

Arab representation between faith, identity and culture

A case study about Arab cultural representation and issues of identity, cultural memory and integration in Copenhagen.



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Abstract

The project starts by explaining how different immigrants of non-western origins' representations are reduced to one form of identification through a general religiously informed identification. i.e. through an Islamic identity. In order to explain the impact of cultural representation on the choices of identifications for non western immigrants, the project takes people with Arab origins as the subject for investigating a presumed Muslim identity. Through theoretically analysing a case study about the rise of Muslim consciousness in Britain, the project highlights the danger to prioritise relation of differences in the process of identifications. Therefore we suggest that relations of similarities should play a major role in the process of identification if we want a non antagonistic social engagement. For that, and in order to define the infrastructure, upon which relations of similarities are produced, we introduce the role of memory in identity formation especially in cases of immigration.

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I. Introduction

Europe is witnessing nowadays a large-scale influx of refugees especially from the Middle East. Thousands of women, men and children are trying on a daily basis to cross into Europe by various means in search for a safer and better life. The pictures of dead bodies on the Mediterranean shores shocked the European consciousness and called for demonstrations in many different European cities asking to let refugees in. What we can learn from the recent events is that Europe will not be able to build a fence preventing refugee flows. Thus, the increasing numbers of refugees might have consequences on different levels of social, cultural and political realities of the future Europe.

The increasing number of refugees knocking on the doors of Europe will definitely invite many scholars (social scientists, anthropologists, political thinkers, students...etc.) and policy makers, to examine what kind of consequences will that bring to Europe and its' relation to rest of the world in the coming years. And most importantly, what kind of strategies and policies one might think of in order to deal with such consequences.

It is noteworthy that in Denmark, a demonstration took place on the 12th of September 2015, where, about 30 to 35 thousand people gathered to say welcome to refugees and to oppose the Danish government's policies in relation to refugees. Also, thousands of activists and groups mobilised to help refugees arriving through the German border assisting them with food, clothes and even a lift to the Swedish borders. This big sympathy towards refugees is only one side of the story.

The other side, there are people in Denmark who are against having the door open for refugees and a government who is doing their best to make asylum seeking less advantageous, which will make Denmark a less attractive place for refugees. Also on this side of the story is a seen

in Pegida Anti-Islamisation of Europe's demonstration in Dresden, Germany during the month of October 2015. All in all, issues related to refugees became heated subjects.

The two sides of the story are radically opposed. Each follows its own discourse and sometimes assumptions. This can be manifested in Denmark through the man who spat on refugees crossing under the bridge. This man became the most humiliated figure on Danish social media and some mainstream media outlets. He was transformed into the evil and therefore pro-refugees started to associate his picture with each and everyone who is opposing the influx of refugees.

But aside from some public disenchantment from the Government's policy towards refugees, the political power is still producing and reproducing threat-related refugee discourse. This threat is either put in an economic or in a religio-cultural frame. The former uses economic dimensions since refugees are always thought of as a burden for the state economy especially in a welfare state like Denmark. The latter capitalises on the idea that the newcomers are mostly holding a Syrian, Afghani, Pakistani nationalities, and consequently they are Muslims in the eyes of many of the Danish people. Therefore, they represent a cultural burden to the nation state, especially with the mainstream use of Islam in relation to terrorism or the discourse of Islam as a cultural threat. The answer to why one rejects refugees might range between these two factors in different forms. While this project will not be interested in the economic burden refugees might impose on Denmark¹, we will be mainly dealing with the presupposed cultural Islamic threat.

In her article, "The Cartoon Controversy, Creating Muslims in a Danish Settings", Anja Kublitz stated in relation to Palestinians' perception by the Danish public that:

"At some point during the 1990s, the immigrants were once more re-conceptualised in the Danish public discourse, this time as 'Muslims' (Hervik 2002). My fieldwork confirms this

¹ there are of course people who might argue otherwise since many of the new comers are well educated and might be assets for the danish economy

development. In public places in Denmark, at schools and workplaces, or simply on the streets, Palestinians are no longer approached as immigrants and asked where they are from; rather, people assume, based on skin color, name, or dialect, that they are Muslims” (Kublitz 2010, p.111).

This tendency that Anja Kublitz is hinting at, must be deepened after 9/11 and re-emphasised after the Mohamad Cartoon crisis. Jørgen S. Nielsen’s article “*Danish Cartoons and Christian-Muslim Relations in Denmark*”, hints to this transformation by saying that:

“The so-called war on terror, mainly targeted at terrorism originating in Muslim networks. This theme had developed during the 1990s and was sharply focussed by the attacks of 11 September 2001 and reinforced since by the bombings in Madrid and London. Muslims had come to feel that government policies and public attitudes to them were now security-led.” (Nielsen 2010, p.229).

More nuances about this transformation into perception and will be tackled within the project.

We believe that to understand what would take place in the future, we have to look at past experiences, try to benefit from the positive and re-think the negative in them. To do so, we chose to have immigrants of Arab origins as the scope of our fieldwork. We chose to deal with this specific ‘group/groups’ for different reasons, not least that Arabs constitute a major part of the new refugee influx, but also many of them have been living in Denmark for three generations now. Our project will shed light on Arab immigrants who live in Denmark, their descendants, their relations to each other, as well as their relation to Arab culture, to the Muslim subject, as well as to the Danish society. This is to answer our research question; How does cultural representation participate in shaping identity for people of Arab descent? With subset questions following; How are Arabs

represented? What kinds of implications will representation affect their forms of identifications? And how do different Danish institutions participate in the creation of such a representation?

During the month of September 2015, I was called by a Danish production house called Heartland to assist them in a documentary they are shooting for the Danish Radio (DR). I travelled with them to Austria where we drove to the Hungarian border and then back to the German border and to a little village in Germany. We visited different refugee camps and waiting zones such as train stations or border camps. There I saw thousands of refugees all set to a waiting mode. They are waiting for trains, busses, food, for the border to Germany to open, for the police to give an answer what is next, for some activists to assist them with water or diapers or for some doctors to look at their sick and tired children. All what I saw there were survivals running from trouble and not for troubles. To Islamise their whole identity seems to be a step in the wrong direction.²

Therefore, the transformation of Arab culture into Islamic culture seems to be the shortest way to intentionally or unintentionally feed in radicalism. Ignoring the different layers of culture and focusing on religion as the main form of identification will be minimizing and marginalizing any secular tendency to identify with Arabism as a culture³ that definitely have a strong relation the Islamic culture but of course not defined only by it. It seems that the politics of culture intends to group immigrants into one fixed identity in a process of ‘othering’ in order to be used for internal or external political struggles and gains. Our main research question carries another set of sub-questions: When Arabs arrive to Europe, do they arrive having Islam as the main form of identification? What kind of identification do they possess while moving from their homeland? Are

² ‘I’ as in Abbas Mroueh

³ It might be true that one cannot say that there is a well defined description of what an Arab culture is, yet we will give an account along the project on the legitimacy for talking about Arab culture.

they created as Muslims subjects? Where and why? This will be carried out through a discussion about identity, cultural memory and consciousness.

II. Methodology

The project and in order to understand cultural representations of the Non-Western immigrants in Denmark, will follow the different mainstream media and political contexts' related discourses and their development during the past 15 years. In order to do so, we used data collected from different mainstream media outlets and political debates especially in times of parliamentary elections. Our choice was made based on the idea that mainstream media and political debates participate to a big extent in mobilising and shaping public opinions towards immigrants and immigration subjects.

Out of this general Non-Western category, we will be mainly looking at how this cultural representation affected the choices of identification for people of Arabic origin. This is where we will be engaging with a theoretical discussion in relation to collective forms of identifications, and cultural representation. Here we will argue with and against Nasar Meer work on the rise of Muslim consciousness in Britain by reckoning to Richard Jenkins ideas on identity formation and the tendency to focus on relations of differences rather than similarities. In this chapter we seek to deconstruct the structure in which Meer based his concept of "hyphenated British Muslim" identity. This is not to say that there is no Islamic form of identification, but to criticise a stereotypical tendency such an approach invokes.

To be able to deal with the social construction of a collective forms of identifications, particularly in cases of immigration, and specifically in a Danish context where people with an Arab background have been here for only a bit more than two generations, we have to acknowledge that

there is essential inter-generational differences of life experiences that exist. This we assume is related to some structural differences within - what Maurice Halbwachs called - “collective memories” between the two generations.

Whereas the first generation spent a considerable amount of time living in their homeland, they therefore, possess a strong memory of it. The second generation was born in Denmark, or they arrived at a very young age and therefore, they do not possess lived experiences of their parents’ homelands. However, if they do, it is fractional compared to their parents and sometimes imagined. Thus in such a situation, one cannot avoid a discussion of memory. For that memory is essential to understand the infrastructure, upon which identity has been based, collectivity. Thus, our project will try to understand collective forms of identification in light with memory functions. This will be done in reference to Astrid Erll's work on mapping the development of the notion of ‘collective memory’ since its inception with Maurice Halbwachs, during the 1920s to present. Also a special focus will be on Jan and Aleida Assmann's differentiation between the two dimensions of collective memory, namely the communicative and the cultural memory.

Arriving to this point, to understand the collective identifications and the collective memories of Danish citizens with Arab origins, we have to understand the general patterns of what could be called Arab cultural memory in relation to their recent history through the different social, political and cultural events that we believe still have their imprints on Arabs’ self identifications. The importance of this overview is that it creates the historical, political and social frame or context, upon which, most of the Arab immigrants of the first generation were raised. The above theoretical and practical observations will constitute the infrastructure to enter into discussion with the data from interviews of our fieldwork. This understanding of identity in relation to similarities, differences, shared experiences, communicative memory, cultural memory, and time and space, can function as a dynamic with different variables that might illuminate some thoughts in relation to integration and social engagement processes.

1. Theory

Theories were used in our project in what we will term as *soft* and *hard* versions. Theories regarding the Danish socio-political context in relation to the Muhammad cartoon crisis are used in a *soft* way to not be used further into analysis with our fieldwork. The theories are used instead to highlight the importance of strategies used in an ‘ethnic relationship’ frame through a socio-anthropological lens to show the involvement and influence politics has on socio-cultural portrayals and relationships. These *soft* theory frameworks stem from works of Fredrik Barth and Thomas Hylland Eriksen.

Hard theories are used in our project dealing with cultural memory. We coined them as being the *hard* theories used because they are related more to our fieldwork data. We find it essential to include memory and cultural memory theories when exploring cultural identifications people associate with, because without memory there is no basis or reference points for persons to create such identifications. From this important aspect that we determine memory plays, it seems more *hard* than *soft* with its potential influence on individuals’ identifications. Thus the cultural memory theories of our project are both empirical theoretical overviews, and also analytical theoretical tools used to look at Arab identity or culture in relation to memory. We must emphasise however the main locus of the project is not only to analyse our fieldwork data in relation to memory, but also to provide frameworks that to us seemed essential to involve when assessing the portrayal of non-Western, or Arab immigrants in Denmark as a homogenous Muslim identity.

Socio-anthropological Theoretical Frameworks for Ethnicity

1. Fredrik Barth’s work of *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries (1969)*, was used in ways just as a very basic reference of what culture and ethnic groups have been determined as from an anthropological perspective. Using Barth is the starting point to look at different ethnic group relations on the basis of culture and social interaction. As put by Barth;

“By concentrating on what is *socially* effective, ethnic groups are seen as a form of social organisation. The critical feature then becomes the characteristic of self-ascription and ascription by others” (*Ethnic Groups & Boundaries, 1969, p.13*)

Following theoretical framings of Fredrik Barth with his contributions in *Ethnic Groups & Boundaries* provides basic cultural frameworks of ethnic groups characteristic compositions and interaction aspects. When applied to the Muhammad cartoon crisis and further to Danish media and political discourses towards their “Muslim” immigrants, the relationship and strength actors have in relation to others, illuminates.

2. Thomas Hylland Eriksen’s essays on ethnicity, relations between ethnic groups and more specifically relations between immigrants and host governments in Western Europe, are referenced. One could say T.H. Eriksen provides a modern and globalized version of Fredrik Barth’s *Ethnic Groups & Boundaries* perspectives in discussing ethnic relationships today. Integration aspects in Europe are topics he sheds light upon from a socio-anthropological viewpoint. Furthermore, identity is discussed in relation to relationships with its formation. As T.H. Eriksen describes; “ethnicity is an aspect of relationship, not a cultural property of a group”, (Eriksen 2010, p. 14) Furthermore Eriksen concludes; “ethnicity occurs in social contexts where cultural differences ‘make a difference’” (Eriksen, 2010) Eriksen is relevant to refer to for his anthropological perspectives that highlight many aspects of the Danish case for taking a well-rounded interpretation of all the factors influencing the interplay between Scandinavia and its immigrant populations, and in specific cases the situation at play in Denmark which we are investigating.

Socio-Political Theoretical discussion

With relation to social identity, while we critically take a stance on Nasar Meer’s perspective, he is still of value in our project. Meer, throughout his book “*Citizenship, Identity and*

the Politics of Multiculturalism”, claiming and celebrating the rise of Muslim consciousness in Britain, refers to the decisive role relations of *differences* played in forming British Muslim consciousness. In order to analyse Nasar Meer’s observations and logic and therefore try to challenge it, we will refer to the work of Richard Jenkins on the role of similarities and differences within identity formation and the consequences of prioritising differences within the process.

Memory, understanding relation between memory and culture

In the field of memory studies, we will refer to the work of Astrid Erll “memory in culture”, which gives an interesting map of the development of the notion collective memory from its inception with *Maurice Halbwachs*’, by inventing the notion, he changed the way in thinking memory. Halbwachs’ interesting remark that individual memory cannot take place without a social framework will be a corner stone for our understanding of memory. The other important development that is related to our context took place in the 1980s, with Jan and Aleida Assmanns. This is where they differentiate between two forms of collective memories, the communicative and the cultural. Whereas the former is the oral, the lived, the autobiographical, the latter is the written, the mythical and institutional. We will also recourse to Astrid Erll's insight on the interrelation between the communicative and cultural memories, which will be later used in the discussion of first and second generation immigrants’ forms of identifications.

A communicative memory can be and become a cultural memory. The relationship between the cultural and communicative memory is always at play. These different theoretical discussions and frames of memory studies provide us to look at memory as an organ to help identify identity formations on a multilevel spectrum. These considerations help with our analysis of differences between our generational interviewees, and more broadly on the variance of cultural memory formations within groups taking into consideration aspects of time and space.

2. Empirical Literature

The Empirical research takes the Muhammad cartoon crisis of 2005, as an instance in which to show predominantly pejorative ‘Muslim’ ethnic identification imposed upon immigrants of non-Western descent in Denmark. It is this negative portrayal or imagery of Muslims in Danish society that we find to be problematic for the cultural representation and identity formation for non-Western immigrants in Denmark. Two factors that influence the context in which this negative imagery is embedded into Danish portrayal of these immigrants is examined. The first is Danish media, and its involvement in imagery formation of Muslims in Denmark. Literature used includes a discourse analysis of national newspaper articles regarding Muslims, along with literature emphasising the historical and newly ‘re-politicised’ nature national newspapers have in Denmark. Thereafter, literature is used to briefly overview the progress of the Danish Peoples Party in becoming a major player in Danish general elections in the past fifteen years, and the impact this has had on putting anti-immigration and in particular anti-Muslim issues at the forefront of national political agendas. Theoretical considerations regarding ethnic relations and ethnicity are mentioned from Fredrik Barth’s *ethnic groups and boundaries* work and Thomas Hylland Eriksen’s ethnicity & nationalism and differences and diversity essays, which emphasize examining the relationship of ethnic groups in regards to prescribed identification. Through using these anthropological framings, illumination on how the Muhammad cartoon crisis can be seen not only just as an example of how Muslims are portrayed in Denmark. These theoretical considerations provide us with the potential to look at the non-Western immigrant case in Denmark into becoming an ethnically framed, negative ‘Muslim’ prescribed identity, being formed in a modern global context based upon to an extent of ‘ethnicity’ creation and ethnic relationship based up Difference and Us/Them rhetoric.

