welcome you to Denmark”

DEAR REFUGEES

WE WELCOME YOU TO DENMARK



The Danish government has announced a controversial scheme to deter refugees. Minister of Integration, Inger Støjberg, is planning an international newspaper campaign to advertise the imminent tightening of conditions for refugees in order to stem the influx of people seeking asylum in Denmark.

The aim is to deter refugees from coming to Denmark in the first place. But we're not all like minister Støjberg and the rest of the Danish government. Many of us are bidding refugees a warm welcome. And many of us want to help those who are fleeing torture, bombs and persecution.

We do not believe that families in war-torn countries should learn that a Danish cabinet minister is planning an advertising campaign based on the ill-conceived and erroneous logic that families calculate where they may profit the most from settling as refugees.

Not in our name!

So, dear fellow human being, there is another voice in Denmark - a voice representing peace, solidarity and human decency.

That's why we extend a warm welcome to Denmark and denounce the government's scare tactics.

Humane greetings

No to the Danish government's scare tactics



Source: The Local (Pro-refugee ad 2015)

Annex 3: People Reaching Out Refugee ad

7/9-2015

De danske udlændingemyndigheder oplyser om ændringer i vilkår for ophold i Danmark, som den nye danske regering gennemfører

Danmark har besluttet at stramme reglerne for flygtninge på en række områder.

Det danske parlament har netop vedtaget:

- At beskære de sociale ydelser markant. De sociale ydelser til nyankomne flygtninge nedsættes med op til 50 procent.

Regeringen vil fastholde og sikre:

- At udlændinge, som opnår midlertidig beskyttelse, ikke har adgang til at få deres familie til Danmark i det første år.
- At udlændinge tidligst kan få permanent ophold efter 5 år og risikerer indtil da at miste deres ret til ophold.
- At der stilles sprogkrav om evne til at tale og forstå dansk for at kunne opnå permanent ophold i Danmark.
- At der efter en særlig hurtig procedure gives afslag, når en asylansøgning betragtes som åbenbart grundløs.
- At alle afviste asylansøgere skal sendes hurtigt ud af Danmark.
- At der er et særligt udrejsecenter for afviste asylansøgere med henblik på at sikre, at asylansøgere, der får afslag på asyl i Danmark, så hurtigt som muligt sendes ud af landet.



*ps. sorry for the hostility towards refugees expressed here. As ordinary Danes we wish to extend our sympathy & compassion to anyone fleeing war and despair.
people reaching out*



Udlændinge-, Integrations-
og Boligministeriet



Udlændinge-, Integrations-
og Boligministeriet

Udlændingestyrelsen

Source: People Reaching Out (People Reaching out 2015)