The empirical overview and analysis of the Muhammad cartoon crisis furthermore is linked to our fieldwork data with our interviewees that we identify as being ‘Arab immigrants’ living in Denmark. While the empirical literature uses the term non-Western immigrants being prescribed the

Muslim identity, we use the term ‘Arab’ immigrants in other sections of our work for this same group of peoples that receive this imposed Muslim identification in Denmark. We make this shift in term usage not only because non-Western immigrants can include immigrants that are not from Muslim countries, making the imagery imposed irrelevant for these people and this study, but also because it takes on a more socio-culture frame. Furthermore as will be shown in the Muslim cartoon crisis section, half of non-Western immigrants in Denmark come from the Arab world, yet only half of these people identify as practicing Muslims.

3. Historical overview of Arab cultural memory

The Chapter of historical overview consists mainly on mapping the different events that we consider essential in the formation of what we call Arab consciousness or a modern Arab consciousness. The main idea of the chapter is to show how people of the Arab speaking world do possess a certain kind of social identity, which is based on shared memories, a shared symbolic system, and a shared language. We will refer to Albert Hourani’s book “A History of the Arab People” in order to highlight some historical moments such as the rise of Arab nationalism. This chapter does not focus on whether or not the Arabs constitute a political identity, but rather its objective is to highlight the social dimension of their identity.

4. Fieldwork

For our project we contacted immigrants of Arab origins in Copenhagen between 4/1/2015-9/12015 for informal interviews. People were found through personal social networks of friends, and friends of friends. This was done intentionally in hope to have a level of social trust with our interviewees in a less formalised environment. Informal interviews took place at cafes and lasted on average about 45 minutes. Interviews were more in form of semi-structured or themed

conversations guided by the interviewers. Questions that pertained to all interviewees were that of basic data collection needs such as names, ages, country of origin, and time spent living in Denmark. Content of interviews beyond these basic data collection skeletons varied between cultural identity related questions, to that of perceptions of Arabs in Denmark, and to questions of participation or involvement of cultural practices. In total 15 people were interviewed with ages ranging from 14-55. Purposely, people were chosen to be interviewed that had lived in Denmark for fifteen years or longer. We thought this was necessary to be able to have a sample to ask sub-questions about how identity perceptions have evolved with more strict anti-immigration debates and laws in Denmark, and the rise of anti-Muslim politicisation as well.

We are very much aware our research sample is small and of little significance to being representative of Arab immigrants in Denmark. We however felt the need to interview immigrants of Arab origins themselves, given the knowledge of the lack of Arab representation in Denmark specifically, that is something other than being related to Islam or being Muslim. Furthermore we thought that looking into memory as a mode of identity formation would be an interesting vehicle for analysis given the ability to look at the influences time and space have on both identity and cultural representation.

Both first and second generation, Arab immigrants were chosen on purpose for our study. First generation immigrants were important because of their cultural identity formation took place in their homelands. They were directly immersed in the culture and formed memories of cultural identity with some traces Danish influence. These people also arrived to Denmark before the year 2000. This was of importance to us given the socio-political context shift in Denmark towards non-Western immigration that most noticeably begins in 2001. Furthermore not only from our interviewees, but also there are other literature examples specific to Denmark with non-Western immigrants mentioning a socio-political context that was different in the 1980s-1990s with being an immigrant; without a doubt globalisation is a catalyst in this contextual difference.

The second-generation interviewees can be further divided into two categories; those born in Denmark and those born abroad. Overall from our small sample, which we are well aware in no way properly represents Arabs or any group in general, has significant variances. Second generation immigrants largely lacked knowledge of the Arabic language. Not only did this separate them from their parents in family dynamics, but it has important linguistic implications on the individuals' ability to identify themselves and their cultures. While second generation immigrants whom were born outside of Denmark may have some memories and sometimes, good knowledge of Arabic, they in certain instances differed from second-generation immigrants born in Denmark for other reasons. Second generation immigrants born in Denmark were fluent in Danish, and used Danish as their primary language. This is significant in the inevitable perception of Arabs and immigrants having a Danish tone. Furthermore these individuals born in Denmark have experienced their entire lives with a dialogue of receiving representations of the identity and culture through Danish society and through the parents and family relationships. Moreover, the contrasts between the availability to participate in and the access to their cultures between the first and second-generation immigrants is a significant point we wanted to explore and incorporate into our study.

III. Arab cultural representation in Denmark, socio-cultural

Two years ago, directly after the Copenhagen Mosque in Nørrebro was built, a friend of mine greeted me for what she considers will please me as an Arab. When I showed my indifference, she felt offended as a person whom advocates multiculturalism. My argument back then was very simple. I told her that what is needed here, more than a mosque, is for example a small centre where people can read Arabic books or translated Arabic books so they can access Arabic culture through different paths. To my surprise, she told me that if I have to be a positive person, I should

acknowledge that I could go to the mosque where Arabic books would be available. I asked her why don't you go to the church to read Danish books, she got offended again and answered that she does not like churches, I replied why should I like building mosques then? I am not against building mosques if they are needed but I would say I am against the rhetoric built around the fact of a built mosque. This little incident posed different questions and faced me with different challenges. First of all, I asked myself how and why Arab culture is represented mainly through a religious dimension, and how both advocates and opponents of multiculturalism have the same representation? This, one can easily depict not only from the mosque's incident but also from the different posters and flyers one can encounter on the street where Arab women are always veiled.

Another incident with similar effects was when we were walking the street on Blågårdsgade and some young girl volunteering to distribute flyers saying: "We welcome immigrants and Muslims". The first thing that Abbas noticed was that the Arabic version of the sentence had three spelling mistakes and the second thing was why would we emphasise on Muslims specifically when we say we welcome immigrants or refugees? Isn't it also something that says that Muslims are problematic for some but we still welcome them? Yet even with that isn't it that by saying it we are also acknowledging their problematic character? Of course, the woman drawn on the flyer were veiled as well. The same stereotyped image of Arab woman is depicted.

It is widely acknowledged within the European context that immigrants and refugees in general, and consequently Arab immigrants and refugees pose serious challenges and questions to the authorities. These challenges and questions have been usually answered through different policies and processes of - if not repatriation - integration. It is very common within refugee discourse that repatriation is the best possible solution for refugees since it brings back to them what they have lost. Here is a sentence from UNHCR website that emphasises or prioritises this logic as durable solution:

“For millions of refugees around the world, going home remains the strongest hope of finding an end to exile. As the durable solution of choice for the largest number of refugees, voluntary repatriation in safety and dignity requires the full commitment of the country of origin to help reintegrate its own people. It also needs the continuing support of the international community through the crucial post-conflict phase to ensure that those who make the brave decision to go home can rebuild their lives in a stable environment” (UNHCR website).

Yet, when repatriation seems an impossible option for various reasons, and when shutting down the borders cannot totally stop the influx of immigrants and refugees, policies of integration becomes the ultimate goal. Yet, it is not sufficient to say that integration is necessary, we should also understand what do we mean by integration and what are the areas where integration should take place? Who should be subjected to the integration processes? Only immigrants and refugees or should host society be part of this efforts of integration?

In the case of Copenhagen (and Denmark in general), integration can be very close to assimilation since beside the market integration, i.e. integration into labor market and being part of tax paying community, issues of cultural dimensions are left behind or they are used in a negative terms as something to oppose. When issues of culture are raised and are used to mobilise the society for political reasons by different political parties, then one should ask what do we mean by integration? The issue of culture, when it is left behind or when it is posed as a threat, then we will be talking about assimilation, and integration becomes its synonymous. In the case of Arab immigrants, the issue of culture takes a more complicated path since when it comes to Arab immigrants, the cultural issue becomes an issue of Islam and consequently of radicalisation. Thus, the matter is shifted from the intention of integrating people within the host society into a matter of

avoiding security and culturally related threats. Yet, it is a bit ironic that - in a city like Copenhagen - it seems that the only way to emphasise tolerance towards Arabs (whom are considered de-facto muslims) is through building a mosque. It is ironic since as we know, the Danish educational public institutions have decided to remove Arabic language from its curriculum, and by doing so, they are pushing Arab immigrants (who want their kids to learn Arabic language) towards Arabic schools, which are Islamic by character. Therefore, one might ask, if we want only recognise the Islamic dimension of the Arab culture, then isn't it clear the answer of why some Arabs are being radicalised? The issue of teaching Arabic language in public schools is not only important because it helps Danes from Arab origins to know their parents' language but we assume it is specifically important because it gives them the tool to secularly understand the Arab culture, to acquire cultural competencies vis-a-vis their fellow citizens and to have their own ability to understand religious practices outside what has been dictated in Islamic schools or mosques.

In an article titled *"Peace, welfare, culture. Muslims as a security problem in Danish integration discourse"* Ulrik Pram Gad states:

"Danish narratives of integration have produced a security problem for themselves: they have provoked an answer which in their own continuation may best be described as a threat. The threat, notably, is produced without the "seriously religious Muslim" engaging him or herself in terrorism or denouncing democracy. The specific way in which official Danish identity discourse constructs the Muslim may contribute to decreasing loyalty to Denmark and even to increasing the actual terror threat. However, an excluded Muslim does not need to take to such extreme measures to appear threatening: the mere act of formally departing in Islam when reasoning ones way to democracy is a threat to the narrative" (Gad 2011, p.71).

Gad hints in his article at the general rhetoric created around Muslims (and consequently Arabs) by Danish political institutions both in centre right and centre left ideologies. This securitisation of Muslims and Arabs plays a major role in creating a general perception of Arabs as a threat. In

addition to what Gad depicted in his article, we would like to add that Arabs in Denmark are trapped between being a security threat on the one hand and a cultural threat on the other. What could be said more on this issue is that the emphasis on a skimmed version of Arab culture produced and is continuously reproducing the threat discourse. Ignoring the richness of Arab culture and focusing on the Islamic version of it is of a major importance, and is the corner stone in this security and cultural threat discourse.

Also, something could be understood from the different articles about Islam in Europe, which is how this Islamic pool is created and why it is created. People from the Middle East, Turkey, Somalia, among other places where the majority of the population are Muslims do differentiate to a big extent from one another. For instance Arabs, whom are the subject of this project, share, as we will discuss later on, different cultural aspects that they do not share with Turks or Somalis for example. The language in the Arab case plays a major role in this cultural sharing, yet as we will see it is not only the language that constitutes Arabs as a more legitimate group than the Islamic one. Therefore, one can say that it is more logical to have Arab culture, Turkish culture and so on, instead of creating an Islamic group that does not help at all any effort of integration and interaction. The Muslim group in Europe is problematised to a large extent, and it is usually used for internal political struggles and gains. Below we will discuss how this group was put in action within Danish political debates.

The Danish Media and Cartoon Crisis

One of the most academically assessed instances of “Islamophobia” in Denmark by Danish academics was the Muhammad cartoon crisis in 2005. The controversy gained global attention, furthering Denmark’s reputation as a state that has been openly to borderline racist in its media portrayal of their Muslim immigrants. The cultural editor for *Jyllands Posten*, Flemming Rose,

invited newspaper cartoonists across the country to submit cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad. His idea was to show that the freedom of expression was non-negotiable and absolute in Denmark (T.H. Eriksen 2007, p. 3). Twelve cartoons were published on the 30th of September in 2005, and the cartoons ranged from harmless to potentially deeply insulting (T.H. Eriksen 2007, p.3). It must be noted that in Sunni Islam, there is a ban on depicting Muhammad in any sort. One cartoon that depicted Muhammad wearing a bomb in the shape of a turban on his head has become the most infamous (T.H. Eriksen 2007). Interestingly, there was no strong or immediate negative reaction by the public in Denmark over the Newspaper's publication of the cartoons. It only gained attention when journalists began to interview conservative imams in Denmark about their opinions on the cartoons, and eventually a demonstration organized by the Danish imam Ahmed Abu Laban took place in October (T. H. Eriksen 2007). The demonstration led by Ahmed Abu Laban, was against the perceived growing Islamophobia in Danish society, not only the about *Jyllands Posten's* publishing of the Muhammad cartoons (T.H. Eriksen 2007).

While the cartoon crisis began with reactions in Denmark over the freedom of expression and the discrimination of Muslim immigrants in Denmark, the months following showed violent reactions with burnings of embassies, and riots around the world (Rostbøll 2009). What needs to be noted is the socio-political context in which the cartoons were published and received by the public in Denmark. While the reactions of Muslims in Denmark were almost silent, the defensive position Danish politicians took on the matter made it clear there is not a dialogue between Muslim immigrants in Denmark, or about Islam and subsequently, the Muslim identity in Denmark. It is strongly one sided, with the Danish government and majority in the power position to determine what can be said about Muslims in their own country, even when it can be perceived as outwardly offensive. *Jyllands Posten's* cultural editor claimed he requested the cartoon depictions with the goal to; "push back self-imposed limits on expression" (Rostbøll 2009, p. 625). In other words, it was an act of a Dane exercising and demonstrating his personal opinion behind the right of freedom

of expression to show what he and also some other Danes viewed Islam and its followers in their country as, without having to make any specific or factual based references for their views/depictions.

The Prime Minister of Denmark, Ander Fogh Rasmussen further exhibited the lack of dialogue between Muslims in Denmark, and Danish dominance over Islam's representation in the country with regards to the Muhammad cartoons. In October 2005, Anders Fogh Rasmussen refused to meet with eleven diplomats from Muslim countries that complained about the negative portrayal of Islam and wanted an explanation (Rostbøll 2009). His response for not meeting with the diplomats was simple; "This is a matter of principle. I won't meet with them because it is so crystal clear what principles Danish democracy is built upon that there is no reason to do so" (Rostbøll 2009, p. 626). While freedom of expression may be a principle pillar under Danish democracy, the unwillingness to even talk with Muslims about the event shows that the rights and the feelings of Danish immigrants, especially with Islam as their religion will be undermined for the Danish democratic freedoms Danes are entitled to. "*Jyllands Posten* and its defenders portrayed the conflict as a question of enlightened Danes versus unenlightened Muslims" (Rostbøll 2009, p. 626), even if these Muslims are holders of a Danish passport and in legal terms are 'Danish'. What should be pointed out to better clarify this importance is that *Jyllands Posten* was given cartoons depicting Jesus Christ by Christoffer Zieler in 2003, yet the editor of *Jyllands Posten* refused to publish them (T.H. Eriksen 2007). *Jyllands Posten's* editor's reply to the cartoonist's submissions was;

"As a matter of fact, I do not think that the readers of *Jyllands Posten* will enjoy the cartoons. Actually, I think they will lead to an outrage. Therefore, I will not publish them." (Larsen & Seidenfaden 2006:264, in T.H. Eriksen 2007).

Thus, a form of screening process of religions that are open to ridicule and those which are saved from this potential scrutiny is within *Jylland Posten's* publishing morals/code of conduct. While there is a National church of Denmark (the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark), it is widely

known that the majority of Danes are not practicing Christians in a strict sense. “Denmark is one of the most secularised countries in the world, and church attendance is very low” (Gertsen et al. 2012). At the same time, it must be noted by Danish historians that the instillation of Christianity is the most normal underlying religious traces in Danish culture and society still today. Thus Denmark, like many other Western European countries can claim to liberal democratic ideals, yet they are historically linked with a basis of a unified Christian religious background as well, that should not be glossed over. Scholars have recently researched the close relationship Danishness has with Luthernism, and its particular-ness in its relationship to their culture and religion compared to other EU states today (Østergård p.52). This relationship is described by a former Bishop in Roskilde, as the following; “Danes do not need to go to Church because they live in their Danishness everyday” (Østergård p.2). Thus, while Denmark is seen from the outside as a very liberal and secular society, still, “religion plays an important role as can be seen in its uneasiness with other religions, in particular Islam” (Østergård p.52). It should be pointed out that immigrants have been in Denmark throughout its history, yet the lack of religious diversity of these immigrants has made the continuity of Christianity as the dominant ‘normal’ version of religiousness Danes have experienced. This has contributed in some noticeable degree towards the feelings of aversion towards non-Christian religious practices.

On September 30, 2005, *Jyllands-Posten* published twelve cartoons depicting the Muslim prophet Muhammed. Global involvement in the crisis began to overshadow the preliminary domestic, Danish-Muslim reactions (Rostbøll 2009). On a global scale both Islamic countries and non-Islamic countries took notice of the cartoons. In regards to the recognition Denmark received from the Muhammed cartoon crisis in 2005; ‘(it) has made Danish Media representations of Muslims world-famous’ (Jacobsen, Jensen, Vitus, Weibel 2013, p. 2). Domestically, responses happened in fragmented, individual cases...; ‘many Muslim kiosk owners refused to sell the edition of *Jyllands-Posten*, for example (Bonde 2007). Also in the same afternoon the publication was

released *Jyllands-Posten* got a phone call by a young man threatening to kill one of *Jyllands-Posten's* workers because of the cartoons (Bonde 2007). The Copenhagen demonstration led by imam Ahmed Abu Laban however was the only public collectively organised response of Danish Muslims. The week before the demonstration in Copenhagen took place, Muhammed was the primary topic of Muslim prayers, and many Imams in Danish mosques reprimanded *Jyllands-Posten* and urged Muslims to voice their complaints and protests to the paper (Bonde 2007). Despite efforts made in Danish mosques for mobilisation, the number of participants in the demonstration that took place the following week in Copenhagen had a relatively small turnout of 3.500 participants (Bonde 2007). The small number of participants could be explained with aspects such as that many Muslims rarely visit the mosque, being passive believers in practice, and specifically in the Danish Muslim case, they are an exceedingly heterogeneous group (Bonde 2007, p. 40). It is known for those of us whom live in Denmark that mosques are not in large numbers here, and furthermore they only cater to certain groups of Muslims linked with the Mosques. Moreover, Danish Muslims originate from many different countries, speak many different languages, adhere to many different interpretations of Islam, have different cultures, and like Danes, practice varying levels of religiousness and engage in various religious activities (Bonde 2007, p. 37). So perhaps while Muslims do go to mosques, given their multi-levels of variation, only turning to Mosques for support and mobilisation, most likely only addressed a minority of practicing Danish-Muslims.

The number of participants in the Copenhagen demonstration as mentioned before was relatively small in comparison to other political demonstrations. The Muslim Danish reactions to the Muhammed cartoons was on such a scale that had never been seen before in a public controversy in Denmark, yet the heterogeneous nature of Danish Muslims as a group, could be considered the major problematic aspect in their reactions to the cartoons (Larsson and Lindekilde, 2009, p.366). Thus while the number of participants was small, it is still the largest noted

participation of Muslims politically reacting to Danish discourse regarding them. In reality though it is a meager accomplishment for Danish-Muslims in showing their power and ability to unite on a large scale when faced with instances of discrimination like the Muhammad cartoon affair.

The Muslim actors in Denmark had the largest amount of 'claims-makings' in response to the Muhammed cartoons in media stories following the crisis, yet the lack of agreement among Danish Muslims and their inability to agree upon courses of action and the main content of their argumentation against the cartoons, created 'intense internal Muslim debate' (Larsson and Lindekilde 2009, p. 366). Two opposing sides can be identified; the first being led by the Community of Islamic Faith, which had their reactions to the cartoons characterised by the imposed grievances from the Muhammed cartoons, which lead to religious motivation for action by leading Muslim religious authorities. These authorities, (Imams) for example, sought out support from preexisting Muslim organisations (Larsson and Lindekild 2009, p.366). This ultimately ended with the Copenhagen demonstration from religious actors in. On the other side of Danish-Muslim reactions was that of Danish Muslims that felt 'misrepresented' by these Danish Imams and religious organisations claiming that Islam as a religion was being attacked by Danes. These Danish Muslims that felt misrepresented reacted in different ways, one example was the Democratic Muslim organisation, that felt they were owed an apology because of the offensive and proactive nature the Muhammed Cartoons had been published and defended by *Jyllands Posten* (Larsson and Lindekild 2009, p.366). The Democratic Muslim organisation chose to focus more on the issue of overt discrimination or one could say bullying of their identity, rather than jumping to the more blanket argument of Danes being against Islam. This tactic should be seen as an attempt by the Democratic Muslim organisation to make a more social issues based case of the situation, which was quickly silenced and they later backed down from demands for a public apology. They felt they had to do this because of the actions of other religious actors, such as the Danish imams affiliated with the Community of Islamic Faith. Who gained international support from various groups that

ultimately lead to violent demonstrations and political escalations abroad (Larsson and Lindekild 2009, p.367). Danish Muslims then changed their strategies from more formal reactions such as official complaints and media involvement, to attempts of de-escalating the reactions to the cartoon controversy through more direct means of demonstrations and public meetings (Larsson and Lindekild 2009, p. 367). This influence Muslims had outside of Denmark on the actions of Danish Muslims in Denmark should be seen in a broader perspective of the challenges Danish Muslims face with potential socio-political pathways of actions they can take.

Interagroup relations or more possibly more properly put, sub-groups of Muslims in Denmark have various goals, tendencies, and modes of actions they take when confronted with discrimination like the Muhammed cartoon controversy. Their actions vary like their compositions and backgrounds. The issue is though, despite this controversy only highlighting differences between two organised groups of Muslims in Denmark, their differences in agenda and actions led to one group; the Democratic Muslim Organisation, to silence themselves. This left Denmark and the world with only one remaining Muslim group and their actions in Denmark to be seen making claims of discontent with the Muhammed cartoons. Their claims of Islamophobia in Denmark and the violent reactions caused by their activism and seeking support abroad left only negative portrayal within Denmark of Muslims as a group. Theoretically, this Danish example and its consequences can be explained by Fredrik Barth, in regards to differences among members of an ethnic group. As Barth explains, when emphasis is on ascription as the critical feature of ethnic groups two important manifestations occur, one of which will be further explained (Barth, 1969, p. 14). As put by Barth in regards to ascription as the critical feature of an ethnic group; “Socially relevant factors alone become diagnostic for membership, not the overt, ‘objective’ differences which are generated by other factors. It makes no difference how dissimilar members may be in their overt behaviour if they say they are A, in contrast to another cognate category B, they are

willing to be treated and let their own behaviour be interpreted and judged as A's and not as B's; in other words, they declare their allegiance to the shared culture of A's." (Barth, 1969, p. 15).

Thus we will argue, that because the social situation; that being Danish Muslims reacting publicly to the Muhammed cartoon publication (discrimination in Denmark), despite 'how dissimilar members may be in their overt behaviour if they say they are A, in contrast to another cognate category B, they are willing to be treated and let their own behaviour be interpreted and judged as A's and not B's" (Barth, 1969, p. 15). In the given Danish context being A, meant being a Danish Muslim that was publicly reacting to the Muhammed cartoon incident, despite the B cognate category which was we could say was being a member of the heterogeneous Danish-Muslim identity, or any other defining category for that matter. Because the Democratic Muslim Organisation took part in the social situation of publicly voicing their discontent, despite their differences with the Community of Islamic Faith, they had participated in the 'A' group category, and thus one could say they only had two options from that point onward. Either they could openly support the Community of Islamic Faith and the reactions that followed (which obviously was not along their claims-makings), or they could choose to silence themselves and accept that the allegiance to sharing 'A' group category with the Community of Islamic Faith, hoping that withdrawing their claims from that point on would, eventually, disassociate themselves with the actions and global reactions caused by the other 'A' members they initially grouped with. Thus, the social factors influencing what members of groups choose to categorise with can be significant in their ability to be effective in their desired behaviours and actions in situations, making their choices sometimes negate other behavioural options they could have had.

Danish Media influence on Muslim Portrayal

Power relations between the Danish state and Muslims as a minority group are illuminated and reinforced through the example of the Muhammed cartoon crisis. As pointed out by T.H. Eriksen in (2007, p. 8); ‘leading Danish media had for years taken a hard line on political Islam and in general focused intensively on problems with Muslims in Danish society’. In a media study using discourse analysis carried out by SFI (the Danish Centre for Social Research), two case studies were done looking into the role Danish newspapers play in reproducing racial and ethnic inequality. The analyses are based on, respectively, a two-month and a two week monitoring of four Danish newspapers between mid-October and mid-December in 2011 (Jacobsen et al., 2013, p.1). The first case study focuses on representation of Muslims and Islam in Danish newspapers, and the second study looked at the presence and absence of debates on racism and discrimination towards ethnic minorities in Denmark (Jacobsen et al., 2013, p.1). The authors of the article note, referring to the Muhammed Cartoon crisis that; “The cartoon affair has led to strong on-going clashes between different segments of the Danish Society” (Jacobsen et al. 2013, p. 2), which has already briefly been mentioned above among Danish-Muslims and their responses to the event. Furthermore the authors note that; “the controversy has sharpened the tone of public debate on Muslims and ethnic minorities, making it more polarised” (Jacobsen et al. 2013, p. 2). Coming back to the case studies by the SFI; a two-month long observational period of the four largest read newspapers in Denmark was carried out that included *Politiken*, *Jyllands-Posten*, *Ekstrabladet* and *KristligtDagblad*, from which a discourse analysis approach was used (Jacobsen et al. 2013, p. 3). The research from the case studies were categorised in the following ways as carrying the following ; ‘hostile’, ‘inclusion’, or ‘neutral’ in tone, with regard to Islam and Muslim framing, and then with regards to minority voices in media coverage as being; ‘strong’, ‘weak’, or ‘nil’ (Jacobsen et al. 2013, p.6). Of the news articles analysed, around fifty-eight percent of them were negatively framed towards contributing towards a hostile tone towards Muslims and Islam, and only about

eight percent with a positive/inclusionary tone towards Muslims and Islam (Jacobsen et al. 2-13, p. 8). The positive/inclusionary stories regarding Muslims portrayed them as a diverse group of people that are a resource for society whom are victims of discrimination (Jacobsen et al., 2013, p. 8). Like mentioned before, a downfall of the Muslim population in Denmark is the heterogeneity. Not only for the inner group challenges that arise from this for their ability to act unified as a group in response to discrimination in Denmark, but also their heterogeneity being downplayed in the majority of media coverage. This makes their imagery constantly reinforced and misrepresented by Danish media into public sphere without many contestations. The coverage of negative toned stories revolved around themes such as extremism, terror, sharia, freedom of speech, women rights, and democracy versus Islam issues (Jacobsen et al., 2013, p. 8). The themes in these articles furthermore dealt with more encompassing questions of values and religion in Danish society (Jacobsen et al., 2013, p. 9). Furthermore, authors note from the work of Peter Hervik, that the negative media portrayals represent “Muslim culture and Islam as a threat to liberal democracy, Christianity, freedom of speech, and/or other ‘Danish Values’ like individualism and secularism (Hervik 2002, in Jacobsen et al. 2013, p.9). These are ‘representations of Islam as oppositional to ‘Danishness’ functions, according to Jensen (2010), that sustain a general perception of the polarisation between the secular democracy and that of *sharia* (Jacobsen et al. 2013, p. 9). Furthermore, these negative portrayals of Islam and Muslims in the media contribute to the construction of an antagonistic and hierarchical relationship between ‘Muslims’ and ‘Danes’ (Jacobsen et al. 2013, p.9). These articles are where the portrayal and reinforcement of Muslims as Terrorists imagery is distributed to the public sphere, while imagery of ‘ordinary’ Muslims in day to day situations were almost entirely absent in media coverage (Jacobsen et al., 2013, p. 9).

Now we must turn to the analysis of minority voice in these media stories to look at what representation the Muslim minorities have on themselves being portrayed in Danish media.

It is clear that one tactic Danish media has with discussions and coverage of Muslims and Islam is not providing a dialogue or 'equal field of representation' in their stories. "reporting tended to become a talk *about* specific problems associated with Muslims and Islam, rather than a talk *with* Muslims and a dialogue between Muslims and non-Muslims" (Jacobsen et al. 2013, p. 13). Thus, seventy-five of the articles dealing with Islam and Muslims reported, Muslim voices were completely absent (Jacobsen et al. 2013, p.13). Thirteen percent of media articles analysed had strong voices of Muslims in them, and eleven percent of articles had weak voices of Muslims included (Jacobsen et al. 2013, p. 13). What must be noted is that the Muslim actors that did appear in articles, appeared again and again, and had a tendency to be Muslims with the most critical viewpoints, differing from the majority population of Muslims with whom they are representing (Jacobsen et al., 2013, p. 13). These Muslim actors that were given voices in media were representatives of Islamic organisations, Imams, Salafis, and extremists (Jacobsen et al., p.13-14). Overall the authors of the article concluded some important points from doing a discourse analysis of Danish media in relation to Islam. They found that "most reporting tended to be rather one-sided and exclusive of minority voices, and in cases where Muslims were given a voice, the same few actors were heard, who stand out from the majority population of Muslims in Denmark" (Jacobsen et al. 2013, p.17). Furthermore it is also important to highlight what has not been said and covered in Danish media of minority Muslim voices.

"the less visible Muslims, who practice their religion outside the religious institutions, were broadly overlooked..in this way the media created a distorted picture of Muslims and Islam that does not acknowledge the heterogeneity of Muslims' experiences and identities, but lumps them together in a homogenous category" (Jacobsen et al., 2013, p. 17).

The discourse analysis study by SFI on national newspapers in Denmark highlight ongoing themes in Danish media that are worth relating with theoretical considerations. One, is the ongoing

downplay of differences among Muslims portrayed in Danish media. It is no secret that the population that comprises the Muslim minority group in Denmark is incredibly diverse. The discourse analyses by Jacobsen et al., of the four major newspapers found that there was constant emphasis on the contrasts between Danishness and Muslims; between Danish liberal, democratic values and Islamic values. With constant examples being released in media publications that show only difference and incompatibility between Islam and Danishness. The constant need for the media to perpetuate these differences not only is to maintain ethnic boundaries and ultimately ethnic group survival (along theoretical framing of Fredrik Barth), but also it is because of the kind of society Denmark is today. In complex, polyethnic systems, or put more in today's wording ; in a globalised world, the flow of people across borders, and migration are more common and rapid than ever before. Denmark is no exception to this reality. While many states have accepted some form of multiculturalism, Denmark has been more conservative, which has been highlighted by various scholars. Denmark has chosen a position to try to preserve its own culture above all others, and the result of this is the extensive efforts and measures that must be taken to achieve this in an ever globalizing world. As Barth puts it with these polyethnic societies, 'boundary maintaining mechanisms must be highly effective' (Barth, 1969, p.19). Barth gives three reasons for why they must be so effective; the first the complexity of the (polyethnic) system is based upon the existence of important, complementary cultural differences ; secondly, these differences must be generally standardised within the ethnic group, every member of a group must be highly stereotyped-so that inter-ethnic interaction can be based on ethnic identities ; and lastly, the cultural characteristics of each ethnic group must be stable, so that these differences can persist despite close inter-ethnic contact (Barth, 1969, p.19). Thus if we look at the Danish system, difference between Danes and Muslims has been constant in media, and the portrayal of Muslims is highly stereotyped into threatening images such as religious extremists and terrorists. The lowest amount of news stories reported by the discourse analyses study done by Jacobsen et al. on the major newspapers were

those that highlighted the diversity among Muslim minorities in Denmark. For Barth the survival of ethnic groups in social interaction contexts relies upon these exercises of boundary maintenance.

Furthermore, the Danish media purposely focusing on difference between Danes and Muslims and downplaying the diversity among Muslims in Denmark can be seen in more modern ethnic relation terms by Thomas Hylland Eriksen. Eriksen postulates in an essay regarding Diversity and Difference; “I propose a simple contrast between diversity and difference in order to highlight two fundamentally distinctive ways of dealing with, and identifying, cultural variation.” (Eriksen 2006, p.2). Eriksen further summarises that, “while diversity is seen as a good thing, difference is not..Difference refers to morally objectionable or at least questionable notions and practices in a minority group or category” (Eriksen 2006, p. 2) He further comments that while there can be support for diversity in the public sphere (to varying degrees), difference has become more and more viewed as being a main cause of social problems associated with immigrants and their descendants (Eriksen 2006, p. 2). Thus the Danish media simultaneously uses difference to homogenise and stereotype the image of Muslims based on the lack of acknowledging the diversity of Danish Muslims, while then using differences between Islamic and Danish values as the basis for which Muslims are seen as a threat.

Danish media's political context and Jyllands-Posten

The newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* is particular in ways that make it more anti-Islam than any other major national newspaper in Denmark. However before that is divulged in further, a brief overview of the past and present situation and nature of Danish National newspapers should be made, *Jyllands-Posten*, like the other major national newspapers of Denmark has experienced hard times in the wake of globalisation. Historically, Danish Newspapers have always been linked with political parties of Denmark. When these newspapers that were established over 200 years ago, they were each closely tied to a political party (Hervik 2012, p.19). *Berlingske Tidende* (est. 1915), was

the supportive publication of the “Right (Højre)” or from 1915 onward, the Conservative People’s Party; *Politiken* has supportive roots with the Social Liberals (Det Radikale Venstre), and *The Social-Demokraten* newspaper which no longer is in existence was the supportive publication for the Social Democratic Party, and lastly, *Jyllands-Posten* was supportively tied to The Conservatives (Hervik 2012, p. 19). However a bit more than a hundred years after the formation of the political party system formations in Denmark in the 1870s, these national newspapers encountered obstacles of their survival. As pointed out by Hervik (2012, p. 19);

“Under economic pressure and the introduction of new technologies in the early 20th century the opinions of newspapers were no longer an asset. Papers began losing their role as agitators. Some went out of business, while other papers adjusted and merged as de-politicised local media monopolies that served a town or region”.

As a result, the national papers adopted tactics related to journalistic criterion for their survival and began to function more so public life aspects in Denmark moving away from political focus and opinion (Hervik 2012, p. 20). However in recent decades these national newspapers have shifted back to being ‘re-politicised’ as a result not only of the Developments in Danish politics but also due to factors of globalisation’s influences on media consumption options. In 2001, the *MetroExpress* and *Urban* emerged, and within just a few years (by 2006), has accumulated about 60% of the journalistic market in Denmark, both being free, with a general audience as their aim, and containing briefly summarised news stories (Hervik 2012, p. 21). The national newspapers of Denmark dealt with this competition by becoming more opinionated and emphasised values echoing political party sentiments (Hervik 2012, p.21). Today, *Jyllands-Posten* attempts to portray itself as an independent and liberal publication, yet still has its historical ties to the present leading Venstre party in Danish parliament today (Hervik 2012, p.20). These ties have become more evident

and all the national newspapers, including *Jyllands-Posten* have become actors in the public sphere with politics and strong politically infused stances on debated national issues (Hervik 2012, p. 21). Furthermore, Hervik points out that *Jyllands-Posten* has had ‘confrontational and Islam critical style’ that has emerged as early on as in 1997 (Hervik 2012, p.21). Around this time as well; “studies conducted as early as 1995, reported that cultural racism is gaining ground in Denmark and that the media’s role spreading stereotypical images of Muslims” (Muller & Ozcan, 2007, p. 289). Again in another study done on Danish media; “points to the media’s role in popularising a neo-racist discourse that positions the Muslim identity as a direct negation of the ‘Danishness’ “ (Muller&Ozcan 2007, p. 289). The media and national papers of Denmark have a strong political tone in recent years that has risen simultaneously with Danish politics gaining anti-Muslim immigrant sentiment, and Denmark facing more diverse immigrations than ever before in the globalised present. As summarised by Hervik about Danish media coverage over immigrant minorities in Denmark (2012, p.75); “news journalism is moving further away from critical journalism into journalism where journalists become conductors of cacophony of political statements”. The socio-political context of Denmark summarised a year after the Muhammed cartoon crisis took place is described by Hedetoft (2006, p. 9) as; ‘The Danish view of immigration is to a large extent couched in terms of an Islamic menace and a clash of cultures. The so-called cartoon affair illustrates the state of affairs well.’”

Rising DPP Influence

Around the same time as the outward anti-Islam views of *Jyllands-Posten* can be detected, the Danish People’s Party was created, breaking away from the older anti-immigrant oriented Danish Progress Party. Some scholars, such as Jens Rydgren argue that; “Denmark did not have a pure RRP(radical right-wing) party until the foundation of the Danish People’s Party in 1995” (Rydgren 2004, p. 480). Furthermore Rydgren points out that; “the core of ethno-nationalism and the doctrine

of ethno-pluralism” enshrined in the Danish People’s Party is what fundamentally separates them from the previous Progress Party that gained popularity in the 1970s (Rydgren 2004, p.480). For the Danish People’s Party; “Immigration is seen as a threat against Danish culture and ethno-national identity..Muslims in particular are believed to present a threat to Danish culture” (Rydgren 2004, p. 484). Furthermore the stance the DPP takes towards Muslim immigrants is hostile and non negotiable; they believe Muslims cannot become part of Danish society. Stated in the party’s programme;

“to make Denmark multiethnic would mean that reactionary cultures, hostile to evolution, would break down our so-far stable, homogenous society....Nowhere on the globe has peaceful integration of Muslims into another culture been feasible” (Dansk Folkeparti 2001,in Rygdren 2004).

Thus to the Danish People’s Party, Muslim immigrants into Danish society seems to be not an option, the very thought of them being in Denmark is seen as a great threat to Danish society. In 1998, the DPP received 7.2% support from voters and 12% of votes in the 2001 elections (Rydgren, 2004, p. 474). During this period Rydgren also points out the shift in what issues political parties in Denmark focused on. “In 1998, only nine percent answered ‘economic policy’ when asked to mention the most important political issues of the day” (Nielsen 19991: 21, in Rygren 2004, p.491). Rydgren quotes that, “the salience of the socio-economic issues has decreased, party as a result of the politicisation of alternative issues such as immigration, security and the EU” (cf. Blomqvist & Green-Pedersen 2002: 11, in Rydgren 2004, p. 490). This shift has had significant consequences on political parties and their strategies in Denmark. Traditionally being based upon issues of social and economic orientation, parties now must include these alternative issues mentioned above to forge attraction of voters. A case such as this can be seen with the Social Democratic Party having issues

of their ideology and strategies becoming disoriented (Rydgren 2004, p.491). As Rydgren concludes about the Social Democratic Party's position;

“the issues the party traditionally ‘own’ decrease in salience-and seeing its traditional voter constituency slowly wither away- the party has increasingly tried to exploit authoritarian attitudes on the socio-cultural dimension” (Rydgren 2004, p. 491).

Furthermore, issues within the party upon how much to emphasise on these new socio-cultural dimensions and the positions to take on them have weakened the party as a whole as a result (Rydgren 2004). In contrast to issues the more historically prominent political parties of Denmark, like the Social Democratic Party have experienced, the Danish People's Party has not struggled with the new socio-political dimension of importance in political party success. Since the creation of the Danish People's Party, they have focused on socio-political issues such as immigration. They have been successful in making it a strong political issue they have always engaged strongly in and made it a pivotal platform of their party goals. Furthermore, as the number of immigrants and the demographic composition of these immigrants has changed dramatically in Denmark, like all Western European states in the face of globalisation in recent decades, the DPP has gained more party support simultaneously with the rise of European immigration and in particular increased immigration flows to Denmark.

By the time of the 2001 elections in Denmark, the issue of immigration had gained a considerable position of concern in Denmark. “In 2001, 20 percent of the voters mentioned ‘immigration’ when asked which problems of the day they considered to be most important when deciding how to vote” (Rydgren 2004, p. 494). After the 2001 elections, the DPP found itself in a unique and influential position. The DPP was the support party to the Liberal-Conservative coalition government that was formed, and even still today it holds this position as “the governments main coalition partner in day-to-day politics” (Rydgren 2004, p.496). The 2001 elections and results for the DPP are significant in seeing a shift of a far-right party gaining

considerable influence in the Parliament which is very rare in Danish Parliamentary history. The year of the Muhammed cartoon crisis was also a year of elections in Denmark. The DPP enjoyed their previously gained position and influence since the 2001 elections. “The major winner of the 2005 election was the Social Liberal Party, which almost doubled its parliamentary representation..also on the winning side were the Red-Green Alliance, Danish People’s Party and the Conservatives, each of which gained two seats” (Pedersen 2005, p. 1105). The 2005 general election results can be considered as reconsolidating of the parliamentary shift that took place in the 2001 election. The DPP in 2005 received 13 percent of votes, being the third largest most supported party with 24 seats in Parliament (Pedersen 2005). The end result of the general elections in November of 2007 left the DPP sitting in Parliament with about as much voter support they had experienced since 2001 general elections floating at about 12-13% (Knudsen 2012). Again in 2011 the amount of voter support for the DPP was at 12 percent, giving the DPP a decade of successful influence and presence in Danish Parliament (Knudsen 2012).

This year Danish general elections took place and the DPP experienced a significant jump in their supportive voter turnout. While they have gained a small, yet stable voter following as shown above, the most recent elections reflect that immigration as a major politically debated issue in Danish politics has increased to its highest position of significance thus far. The results from June 2015, showed the Danish People’s Party receiving 21% of votes in the election, making them the party that gained the second largest amount of votes behind the Social Democrats (Deloy 2015).

The 2015 election like previous elections mentioned had immigration issues as major issue platform for debate. Since the Muhammed cartoon crisis of 2005, the politics in Denmark both before and after, still revolve around parties needing to focus their stances on immigration to keep voter support. The Danish People’s Party has by far been the most stable on their stances towards immigration, and their voter support on their stance of the issue has been stable in the past fifteen years, with a significant rise in popularity in the past five years. What this means in regards to the

Muhammed cartoon crisis is that with the previous section briefly summarising the past two decades of the evolution of the mediascape in Denmark becoming highly politicised with anti-Muslim rhetoric and immigration debate. Along with politics having had shifted as well with Denmark's far-right party establishing itself a legitimately influential position in Danish politics in the last decade, making anti-Islam sentiment in Denmark stronger than ever before in its history. The political agendas of parties in Denmark focusing on anti-immigration and in particular anti-Muslim immigration has been successful as mentioned through 'ethnic conflict' framing and an outwardly emic Danish creation of Muslim immigrant identity in Denmark that prevails and continues to be re-solidified and safeguarded through tactics of excluding minority voices and representation, and a lack of dialogue with the immigrant population and the Danish government. If we look at examples from the campaign video for the DPP in this year's elections we can see very easily the ethnic Muslim group portrayal as discussed in previous sections.

If we look at the DPP's campaign video we can see their logic into what is Denmark and Danes, and why these immigrants are still considered the 'other' or the 'them' to the 'us' of Denmark. The start of the DPP campaign video is reminiscent of an old, history video clip from something one would have seen in elementary or middle school. It begins with establishing Denmark as the oldest kingdom in the world, with their language and people being over a thousand years old, claiming Denmark's roots go deep. Vikings are shown as their people, that have strong traditions. Then the scene jumps to images of famous 19th century Danish figures such as Kierkegaard. Equality, the welfare state, democracy and tolerance are all emphasised as being Danish. What is quite striking is the saying of "I welcome people of other countries, I give a home to those who are persecuted and seeking freedom", simultaneously the first image is of people in white lab coats smiling, either meant to be doctors or scientists, then the next shot is of a family in Africa for 'giving a home to those who are persecuted and seeking freedom'. It must be noted

between these two scenes and sentences the DPP separates and uses radicalised imagery between whom is a welcomed foreigner from another country and what a refugee is.

The video then takes the most dramatic and racial turn with saying 'BUT..I will challenge cultures that want to change what I (Denmark), have been fighting for. I will not back down when faced with violence and terror'. The images that go along with this statement are most obviously and only directed towards culture/immigrants of Muslim religion. Burning buildings with Arabic written on flags is shown, followed by the burning of the Twin Towers. 'I will not be forced to accept medieval traditions' with women in full burkas is shown, followed by the burning of a Danish flag, and thereafter people bowing in prayer in Muslim fashion. 'I am a country that will stand guard to protect my own culture, because I am Denmark' is the final saying of the clip with a two children wrapped in a Danish flag watching a sunset.

This video not only sets Denmark and Danes in an ancient, tribal like lineage from the Vikings, it also is primarily exclusion based with regard to immigrants. As put by Thomas Hylland Eriksen; "The first fact of ethnicity is the application of systematic distinctions between insiders and outsiders; between Us and Them" (Eriksen 2010, p. 2). Furthering this perspective on ethnicity by Thomas Hylland Eriksen, we can look at the increasing support for the DPP as being a success of creating an ethnically threatening Muslim 'Them' group in Denmark in contrast to the Liberal, democratic ethnic Danish 'Us' group, the DPP portrays. In establishing this stereotyped portrayal and be against it, the DPP metaphorically is against all the things that threaten the liberal, democratic, safe, free aspects of Danish society, while claiming to safeguard them from non-specific threatening values and traits of a homogenized 'other' from the Islamic realm.

It is noteworthy that politics of culture seems to be very epitomized in today's western politics. Therefore, one cannot understand how certain identities are consolidated without understanding how the politics of culture has been played. In a Danish context, the last elections that took place in 2015 showed how mobilization was centered around issues of immigration and

values. We will argue that in a liberal democratic constellation which characterise Europe in general and Denmark in our case, issues of culture became the main locus for politics. As Jakob Fedt rightly puts it:

“So what we witness in these years can also be coined as a radicalisation of the inherent clash between liberalism and democracy caused by increased pressure on the commonsensical cultural politics of democracy. this pressure primarily comes from the immigration of Middle easterners to Europe, but it is also, as Mouffe points out, caused by the economic policies of neo-liberalism (Mouffe 2000, 17–35). in the balance between liberalism and democracy, since the 1980s the scale has turned to liberalism which makes it increasingly difficult to follow politics of redistribution of wealth and property. this makes it harder for people to see what politics and participation actually accomplish since most political parties flock in the middle where they follow basically the same economic policy. Immigration and integration policies naturally move to the centre of cultural politics because they build up the most obvious pressure on the cultural homogeneity that the people represent. Democracy’s turf, the will of the people, can only unfold on cultural issues. Immigration, integration, education, art and sports are areas where politicians willingly “listen to the people” while economy, employment, housing, foreign policy and redistribution are areas preferably run without public interference” (Fedt, 2010, p.171).

Fedt’s important observation highlights the dilemma of Arab culture in Europe in general and in Denmark particularly. Culture as the main factor that political parties put in use to differentiate one from the other suggests and maybe necessitate the continuous creation of the other. And the other has to be threatening rather than enriching. Thus, we will argue that having an Islamic character is not something necessary the Arabs are asking for but it is something that has to be created by

different actors and sometimes through different political and cultural institutions. Almost along the progressions of thought, Richard Jenkins states; “the reconstruction of theory and strategy on the political broad left, following the collapse of European state socialism and the rightward reorientation of politics in the Western social democracies, was also significant. New political alliances were expressed in ideas such as ‘identity politics’ for which ‘difference’ provided an organising theme” (Jenkins 2008, p.19).

IV. Understanding identity formation, A theoretical framework

In order to understand and further discuss identity formation specifically for Arabs who have been living in Denmark, we will recourse to Nasar Meer’s discussion about the rise of Muslim Consciousness in Britain, and the work of Richard Jenkins on social identity. Later on (Next chapter), we will introduce Astrid Erll’s work on memory in culture. Both the current and the next chapter will create the necessary theoretical framework for our project.

But first let us start with Richard Jenkins’ statement, which argues against the tendency to emphasise relations of differences in shaping identities and for knowing “who’s who and what’s what”, and therefore the tendency to underplay the relations of similarities. In his critique To Seyla Benhabib’s idea that identity politics is the politics of the creation of difference, Jenkins stated that according to such a logic it is becoming that “‘differentiation from’ permits ‘identification with’ to happen, and is thus logically prior and apparently more significant. Difference almost appears to have become the defining principle of collectivity” (Jenkins 2008, p.20). We will come back to Jenkins’ argument in relation to similarities and differences later on in our course of discussion with Nasar Meer. But for now, we wanted to emphasise that these two dimensions of similarities and

differences, and how they are played in a given context, are key issues if we want to understand the position of what we call an Arab cultural identity within a Danish context.

On the other hand, Nasar Meer argues in his analysis about the rise of Muslim consciousness in Britain that it was mainly developed and shaped in a dialectic relation or in the course of interaction between the self and the others. Yet, he adopts or privileges the idea that one sees his or her own identity through the eyes of the other. This can be depicted when he states - agreeing with Du bois – that, “the identity others assign to us can be a powerful force in shaping our own self-concepts, so that, while our own self-consciousness is subjective, it does not free us from the impact of what others say and do. This seems particularly true for minorities at moments of acute objectification” (Meer 2010, p.64). This is also clear when He goes on to say that this moment of acute objectification for Muslims exists through the rise of anti-Islamic discourse in the West. Meer continues to emphasise this idea throughout the book by referring to different writers; such as when he referred to R. Greaves who “insisted that an increasing self-identification of second and subsequent generations as ‘Muslim’ constitutes a reaction to the aspect of their identity believed to be under attack” (Meer 2010, p.82).

Meer’s book’s objective is not the point we just highlighted, rather he used this point in order explain the infrastructure, upon which, a Muslim consciousness/identity was built and transcended the different forms of identifications Muslims from different cultural background might have, and which Meer seems to celebrate. While the first point highlighted above will be the subject of the discussion in relation with what Jenkins argued in relation to identity and identifications through similarities and differences, we will turn now to register some remarks and/or objections on what Meer referred as Muslim identity.

A. Acknowledging the heterogeneity of ethnic, national and theological cleavages within British Muslims, Meer argues against Humayun Ansari claim that “presumptions of Muslim homogeneity

and coherence which claim to override the differences do not necessarily correspond to social reality. A Sylheti from Bangladesh apart from some tents of faith, is likely to have little in common with a Mirpuri from Pakistan” (Ansari in Meer 2010, p.92) and he also argues against Fred Halliday’s remark that “it is easy....to study an immigrant community and present all in terms of religion. But this is to miss other identities - of work, location, ethnicity - and, not least, the ways in which different Muslims relate to each other. Anyone with the slightest acquaintance of the inner life of the Arabs in Britain, or the Pakistani and Bengali communities, will know there is as much difference as commonality” (Halliday in Meer 2010, p.92). Meer’s argument to counter both Ansari and Halliday’s logic is that since “slim majority of the British Muslim” today have been born in the UK. Therefore he sees that, especially for the new generation, there are some factors that can transcend these differences. These factors Meer argues can be summarised by shared concerns of Muslim citizens. He states that “shared concerns are likely to encompass the ways in which to combat anti-Muslim racism or cultivate a positive public image” (Meer 2010, p.92). It is interesting for us to stop for a moment here. While we agree with what Meer highlighted that shared concerns of people who do belong to a ‘Muslim community’ or who might have Islam as a faith inherited from their families might tighten the links between them or maybe unify them in a common struggle, yet it is exactly this point that we want to scrutinise and develop. What Meer highlights is that in order to combat anti-Muslim racism, people having Islamic faith will come together to create a counter image (ibid, P:92). But isn’t that what they are doing is fighting against a given image instead of creating new one, i.e. to counter the image and not to create a counter image? And isn’t it that by framing them into an identity will be re-emphasising the discourse that Meer might be willing to challenge? Namely assuming that all people with Arab, Pakistani or Afghani descents - among others of course - constitute one category, which is firstly an Islamic category that might be regarded as a threat to the local identity. And by doing so, local authorities we assume are also creating the infrastructure for a faith based identity to counter the Islamic one in the long run.

Meer continues to emphasise that the Muslim identity in Britain is a British Muslim identity that transcends relations to homeland and functions as a universalistic version of understanding Islam (ibid, P:82-84). Thus, people, despite keeping some relations to their country of origins, stop being British Afghani, British Iraqi and so on in order to adopt a hyphenated British Muslims identity (Ibid, P:83). Why? According to him, because of the racist attitude towards Muslims in the West, Muslims consciousness was therefore formulated. Therefore, the idea is that Muslims of second generations adopted a universalistic version of Islam that transcends differences and that might be opposing the Islam of their parents, which he deemed to be not up to date with what the British Muslims are facing.

“Youth can use the political and intellectual teachings of Islam to argue and resist parental control (based upon an explicitly cultural understanding of Islam) as much as the pressures of racism and exclusion they experience from the majority group” (Meer 2010, p.84).

By saying so, he is saying that one identifies as Muslim to use this identity to counter something else. Identity in this sense is becoming the locus for conflictual struggle, rather than knowing what one is. Meer here, seems to underplay the inter-generational relations and the extent to which parental transmission of memories and experiences can participate in shaping their kids' identities. This is a very important point for us and it will be part of a further discussion in relation to cultural transmission between first and second generations.

What we want to say here is that mainstream negative representation about Islam might lead people to prioritise certain forms of identifications over others. Yet this is not the same as replacing, once and for all, all other forms of identifications. In some different circumstances, people might prioritise these other forms of identifications. What was once called the Arab spring for example encouraged people do identify as Arabs at a certain stage and what has been done in the name of Islam led many Muslims to dissociate themselves from this identity and to take their faith to the

private realm. Therefore, to call for a recognition of an identity solely based on its religious characteristics might do harm more than good to the subject of Islam as a faith.

It is obvious to say that Muslims in Britain or anywhere else in the West do not belong to the same theological or cultural groundings. In addition, there are people who identify with Islam even if they do not practice Islam and people who consider Islam as part of their other culture⁴. This is of course something that Meer is aware of and also he mentioned it in his book. Therefore, the issue here is how can we draw a line between people who identify with Islam and are actively seeking an Islamic way of governance (in many different forms), people who practice Islam as faith without any tendency to seek Islamic governance and people who do not practice religion but still have Islam as part of their cultural backgrounds? And how one can think of an all-encompassing Muslim subject while people from the same Islamic sect do diverge based on their nationalities⁵?

C. In an example that Meer used to elaborate on the different forms of Islamic identifications, Meer turned to ethnographic research done by Philip Lewis during the first Gulf War on Bradford upper school that has a majority of Muslims intake. Lewis, trying to answer why students were pro-Iraq while most of the local and national media discourse was directed against it, he argued that this happened because the students perceived a threat to their shared identity. At the same time, Lewis hinted to the fact that this did not increase the number of Muslim kids appearing in the area allocated for prayers in the school (Meer 2010, p.82). Meer celebrating this result claimed that this would support his argument that there are different forms of Islamic identifications.

⁴ For many, Arabic culture cannot be reduced to Islamic since many of thinkers who advocated Arabism were Christians. Not only that, also because the contemporary Arab world is not homogeneous but rather very heterogeneous in terms of religions, ethnicities and races.

⁵ For many Iraqis, even if they share the same Shia sect with Iranian, one cannot say that they share the same identity. The history of the two countries might prevent that.

Here we want to highlight that the reaction towards different events such as the Iraq war is not based only upon Islamic sentiments. For that Iraqis or Arabs opposing the war were more concerned with their nationality and sometimes their Arabism. Let alone the opposition by many in different places in the world whom do not have any relation to Islam as a faith. In addition one cannot mistake that most of the international media discourses back then were mostly directed towards the Iraqi regime and most of the sanctions were producing Iraqi refugees. The problem as it always occurs, is that by naming the Bradford student Muslim students, then we would see their reactions depending on an Islamic categorization.

D. Meer in order to back his argument, recourses to feminist theory especially on issues related to sex and gender. He states; “the relationship between Islam and Muslim identity might be analogous to the relationship between the categorisation of one’s sex and one’s gendered identity” (Meer 2010, p.60). Meer in this analogy tries to say that Muslim identity does not necessary advocate religiosity as much as sex should not necessary advocate a given gender. The analogy here even it seems to be attractive especially that it create an ecstasy that an Islamic struggle for identity recognition is being analogous with gender based struggles. Yet, and after we get rid of the ecstasy of the analogy, one might have a closer look to note firstly that sex and gender are two different words while Muslim identity is highly referential to Islam. Secondly, to dissect this analogy we have to choose either that Muslim identity is referring to the practice of religiosity and therefore the analogy is destroyed, or to say that Muslim identity does not necessary refer to religiosity. In this case, taking into consideration the heterogeneity of British Muslims that Meer acknowledged in point (A) above, one might ask on which basis a non-religious Muslim will identify with other Muslims if not on premise of issues of religiosity? Then isn’t it what we call a Muslim identity is referring to anti-Islam rather than to Islam itself? Then why we are insisting on calling it Muslim identity and why we are using Islam and Muslims rather than Anti-Islam and Muslim identity in the analogy? What Meer is

suggesting is that “Je suis Charlie” should be elevated to an identity rather than an identification for a common struggle.

The question is whether one having Islam as a faith will be enough to be part of a group identity labeled as Muslims? Even if we consider that it does not mean necessarily religiosity. Following such a logic, we will end up, in a Danish context, having Christian Danes and Muslim Danes. Having Islam as one form of identification does not mean anything in relation to conformity of action. People having this identification could not be represented by one group. They do differentiate from one another big times. They do share some general social codes yet they do not constitute a fixed identity. And of course, there might be a group who chose to have an Islamic identity based on religiously informed understanding of the world and this we assume can be accounted as ideological, yet this group’s struggle is not the struggle of the majority of people who have Islam as a faith. Therefore, giving this specific identity to everyone is nothing but a stereotyping tendency, that it seems both opponents and proponents of Islam are happy to follow. Only by breaking with this discourse we can arrive to see people with a different view and only then, we will be thinking of enriching plural society rather than dividing two societies.

We are not arguing here against the presence of certain Islamic identity, rather we are trying to avoid the claim that all Muslims do possess this identity. Because by saying so, we might hide some other more powerful forms of identifications. One of these, is an Arab identity. It is important to understand the consequences of such a move. In a context where Arabs constitute the large proportion of immigrants, their struggles might be different from Islamic ones. Arabic language for example is something that not all Muslims might ask to include in public schools. Yet for Arabs, this is one of the main issues. Also, in moments where we have a big influx of refugees such as the Syrians who are arriving in enormous numbers, the question is how much assumption that these people have a Muslim identity can be seen as not being threatening? This especially is that the newcomers might not share and Islamic identity, which Meier is arguing the already existing immigrants

might have, i.e. a universalistic form of Islam. The issue here is not whether or not there is an Islamic dimension to the issue in terms of recognising some faith related traditions by incorporating them within Danish legislation processes. The issue is how can we add the majority of people having Islam as a faith to a singular identity and category while they possess different or other forms of identifications as well?

The danger of Meer's suggestion is that it is, even though he made a lot of efforts to argue for a common Muslim identity in Britain (which he tried to wrap it as an ethnic identity), it is intrinsically built upon relations of differences vis-à-vis; 1) anti-Muslim discourse, 2) Assumed Christian majority and 3) the identification of their parents as Meer suggests. All of this has been not only celebrated by Meer, but also he calls for their concretion and recognition. It is here that the relations of differences, using Jenkins term, took over relations of similarities and therefore, these tightened links or closer relations Arab Muslims might develop with other Somali, Pakistani, Afghani or Bangladeshi Muslims are directly related to a relation of difference with a third party. Put differently, we can say that As develop a tighter relation to Bs and Cs (who definitely have some shared features yet not necessarily the same identity) because they share concerns about the practices of Xs. The issue here is how the relation to Xs are driving As, Bs and Cs to develop or to emphasise certain characteristics over others. One can easily say that Islamophobia suggests a shift of focus from and to certain forms of identifications between people who might have relation to Islam. I.e., even a secular Arab, in a situation where anti-Islamic sentiments grew within society, will somehow identify with Islam. Moreover, the different types of Islamic identifications, when differences emphasised, will start to emerge as one against anti-Muslim discourse. Also, in a context loaded with anti-Islamism, Islamic institutions and figures are always the ones whom will be heard and sometimes used to re-emphasise the same discourse about Islam and Muslims.

In a way it is becoming a vicious circle where people are only recognised through their religious affiliation, then in some occasions (say 9/11, 7/7 or other incidents) these religious

affiliation creates sentiments of discontent within a society (anti Islamic, Islamophobia), then Muslim institutions are brought to a fore by both opponents and proponents to become the sole representatives of people coming from specific regions and thus they can be used to reproduce the same threat. This Meer himself mentions when he spoke about the controversy that took place in relation to Muslim Council in Britain (MCB), which was the main interlocutor in State-Muslim engagement. MCB was critiqued by the government and some Civil society bodies for not being able “to reject extremism clearly and decisively” (Meer 2010, p.90) especially in the wake of the new millennium with the Iraq war and what was named back then the war on terror campaign. Therefore, taking into consideration the difficulty any Islamic organisation might face, 1) in creating a rhetoric that can stand in front of secular governmental rhetoric and 2) in relation to the representation of the variety of Muslim people living in Britain, then one can understand how the continuous emphasis on Islamic identification and institutionalization might produce the same problematic.

This circle is always creating the same results and it is always ending up with presenting a problem rather than trying to solve it. It is within this circle that it is becoming difficult to perceive what are the other possible or plausible forms of identifications to emerge. And it is within this circle that is becoming difficult to perceive changes in certain forms of identifications or to perceive how can this infrastructure facilitate any change. As Jenkins stated that “Focusing only, or even mainly, on difference is unhelpful if one wants to understand social change” (Jenkins 2008, p.24). Unless we would assume a violent change, things might grow in the same negative trend. In order to break with this vicious circle, we will refer to Richard Jenkins’ emphasis on the vital role that relations of similarities play with the identification process. As Jenkins said;

“We should also recognise that invocations of similarity are intimately entangled with the conjuring up of difference. One of the things that people have in common in any group is

precisely the recognition of other groups or categories from whom they differ. It cannot be otherwise: Hughes understood this in the late 1940s, and Barth developed the idea further (Barth 1969; Hughes 1994: 91-96). But to acknowledge this is a far cry from calling up difference alone - or even mainly - as the primary arbiter of who's who. The human world simply doesn't work like that" (Jenkins 2008, p.23).

The issue here is within the process of identification, whether the starting point is a relation of difference of, or a relation of similarity with, is of a remarkable importance. Whereas the former hints towards a shared struggle, the latter hints at shared characteristics crafted within not necessary antagonistic relations to the other.

Once again, we will visit Meer's work when he says "new ethnicities are individualistic, choice-based and 'consumed' in an interaction of the local and the global that displace the 'centered' discourses 'of the West, putting in question its universalistic character and its transcendental claims to speak for everyone, while being itself everywhere and nowhere' (Hall, 1996: 169).....it constitutes part of a reaction to a proliferation of minority identities, and specifically the rise of Muslim-consciousness and Muslim group identities" (Meer 2010, p.80).

While we will not enter into a discussion whether or not Muslims can be grouped as an ethnicity or new ethnicity as Meer suggested since this is not the scope of this project, yet there are two key words that we want to highlight in Meer's sentence. The first is the individualistic character of this assumed ethnic-based identity and the second is that this identity is a "reaction" towards the proliferation of minorities' identities. While the latter has been thoroughly discussed in the first part of this chapter, the latter is what we will try to analyze. Faith as an individual practice has been transformed into a common denominator that dictates certain identity on the people who have this faith. This tendency as we have seen is emphasised by both opponents (see Chapter 3), and proponents of an Islamic identity (Meer in our case). Therefore, there is an elevation from the

individual beliefs towards a collective form of identification. To defend a cultural position is not the same as to have similar identity of the others who might be unifying for the same struggle.

Returning once more to Jenkins when he states that;

“moving on to the relationship between individuality and collectivity, the problem is even more fundamental. I am not sure that is possible to have any comprehension of the collective dimensions of social life - other than a merely additive, arithmetical model - if we emphasise difference” (Jenkins 2008, p.24).

It seems that the answer to the question Jenkins is posing can be summarised with what Meer suggested about the rise of Islamic consciousness in Britain. This is to say that it is possible to conceive or to comprehend a collective dimension if we emphasise difference. Yet what could also be true is that this collective formation can fit within what we will call Reactionary Identity⁶. Therefore, what Jenkins is always hinting at but never saying in his argument is that collective identities can be formed mainly through difference, but they are in their turn different from identities that are built upon an interactional relation of both similarities and differences. Here we are speaking about structurally different forms of identities. The former is prioritising a specific form of identification as a reaction towards a specific discourse and the latter is genuinely crafted, where both similarities and differences are at play. The former is one-dimensional and the latter is multi-dimensional. The former is singular with a higher tendency of antagonism and the latter is plural and could be agonistic.

What we are interested in here is not only whether an identity or a cultural identity is solely formed by relations of similarities and/or differences, rather we are intending to understand what are the preconditions to prioritise difference over similarities or vice versa. In the case of Nasar Meer, we believe that the precondition is the mainstream discourse that politics of culture is

⁶ Reactionary identities are a temporary form of identification that one prioritise in response towards certain antagonistic discourse or events addressed to this specific form of identification. It is based on relations of differences rather than similarities.

affording to catalyse the rise of Muslim consciousness. An important point that Meer highlighted as well in his book is the idea of double consciousness that he assumed Muslims have while living in Europe. So in order to understand the formation of Muslim identity or what he referred to as “Muslim Consciousness” in England, Meer re-visited William Edward Burghart Du Bois’s analysis of Africans-Americans discussion on identity and consciousness. His efforts to understand Muslims through the African-Americans discussion was illuminating since it brought to fore a case that might inform well the position of people with different cultural backgrounds in Europe. In his attempt, Meer rightly used Du Bois idea of “double consciousness” in order to illustrate a way to understand the Muslim identity in England. While we will adopt Meer’s approach in using Du Bois’s idea on double consciousness since we believe it is rightly spotted and since the idea of double consciousness is an interesting remark that we find useful in our project. However, yet again Meer’s use of it seems to us to be problematic. If we agree that people coming from the Middle East might have this double consciousness, we are not sure about his claim that one of these consciousness’s is Islamic.

Now, we have demonstrated in the past chapter how a Muslim identity can be created upon relations of differences. And therefore it can be described as a Reactionary Identity since it is built upon prioritising certain forms of identification in response to an anti-Islamic discourse. We also explained how different Muslims might not have the same understanding of a universalist Islamic identity, which Meer advocated for. Also, since we argue in the project that identities should not be mainly formed through relations of differences but also through similarities, then we will turn now to understand how relations of similarities are produced. There is a point to be made before going on. Richard Jenkins, on the relation between identity, social identity and cultural identity, states that “to distinguish analytically between the ‘social’ and the ‘cultural’ misrepresents the observable realities of the human world (Jenkins 2002a: 39-62)” (Jenkins 2008, p.17). Therefore, he always

uses the term identity plain. This is to say that what we call cultural identity is made in relation to social interaction and hence has social and cultural dimension.

V. Memory to understand Cultural identity

In our interviews conducted for this project, it was clear how the different generations depict Arab culture and how are they affected by the different discourses in Denmark when it comes to representation. Peoples' feedback ranged between indifference, disappointment, anger, ignorance and self hate. The major finding is that first generation of Arab immigrants who have been living for a long period in their homelands before they moved to Copenhagen do possess a different understanding of Arabism as a cultural identity in comparison with their descendants. It is here the role that is played by memory and culture awareness is enacting the different relations to cultural representation. Therefore, cultural memory is an essential dimension that is at work for immigrants living abroad. It is through it that one can reflect, perceive and act within a given society. Thus, we find ourselves obliged to discuss the way memory functions in relation to collective identifications. This will be the scope of this chapter.

When we want to tackle issues related to culture, we have to tackle many different dimensions that constitute it. These dimensions might include among others spiritual, historical, mythical, systems of values, literature, food, symbols, language, family relations, societal relations and intellectual productions. Culture can participate to a certain extent in defining the self and its relation to the other. Culture can also play an important role in positioning the self within social, political and spatial landscapes. Furthermore, we cannot speak of culture without addressing the issue of memory since it is through memory that we can develop a sense of our cultural self and cultural identity.

In this chapter, we will map of the evolution of the concept cultural memory and how both culture and memory became more and more intertwined. Since the beginning of the 20th century, there has been a proliferation of interdisciplinary memory studies. Our starting point will be the creation of the concept of collective memory by Maurice Halbwachs, One of the students of Henri Bergson and Emile Durkheim. Halbwachs at that time gave a different and challenging understanding of the relation between individual memory and the social structures. For Halbwachs, even the most individual memories cannot be thought of without the social framework since it is through people we can make sense of events, times and places. This perception of memory raised much controversy within the field even from Bergson himself. Some like the French historian Marc Bloch “accused Halbwachs, and the Durkheim school in general, of an unacceptable collectivisation of individual psychological phenomena” (Erl1 2011, p.14). Halbwachs main collaboration to the understanding of memory lies in his understanding of the collective dimension of the individual memory, which he sees as an operation that can never take place outside a sociocultural framework.

Halbwachs came to conclude when elaborating his concept of *cadre sociaux* that “social frameworks, is an indispensable prerequisite for every act of remembering” (Erl1 2011, p.15). For him individual and collective memories are intertwined in way that our individual memory can neither make any sense of the worlds of meanings nor can we pass it on without social interaction and social grouping, and that each individual occupy what he calls a viewpoint “point de vue” of each of the social group he or she belongs to. In Halbwachs words “one may say that the individual remembers by placing himself in the perspective of the group, but one may also affirm that the memory of the group realises and manifests itself in individual memories” (Halbwachs 1992, p. 40)..Later on, Halbwachs explained how an individual can ascribe to different forms of collective memories such as family or religious communities and he explained how intergenerational memory in the case of families pass on to descendants through oral stories of eye witnessing events. It is

worth mentioning that Halbwachs made a distinction between history and collective memory. Where the former is considered as a universal and deals with the past and usually characterised by contradictions and ruptures, he sees the latter as particular and specific for some groups who are chronologically and spatially restricted and whom their collective memory form their identity (Erl 2011, p.17). In addition, Halbwachs sees that while history belongs to the past, in contrast collective memory are a continuous re-appropriation of the past events in a way that they might seem fictive. Collective memory is not then for Halbwachs, a faithful construction of the past, it is rather selected based on the present needs and the interests of certain groups. Later on, Maurice Halbwachs while studying the Christian mnemonic topography of Palestine, made his break through to the somehow restricted notion of intergenerational memory through everyday communication and autobiography to open the temporal horizon of collective memory to distant past through studying topographical sites of memory.

During the same period, Aby Warburg was interested in the study of memory of art where he tried to explain “the power of cultural symbols to trigger memories” (Erl 2011, p.19). Warburg while observing the tendency of the renaissance artists to re-stage or re-appropriate the artwork of the classical era suggested that ancient symbols reflect emotional intensities. Therefore, they function as a storage of ‘mnemic energy’ which could be released at other historical circumstances. Warburg thus developed the term “social memory” which he derived from his work on the cultural memory of images. Warburg however, warned us about the threat that lies in the re-appropriation of ancient symbols since it always put the ‘civilised’ artist in contact with the ‘primitive’ symbols, in Warburg words. Therefore, art for him moves between the logic and the magic, “between ‘primitive’ ecstasy and ‘civilised’ self control” (Erl 2011, p.20). What Warburg meant is that contemporary artists should always keep a distance between the intensive expression of the symbol and the moral orientation of the present. Warburg through his study on the history of art hints at the

important interplay between the continuity and re-interpretation of social memory, and suggests that this interplay can show us the mental dimension of a given culture. In his words;

“The variations in rendering seen in the mirror of the period, reveal the conscious or unconscious selective tendencies of the age and thus bring to light the collective psyche that creates these wishes and postulates these ideals”(Quoted in Gombrich 1986, p:270-1)” (Erll 2011, P.20). .

The importance of bringing Warburg to our discussion on collective and cultural memory resides in the possibility to choose a variety of signs and signifiers of a cultural past while being aware of the different ways these signs can be used or misused in our contemporary lives. Warburg used the different materials to show the ability of objects and symbols in evoking cultural memory. Both Halbwachs and Warburg shared the idea that cultural memories and their transmission are based on social interactions.

Later, towards the end of the 20th century, Pierre Nora put forward his notion *lieux de memoire*. Nora’s thought about cultural memory were different than Halbwachs’ one. For him, what that we have now is not cultural memory per se, rather we have sites of memories that can function in building a sort of national identity. Nora does not see that contemporary French people do possess collective memory and he states that the presence of monuments, buildings, locations, philosophical texts, memorial days...etc as sites of memory shaped the French national identity during the third republic era. Therefore, Nora sees that this tendency to create these sites of memories faded in the 20th century, and that these remaining sites function as “artificial placeholder for the no longer existent, natural collective memory” (Erll 2011, p.23). He emphasises that these different sites of memory can never account for a comprehensive narrative, rather they are disrupted and fragmented images of the past that were ruptured from the living present. Nora sees that any selection of sites are signs that refer to some aspect of the French past and that hints as well to the

absence of lived memories. Nora's work is very much consumed by the shadow of globalisation and the history of nations. Nevertheless, one can say that despite the many critique for his notion, he opened a subject that many writers and scholars, while engaging critically with it, created important reflections on the subject of cultural memory.

At the same period of Nora work during 1980s, Jan and Aleida Assmann came with a new understanding of cultural memory. Their work was credited firstly to the notion of collective memory created some decades ago by Maurice Halbwachs. The Assmanns benefited from the proliferation of memory studies in order to put forward a theory that became the most prominent in the interdisciplinary field of culture and memory studies. Like Halbwachs', they think of memory as a collective process, yet they categorised memories into three categories; the personal, the communicative, and the cultural. While Halbwachs invented an all encompassing category of Collective memory, Jan and Aleida Assmann differentiate between two types of collective memories. Namely the communicative and the cultural, while the former is created through everyday interaction and communications with a general time span that goes for an average of 100 years time, the latter is based on an institutionalised version of memory that is based on myths, and rituals that go back to ancient times. Jan Assmann later on, gave a more detailed account on the difference he sees between the communicative and cultural memories as follows:

Table II.2 Comparison of communicative memory and cultural memory (J. Assmann 1992, p.56)

	Communicative	Cultural
Content	historical experiences within the framework of individual biographies	mythical past/ancient history, events from an absolute past
Forms	Informal, loosely shaped, natural, created through interactions and everyday experience	consciously established, highly formalised, ceremonial communication, festival
Media	living memory in individual minds, experience, hearsay	established objectifications, traditional symbolic encoding/staging in word, image, dance, etc.
Temporal structures	80-100 years, a temporal horizon of three or four generations that shifts with the passage of time	absolute past or mythical ancient time

	Communicative	Cultural
Carriers	non-specific, eyewitnesses within a memory community	specialised carriers of tradition

Interestingly, Richard Jenkins, yet from another direction arrived to a very similar classification when he states that “the world as constructed and experienced by humans can be best understood as three distinct ‘orders’:

- *The individual order*, is the human world as made up of embodied individuals and what-goes-on-in-their-heads;
- *The interaction order*, is the human world as constituted in relationships between individuals, in what-goes-on-between-people;
- *The institutional order*, is the human world of pattern and organisations, of established-ways-of-doing-things” (Jenkins 2008, p.39).

Jenkins also confirms that the three orders cannot but occupy the space “intersubjectively and physically” (Ibid, P:40). Thus, one cannot separate one from another. Therefore, one cannot mistake the strong relationship between who one is without thinking of what and how one remembers.

Aleida and Jan Assmann also acknowledge to a certain extent, this interplay between cultural and communicative memories, and how these two dimensions or two modi memorandi of memory can penetrate each other. Erll also, in her discussion with the two concepts of cultural and communicative memories stated that the two concepts penetrate each other in a variety of ways. For example, both cultural and communicative memories are cultural since the concept of culture in an anthropological sense can be found within communicative memory, and also since cultural memory as well cannot be but communicative. This interrelation between the two modes of memory were highlighted by the Assmanns, yet one of the most important characteristics that they dedicate for a memory to be qualified to be cultural memory is its foundational aspect for a group of people. Here also, this differentiation could be ambiguous since the foundational events can take place in recent

pasts as much as it can take place in an ancient one. Thus, Erll stated a few examples of how recent events can directly ascribe to the realm of cultural memory. Events such as the French revolution, the Foundation of the German Reich, the First and Second World Wars and recently 9/11, all became foundational in the sense that they started generating “meanings, which, first, is to a greater extent binding and obligatory than the case of communicative memory, and which, second, claims to be valid for very large mnemonic communities” (Erll 2011, p.32). Thus Erll suggests that foundational events forming cultural memory are related to events taking place in the past and/or producing visions for distant future (ibid, p:32). Therefore, Erll despite agreeing that these two categories of communicative and cultural should remain distinct from each other despite their blurring borders, yet his conception of time in this regard is quite different.

Erll, in her following passage suggests that through the different developments in terms of communication and information technologies, the issue of time and storage assisted in blurring the border between what is supposed to be communicative or cultural memory:

“The central criterion to differentiate the ‘cultural’ from the ‘communicative’ mode of remembering is therefore, it seems, not the measurable time (the chronological distance of the remembered events from the present in which the act of remembering takes place). It is rather the way of remembering chosen by a community, the collective *idea* of the meaning of past events and their embeddedness within temporal processes, which makes a memory ‘cultural’ or ‘communicative’. Thus the distinction between the two modes rests not primarily on the *structure* of time (a universal, measurable category), but rather on the *consciousness* of time (a culturally and historically variable phenomenon of the mental dimension of culture). The criterion ‘consciousness of time’ also overrules the strict differentiation between the media associated with each of the two frameworks of memory. Neither is the production of communicative memory limited to orality, nor all texts and

images automatically belong to Cultural Memory. The deciding factor is rather the media *usage*" (Erll 2011, p.32-33).

Based on the last remark by Erll, how can one understand the consciousness of time in relation to cultural memory and forms of identifications for immigrants? We have to note here that in case of immigration, the consciousness of time is very much related to the space one moved to. Echoing Erll's conception of time, Richard Jenkins explains its relation to space by saying that;

"space makes no sense outside time. Apart from the inexorable passage of time during interaction, a sense of time is inherent within identification because of the continuity which, even if only logically, is entailed in a claim to, or an attribution of, identity. Continuity posits a meaningful past and a possible future, and, particularly with respect to identification, is part of the sense of order and predictability upon which the human world depends" (Jenkins 2008, P.48).

It is important here to say that in case of immigrants, there are structural differences in terms of understanding the communicative and the cultural memories and therefore, there might be different structures of identifications. Whereas, we believe that first generation immigrants' consciousness of time is a major factor for their continuation of identity, the second generation's identity formation is more dependent on space related factors. This is to say that while the first generation's cultural memory dictates to a certain extent their cultural identity, the second generation's identity or modes of identifications are mostly related to the communicative aspect of their memory. The move from one space into another entails different interpretations of cultural meanings. This we assume is more prevalent for second and subsequent generations. This is not to say that first generation identity is static or that the second generation identity does not have cultural groundings. But to say that

whereas, for the first generation the cultural dimension is more stable and essential; for the second and subsequent generations, the communicative is more essential in shaping one's identity and the cultural is less stable; virtual or imagined. For the second generation, when cultural aspects of their parents' memory become less communicative they fade away. And if it happens that there is continuous friction with some of these cultural aspects, these specific aspects become communicative and they appear to be the representatives of such a culture.

It is also important to say before closing the chapter that some of today's communicative might be tomorrow's cultural identities. For this, we will end this chapter by quoting Jan Assman: "Memory enables us to live in groups and communities, and living in groups and communities enables us to build memory" (Assmann J. in Young 2008, p.109). Based on the above discussions about memory and culture, we will try to understand how cultural memory functions in relation to Arab immigrants and how does it differ and vary between first and second generations. Many of the above discussions on memory and identifications will be referred to while analysing our field work, but first, we will give a historical overview about the social, cultural and political events that took place in the Arab Speaking world and what kind of cultural memory first generation immigrants brought with them and what kind of cultural memory they transmitted to their kids.

VI. Arab cultural memory, A historical overview.

In order to understand the main pillars that generally constitute what we call Arab consciousness, we give a brief overview of the different historical events that took place in the Arab world, and which were the reasons for the increasing numbers of refugees and migration.

To start with, we will go a bit back in history and precisely to the fall of the Abbasid Dynasty on the mid 13th century, which marked the end of historical Arab/Islamic supremacy. After this, the region was under the Mamluk Dynasty, and then the Ottomans (1250 - 1914). Thus one can say that since 1250 AC, Arabs stopped to have an empire, or a unified form of self-governance. This

very long period between 1250 and 1914, even though it had an Islamic character, was not regarded as an Arab friendly period. It is noteworthy that Arabs fought the Ottoman Empire in the WWI siding the allies. Another point to be highlighted is that in the Middle Eastern region was inhabited by a plural and heterogeneous society, since they were from different racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds whom lived together for long periods. This period of history will not be discussed in detail in the project, yet we might refer to it in relation to contemporary understanding of Islamic and Arab history. However, we will focus here on a later period, namely the period between 1914 and the present time. It is in this period where different Arab states started to emerge after the Second World War (WWII). This is where, after some seven centuries, Arabs were again sensing self-governance.

The colonial era right after the First World War (WWI) could be a starting point for the development of a modern Arab culture and consciousness. Within this period, anti-colonial feeling started to emerge accompanied by an immense production of cultural aspects (which in later stage will constitute a part of the Arab cultural memory) loaded with pan Arabism or Arab nationalism. Eugene Rogan in his book about the history of the Arab world noted that, “the transcendental ideology of the age was Arab nationalism. Liberation from colonial rule was the common wish of all Arab peoples by the 1940s” (Rogan, P:349). The second focal point in contemporary Arab history is the creation of the state of Israel (the 1948 Nakba). This is because it affected the consolidation of an Arab identity. The third focal point was the era of independences and the move into what supposed to be the model of sovereign nation states. Later on, different events took place and participated in the creation of social, political, economic and cultural patterns, which assisted in shaping the Arab cultural memory. And we believe that later events such as the Iraq invasion in 2003, and the very recent Arab uprisings starting 2011 will produce another layer of memories and consciousness that will transform or shape once again the Arab understanding of the self.

Since the fall of the Ottoman empire, at the end of WWI (and even before for some Arab speaking regions), Arab Speaking societies were subjected to a colonial form of political governance, namely French and British. It is noteworthy that the Arabs have entered the war against the Ottomans siding the British and French troops based on a promise that once the war ends, they will be granted independence under one Arabic State. This was the content of what was called “Hussein-McMahon correspondence”. Yet, after the collapse of the Ottoman empire, a different plan was ready to be implemented in the Middle Eastern region. Namely Sykes-Picot agreement, a plan drafted by the French Diplomat Francois Georges Picot and the British Colonel and advisor Sir Mark Sykes, which divided the lands between the two victors, France and The United Kingdom. In addition to that, the foreign secretary of the United Kingdom Arthur Balfour issued his famous declaration to Baron Rothschild who was a leader of the Britain Jewish community, which granted the land of Palestine to create a state for the jewish people (Israel). Thus Arab communities felt this double betrayal from the new colonial powers. The period between the two world wars was essential in the formation of the Arab modern identity. Yet, as recent history shows us, despite the general dissatisfaction with colonial powers, it seems that the demarcation of Sykes-Picot borders succeeded over time to create some sort of national belonging. For instance, the majority of the Middle Eastern citizens have some sort of national affinities. They do identify as Lebanese, Syrian, Iraqi and so on. The period between the two world wars was also marked by the rise of nationalistic feeling in the Arab world as much as it was the characteristics of this era worldwide. At the end of WWII, the concept of the Arab State was consolidated. It is in this period where many national movements started to seek independence and where the colonial powers started to withdraw. This period we assume had the most influential impact on the formation of Arab identity, memory and consciousness. Different political personalities started to emerge in the Arab world connecting the different struggles to a struggle against colonialism.

The beginning of the colonial era was characterised by a period of adaptation to the new form of governance after hundred years of Ottoman rules. The rise of nationalism in Europe after WWI had an effect on the Arab world where different forms of nationalistic thoughts started to emerge in Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and elsewhere. Some of these thoughts were directed inwards within the recently drawn borders (Lebanon with Michel Chiha and Egypt with Hizb Al Wafd..example needed) and some others were directed outwards within a different kind of proclaimed borders (Syrian national socialist movements with Antoun Saadeh and the Baath parties with Michel Aflak in both Syria and Iraq). By the end of the WWII and after the exhaustion of the two main colonial powers in the Middle Eastern region, these nationalistic movements were almost ready to seize power. And it did not take long for a series of coups to be conducted, which drew the future of the Arab world until recently. Except for small minorities, most of the region was developing an anti-western sentiments since the end of WWI. These feelings were further developed with the creation of the state of Israel and the rise of Pan Arabism (Especially the Nasserist version).

In contrast to the European experience, the end of WWII was the beginning of series of wars that started as early as 1948, and are still continuing in steady paces up until today. Therefore, the period of what was called the Cold War was not at all cold in the Middle East. The use of ideologies was employed in a variety of ways in different conflicts in the region. The loss of the Palestinian lands and the defeat of the Arab armies in 1948 and the continuous arrivals of Palestinians to the neighbouring countries opened a new era of instability.

Below is a list for events that directly affected the social, political, economic and cultural realities of the Middle Eastern region:

- 1920: Creation of Greater Lebanon by annexing lands to the already existing Mount Lebanon
- 1936: Colonial agreement with Syria, Lebanon and Iraq
- 1946: Withdrawal of French troops from Syria and Lebanon

- 1948: The creation of the state of Israel
- 1948: Arab war against Israel
- 1956: The Tripartite aggression against Egypt
- 1958: Iraq overthrew monarchy and became a republic
- 1958-1961: United Arab Republic between Syria and Egypt
- 1966: emergence of Baath party in Syria as ruler
- The 1967 War between 7 Arab armies on the one hand and Israel backed up by the US military forces on the other
- 1968: Baath party arrived to power in Iraq
- 1970: Hafez Al Assad Coup in Syria and the starting rule of Assad family in Syria
- 1970: The war between Jordanian military forces and the Palestinian resistance known as Black September
- The 1973 war between Egypt, Syria and Jordan on the one side and Israel on the other
- 1973: The oil crisis and the price boom
- 1975: Lebanese Civil war started
- 1977: Anwar Al Sadat president of Egypt visits Israel
- March 1979: Egypt and Israel signs Camp David Peace Treaty
- July 1979: Saddam Hussein Arrived to power in Iraq
- October 1979: Khomeini led Islamic revolution in Iran
- 1980: Iran-Iraq war starts
- 1982: The Israeli invasion of Lebanon
- 1982: The war between Syrian military forces and Islamists in Hamah
- 1988: Iran-Iraq war ends
- 1989: The fall of Berlin Wall
- 1991: The end of USSR

- 1991: The First Gulf war
- 1991-2003: The American embargo over Iraq
- 1996: Israeli Lebanese war
- 2000: the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanon
- 2003: The Second Gulf War
- 2006: Lebanese Israeli war
- 2008: Gaza war
- 2011: The Arab uprisings that ended up to be an open war between variety of actors backed up by a variety of local, regional and international powers

The above list shows the frequency of events, upon which the Arab world was developing between structural shifts of power⁷. This chains of events with what accompany them of destruction, casualties, news and communication, intellectual and cultural production, social reforms, displacement, mobilisation, oppression and political power shifts were producing a collective and shared memories around the Arab world. Of course the effects were differing from one place to another, yet most of these events were not confined within the border of a given state, and all of them had spillover effects to many other countries. These events were behind the increasing numbers of refugees and immigrants from the Arab world for the past century. Most of the first generation Arab immigrants do possess strong memories about many of these events and were directly or indirectly affected by them.

⁷ This quick historical overview constitutes an institutionalised narrative for the independence of Arab states. But for the people inhabiting this area, they were not passive attendees watching the social, cultural and political developments of their region. Rather, they were active agents participating in cultural, social and political struggles. For example, for the people living in the south of Lebanon, the creation of the Greater Lebanon was considered to be a decision that will affect them negatively. In the archived history of this region, there were registers of social resistance against the French troops to pressure them not to annex South Lebanon into the newly formed Lebanese State. For the people there, Palestine was their natural depth and many of them used to work in Palestine (Reference Ahmad Beydoun or Fawwaz Trabulsi). Another example could be the Iraqi revolt that took place in the 1920 against the British colonial power and that was violently crushed.

Therefore, beside the State project, which was orchestrated by colonial powers, the only collective project that the Arab genuinely proposed after the fall of the Ottoman empire was Arabism. While we will not enter here into a discussion of its failure or fading, we want to highlight the main currents that fed into this project. In his book “A History of the Arab Peoples”, Albert Hourani states that the climax of Arabism took place between the 1950s and 1960s (Hourani 2013, p.401). While Hourani acknowledges a subordinate role of an Islamic element to Arabism, he sees that there were three main pillars upon which it was perceived; 1) The idea of the Third World as a common front between countries belonging to former colonial empires, 2) the idea of Arab unity based on that the newly independent states have enough shared culture, historical experiences and interests to pursue such a goal, and 3) a socialist element based on governmental control of resources in the interests of people and this was essentially influenced by the European model and the growing power of the Soviet Union within the Arab region (Ibid, P:401-402). Thus one can easily depict the withdrawal of religious identifications to backstage within the Arab World during this period. This is not to say that there were no Islamic forms of identifications within Islamic groups, but to say that the trend was something else. Therefore, after the this period of Arab Nationalism led by the Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser, the Arab nationalism as a collective political project fade out but the common social consciousness continued developing. Hourani refers to this by saying that “the death of Abdel Nasir and the events of the 1970s weakened ...the illusion of unity” (Ibid, P:423). Yet Hourani reminds us that this did not hinder a further development of Arab states’ relations through the different economic and development institutions such as the Organisation of Arab Oil-Exporting Countries (OAPEC) and the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (Ibid, P:424). Another factor that Hourani mentioned is that during this period many schools and universities across the Arab world were focusing on teaching the curriculum in Arabic and therefore the graduates at that period; “Arabic was the only medium

through which they saw the world. This strengthened the consciousness of a common culture shared by all who spoke Arabic” (Ibid, P:424).

Furthermore, in 1960s and onwards, this common cultural awareness was spread by variety of new mediums such as radios, TV programs and Cinema production. It is noteworthy that intellectual and cultural Arabic production were climaxing between the 1950s and 1970s where different cultural and intellectual figures emerged as Arab icons. It is very common that the majority of the people in the Arab world have big respect to Oum Koulthoum (a female diva singer between 1940s and the 1970s), Fairuz (Lebanese singer between 1960s and the present), Sabah Fakhri (A syrian singer from Aleppo), Abdel Wahab (Egyptian singer), Nagib Mahfouz (Egyptian Novelist), Mahmoud Darwich (Palestinian poet)...etc. Also as Hourani noted that the movement of Arab individuals to work in different Arab countries was growing in steady paces during the 1960s and this was the result of the tightened links between Arab countries (ibid, P:425).

Even with the dismantling of the Arab political unity that was thought of during the 1950s, The social relations between Arabs continued to develop through different means. Thus the consciousness of the region after the fall of the Ottoman Empire (and after 700 years since the fall of the Abbasid Dynasty) was of Arabism rather than Islamism. Again this is not to say that there wasn't any ideological Islamic identification since this was also available through different political forms. Thus the picture was of, if one can say, semi-modernised Arab states interrelated through politics, economy and culture. Nonetheless, the many turbulent events that took place in the Arab World created a lot of disenchantment and disappointment from the external aggressions towards the region as well as from the internal form of governance that was transformed from a revolutionary subject against colonialism into an oppressor in the name of revolution.

The institutionalised version of the Arab culture and, therefore, for their cultural memory belonging to an ancient or most recent pasts. This tendency of the double formation of Arab cultural memory between the ancient past and the recent one highlight a state of confusion. Whereas the

ancient form of cultural memory having Islam as its main source and framed with purity, the recent one was transformed from a righteous struggle against imperialism into a system of oppressions, corruptions and deceptions. These tendencies of seeing Arab culture either from its purified Islamic version or from its corrupt modern state version ignore the different interrelated aspects and features that characterised the Arab culture. Taking into consideration that unlike the European States, the Arab State was newly formed and unlike the homogeneity of the European Nation State model, many of the Arab States' populations were heterogeneous. Hence, the move towards Arabism after the WWI was not only catalysed by the anti-colonial struggle (be it Ottoman or European,) but was mainly catalysed by the shared history, culture, language between the majority of people with Islam as a faith and other minorities. One should not mistake the role of Arab 'Christians' in developing and enriching the Arab cultural identity.

From the above review on the production of recent Arab cultural memory, it is obvious that the foundational events (according to Erll) are not of a religious character. Rather they are political, cultural, and socio-economic. Beside the shared memories of wars, anti-colonial struggles, traditions, rituals, food, geography and other aspects, Arab culture is loaded with art and cultural productions and other forms of expressions that are still forming part of Arab immigrants' cultural memory. More precisely they form a remarkable part of first generation's Arab immigrants' cultural memory. The general shift of focus from this cultural understanding into a solely religious understanding of culture we assume has been done through processes, policies and practices that took place in the country of immigration (Denmark in our project). This could be easily depicted from different examples of how a different culture, especially Arab culture in our case, is represented and stigmatised within a Danish context. Whereas an Arabic school in the Arab world does not mean at any point an Islamic school, Arabic school in Denmark is the synonymous of an Islamic school.

VII. Field Work Analysis: Memory and Identity

During our fieldwork we conducted interviews with 15 persons divided upon the following categories:

- A. First generation who arrived before 2000: Ayman, Mohamad,
- B. First generation who arrived after 2000: Bassel, Dani, Abed
- C. Second generation not born Denmark: Walid, Firas, Rania, Adel, Ali
- D. Second generation born in Denmark: Jasmin, Mona, Sarah, Salma, Shayma

What we will be doing in this chapter is to try to understand how the different discussions between memory and identity relate practically to the living experiences of people of Arab origins in Copenhagen. However, we want to emphasize that it is not our intention to claim that the people interviewed are representative of all the Arabs in Copenhagen. Rather we tried to check how the memory and the lived experience of immigrants from both the first and second generation can testify to the theoretical discussion of chapter VI, and how in its turn, the theoretical discussion can illuminate future development of identity formation.

Below is a table that gives some information about the interviewees in terms of sex, age, time spent in Denmark, Arabic and Danish languages mastery level and their general understanding of Arab culture.

	Age	Time in DK	Origin	Arabic language	Danish language	Dimensions of Arabic culture
Ayman	53	27	Palestine	Native	Excellent	Literature, Music, Art, Diversity
Mohamad	55	22	Iraq	Native	Bad	Cinema, Art, Literature
Bassel	40	12	Lebanon	Native	Excellent	Corruption, Worries

	Age	Time in DK	Origin	Arabic language	Danish language	Dimensions of Arabic culture
Abed	35	15	Morocco	Native	Excellent	Food, senses, smells, visuals, music
Dani	32	7	Syria	Native	Good	Literature, strong family ties, collectivity
Walid	30	29	Algeria	Good	Excellent	Philosophy, Calligraphy, Music, Diversity, Islamic culture
Firas	34	25	Palestine	Good	Excellent	Music, Art,
Rania	33	22	Iraq	Good	Excellent	Diversity, Art, warmth
Adel	38	29	Palestine	speaks	Excellent	Islam, Family relations
Ali	26	16	Iraq	Fair	Excellent	Language, Rituals, Diversity
Jasmin	15	15	Algeria	Bad	Native	
Mona	33	33	Tunisia	speaks	Native	Music, Diversity, Hospitality, belonging
Sarah	15	15	Iraq	speaks	Native	Dresses, Islam, Food
Salma	15	10	Egypt	speaks	Native	Food, Islam
Shayma	14	14	Palestine	speaks	Native	Food, Islam

First, we want to register that when it comes to Arab cultural representation within a Danish State context, most of our interviewees regardless their age, their generation confirmed the existence of a general negative perception of Arabs and Muslims in Danish media and political debates. Also many of them hinted to the idea that this rhetoric is not confined to Muslim ideological groups such as Hizb Al Tahrir but it also reaches all Middle Eastern and Arab people. Dani as a Kurd from Syria, did refer to the Arabic culture as a Middle Eastern culture since he thinks that there are non Arab influences on it. Yet, besides that, he notices that the Arabic culture is mixed up with Islam especially in the West. Therefore, for him Arabs' representation in Denmark is very negative not only within public media and politics, but also within academic circles where he notices a big tendency towards a new form of Orientalism (FW, P:29). While majority of first generation and

second generation who were born outside Denmark refused this representation altogether, some of the second generation born in Denmark were affected by such representation. Mona, born in Denmark, answering our question about Arab portrayal in Denmark, she says:

“I would say that they are perceived as something which is against progress, backward, mistreat women and of course it has some dimension of religious fanaticism. Being born and raised in Denmark, this portrayal affected my own perception of the Arab world” (FW, P:3).

Also, first generation and second generation born outside Denmark had a more cultural understanding about Islam if compared with the religious based understanding of the second generation born in Denmark. Ali, having lived in Syria where the society “was secular and where Muslims and Christians lived side by side” (FW, P: 34) and were celebrating each others’ holidays, was confused in Denmark. He says;

“when we came here, I don’t know if this is something related to the Danish society where they focus a lot on what Muslims are, but I found that Arabic culture is more turning out to be a muslim culture. Also people that haven’t been religious they became so. Here in Denmark you cannot find like elsewhere an Arab culture institution. You have the mosques and people go there. So I felt that Arabic culture changed here to become more religiously affected” (FW, P:35).

Thus, the specific form of understanding Arabic and Islamic cultures based on religious terms - whether one identifies with or not is not the issue here - was produced within a Danish context and most probably catalysed not by what people know about their culture but by a Danish political and media discourse.

Also, the first and second generation of immigrants, according to the field work, have different indicators of identifications. In the sense that the first generation were more relaxed about

thinking their national identity or the subject of identity in general, the second generation were struggling between two or more forms of identifications. Whereas for the second generation were somewhere inbetween a homeland's national identity, Danish identity and in some cases an Arabic or an Islamic one, the first generation were not the least bit concerned about such a struggle for themselves. This can be shown from different experience that our second generation's interviewees stated. Here we will refer to Mona, Ali and Adel from second generation. Ali for a period lied about his country of origin because he was scared of cultural stigma (FW, P:41). Adel felt the guilt when he chose the local life style over his family traditions when he was teenager (FW, P:16). Mona has never been able to settle on her identity until the Tunisian revolution. This is where she felt very Tunisian after long hesitation produced by cultural representation (FW, P:2). On the other hand, second generation immigrants were more aware in their discussion about cultural stigma and therefore they were more political in their approach, the second generation were somehow - acknowledging this cultural representation - were more inclined to the politics of the Middle Eastern region. A slight shift was noticed on this behalf during the Syrian refugee crisis.

Interviewees with life experience in the Arab countries and interviewees who mastered the Arabic language were more knowledgeable about the diversity and plurality of the Arab or Middle Eastern culture. Most second generations interviewees born in Denmark and with no competency of the Arabic language were possessing - even within an anti-racist discourse - a generalised or superficial understanding of Arab culture and what it entails. The 4 youngest interviewees of the second generation did not mention anything in relation to Arab culture other than food, religion, long dresses, respect to family and hospitality (FW, P:43, 49). Interviewees with life experience or with a mastery of the Arabic language showed a totally different understanding that range from philosophy during the old Islamic era, Music, language, literature, political struggles and many other things. This we can say is the cultural memory they are reading from. The shared forms of meanings. This hints at the importance of the language to understand and touch on the Arabic

culture as a form of identification. This shows as well that when one loses the language, the other available products will be the ones to represent a culture (long dresses, Islam, food and hospitality). Mohamad when he was asked about inclination of Arabs towards Islamism as a form of identification, said that;

“there should be a different Arabic cultural movement. There is Schizophrenia, some Arab youths are not able to know their history and culture and are not able to totally integrate in Denmark. Therefore, they run to Islam as a form just to cover a lack. There is close-mindedness, people move towards Islam as the already existing product in the market” (FW, P:48).

In addition to the above, Danish language is essential to communicate with the Danish society. Whereas, all second generation's interviewees do speak Danish fluently, one out of two of first generation interviewees (the two oldest interviewees) did not speak Danish. It is obvious that the communication between second generation and the Danish society is stronger if compared to the communication between the first generation and the Danish society. Therefore, one can project that third and subsequent generations of non Arab speaking Danes of Arab origins will start to build their forms of identification from what Jan and Aleida Assmann call the communicative memory. This is because while they will not have an access to the Arabic cultural memory due to the cut with Arabic language, they will not be able to be an organic part of the Danish cultural memory as proposed today. Therefore, the experiences of today will constitute what might be an identity for the second generation. What we create today of discourse will create the cultural memory of tomorrow.

The above, read according to the theoretical framework put in chapters IV and V, confirms that while first generation forms of identification are based on their cultural memory (produced and understood upon specific events and history as shown in chapter VI), second and subsequent generations forms of identifications will be confined to the space of communicative memory. Therefore, and as discussed in Chapter V, in cases of immigration, communicative memory

accompanied by the loss of access to the cultural memory will start to take its place. Thus, communicative memory will be forming an essential infrastructure for future identification. In contrast, what is supposed to be cultural memory for the first generation - and as per Erll should have a communicative character to function as a collective memory - becomes less and less communicative. What comes next, when communicative moves to be decisive in the creation of identity, relations of differences will be replacing relations of similarities while formulating cultural identity. This, we assume, is a dangerous shift in understanding cultural identity and in understanding the future relations between immigrants and host societies. We will end this chapter with an extract of a discussion with Ayman, which took place in June 2015:

Question: How does this affect the immigrant? For arabs while immigrate, do you think that the focus became on the shared or on the different?

Answer: Here, something important takes place, and I think it is one of the biggest problems that arab immigrants suffer, which is the lack of the conscious understanding of their genuine culture. Because once you feel a sense of belonging to a genuine human culture without having a national or an ethnic face, a belonging to a space that produced a human experience, your relation to the other will automatically become equal. This means that you will respect the self and the other without any complexity. I mean only then you can feel that you do not have to deal with them as different. This position becomes natural position that you will not oblige yourself to create.

Question: You arrived to Denmark when you were 30 years or so, therefore, you have touched and lived a different experience in the Arab world. But when it comes to arab who were born here or who came here at a very early stage, when I ask them about Arab Culture, they say that they see corruption, male driven society, troubles and instability. This is how they understood and experienced Arab Culture or memory because they lived here. When you say Arab people should

understand their genuine culture and not to be ashamed of or to be proud of, what should they be proud of?

Answer: At least they have to be proud of themselves as humans without referring only to history, each individual is part of his or her own history and therefore, their culture is what they offer in the present. We are all faces of our accumulated history. The problem with our people is that they know their history through the eyes of the other. Therefore they see themselves through others' perceptions.

Question: When did this start you think?

Answer: This one I think is a modern phenomenon. The modernisation process even in the Islamic thoughts that started with Jamal Al Din al Afghani and Mohamad Abdo during the 19th Century which was marked by the collision with the other, proposed an idea about Islam from this angle. Then the region adopted this idea. Nowadays, it is happening again, a new idea about Islam is proposed by the other which create a picture of Islam as violent, bloody and deprived of any ability of tolerance and forgiveness, this is an idea that is proposed and framed by the other and we are taking it.

VIII. Conclusion

What we found in much of the literature in relation to our subject is that they mainly deal with people coming from the Arab World or the Middle Eastern region as Muslim subjects. Also, many of the literatures tackle Islam as either something to be defended from or as something that needs to be recognised. Despite the importance and validity of some analysis, there is something that does not function well. For that Muslims do not necessarily possess the same identity or in other words do not possess the same consciousness. So, if we are talking about cultural identity and consciousness production as a process that engages different forms of social, political, cultural,

spatial and generational interactions, therefore, it might be a better strategy to follow a different line in grouping consciousness, cultures or identities.

The rationale behind our strategy is that; 1) cultural memory plays a major role in creating and reshaping subjectivities and consciousness, 2) that Muslims do belong to different cultural traditions and that do not necessarily have the same subjective positions, and 3) that in many cases the self-identification could be quite different from the perception of others, i.e. in a given context, what might be perceived as an identity for a group of people might not be their main form of self-identification.

One can assume that immigrants' identity or cultural identity will be reformed or shaped in relation to their new life experience in host countries. It was clearly shown from our fieldwork that people who arrived to Denmark decades ago, do possess now, different forms of identifications if compared with what they had before. Their present identity was articulated in communication with their new social surrounding. Different factors must have played a role in reframing immigrants' identity or in other words many social, cultural, political, spatial, ethical, and economic factors might have participated in the formation of choices of identifications for immigrants and their descendants. The project though tried to understand what effect might the media and political representation have on immigrants of non-Western origin's choices of identifications. Not only that, but also what infrastructure this representation is, preparing for the relations between immigrants and host society.

The project started by looking at the representations of Non-Western immigrants in Denmark. What the first chapter concluded is that the Islamic form of identification is the most prevalent within media and political discourse. This does not mean that there are no other discourses produced upon regional life experiences depending on the extent of communication between immigrants and host society (Nørrebro effect, for example). Yet on the Danish State's

level, the discourse is mainly towards a religiously formulated identity stigmatising and homogenising immigrants of non-Western origins.

While Islamic representation might at some circumstances lead people who have Islam as a faith to identify as Muslims in response to anti-Muslim sentiments or Islamophobia, we tried to show through a theoretically informed analysis what kind of consequences identities based on relations of differences might invoke. We concluded that the forms of identifications mainly formed upon relations of differences produce reactionary identities. While criticising the difference-based identities for what it entails of antagonistic social character, we emphasised the important role of similarities while thinking of identity formation. Our choice to work with people of Arab origins was to show how different forms of identifications might be more the manifestation of knowing who we are rather than knowing who we are not. What we have argued in this chapter is that an Arab identity or an Arab cultural identity has been reduced to one of its dimensions through the process of differentiation with the host society rather than commonalities between identity holders.

In order to understand identity formation, we found it necessary to understand immigrants memory structures. For that memory is essential to understand in which infrastructure identity has been based, collectively. We believe that only through memory, we can get to such an understanding. Agreeing with Jan Assmann that “memory is the faculty that enables us to form an awareness of selfhood (identity), both on the personal and on the collective level” (Assmann J. in Young 2008, p.109), we consider identifications structurally linked to memory. Therefore, when we speak about identifications we cannot avoid entering into a parallel discussion about how does memory relate to such identification processes. This is where we introduced Halbwachs’ notion of collective memory. Yet, in the Danish context, we should highlight that Arab immigrants and their descendants have been living in Denmark for only little more than two generations. Therefore, the lived memory for the first and second generations are quite different, and therefore their identification choices might as well be different. To bypass this deadlock, we referred to Jan and

Aleida Assmann's differentiation between the two dimensions of collective memory, namely the communicative and the cultural memory. We concluded this chapter by saying that while first generation immigrants depend mainly on their cultural memory to identify, the second and subsequent generations (especially when they lose access to homeland language), depend on communicative memory. We perceived a relocation of cultural identity from the cultural to the communicative memory for second generation, a cultural alienation of the first generation and an identity crisis for those inbetween. This, added to the previously mentioned Islamic stigmatisation and the discourse that constitute the infrastructure upon which the relation to the Danish society takes place, lies is a danger that relation of religious differences with host society will be replacing the relations of cultural similarities between group members while creating cultural identities.

To make our claim about Arab cultural or social identity, we produced a chapter that gives a historical account about Arab cultural memory production especially in modern time. Acknowledging the interrelation between Islamic culture and Arabic culture over ancient history, for that the many Arab/Islamic dynasties, which ended by the mid of the 13th century with the fall of Abbasid Dynasty, were the reason for Arabic language to be adopted in the region between the Middle East and North Africa. Yet we should be very careful when we speak about Islamic culture and Islamic religious practices. Islamic culture can consist of Islamic and non-Islamic actors and it goes far beyond Islamic religious practices. However, when it comes to a modern Arab cultural identity, we showed in this chapter the different currents that shaped this identity. Whether, shaped by anti-colonial discourse loaded with socialism and Third Worldism, by shared history and language, we can say that despite the dissociation of a political Arab identity, there is still a strong social Arab identity, in contrast to the Islamic identity which becoming more political than social.

Therefore, Arabism moved in history between the tribal pre-Islamic, Islamic and modern Arab national forms of identifications. In a way, history registered the fall of the different Arab political identities and the resilience of their social and cultural identity. It is noteworthy that

nowadays in Europe, whereas the Arabs cannot be considered as a political entity since they are politically fragmented and diversified, they are perceived through a presumed Islamic political not only identity but project. Therefore, we noticed a transformation of an Arabic social or cultural identity into an Islamic political identity.

Whenever the political is involved, antagonism is involved. According to political thinker Chantal Mouffe, antagonism is the constitutive of the political. Therefore, what Mouffe proposes is to agonise the relations of differences and to transform enemies into adversaries (Mouffe 2005, 2009). This requires to move away from the politics of culture that is hegemonising political mobilisation in Europe. And if we have to make this move we have to break with representing all non-Western immigrants as a cultural threat. If we choose to continue along the same path, we might end up by speaking about some Danish citizens as Muslim and Christian Danes.

The scope is to abstain from catalysing the consolidation and recreation of reactionary identity and to understand the different forms of identifications built upon shared cultural memory. This is in order to shift the scope of identity politics from a threat based on difference into a plural form of hybridity. Once we do this move, we will be deconstructing reactionary identities and assisting in the creation of a less threatening forms of identifications. This alone will ease and develop a better social and cultural engagement. To start seeing people of Arab, Iranian or Turkish origins as people who might have different forms of identifications regardless of their faith; is to start seeing what things are. Focusing on the religious aspect with a ready judgments and perceptions shade all the cultural aspects that might be enriching instead of threatening.

Once we understand the other (the Arab or Middle Eastern in our case) outside the religious framework, we will start re-thinking alternative strategies and plans to engage with people of different cultural backgrounds. This could be translated in different institutional level within a Danish context.

On the educational level, we will have a different outlook to teaching mother tongue language. In the sense that we will start seeing it as a tool to allow a secular understanding of Middle Eastern culture. This will give the kids the necessary cultural competencies and the parents a sense of loyalty to a system that is interested to preserve their cultural heritage where Arabic school will not necessarily mean an Islamic one. Also introducing the different cultural impacts on the Western history of knowledge to the educational curriculum will increase 1) the sense of local belonging for students who have these culture as their background and 2) will introduce to the Danish students an understanding of their fellow citizens background.

On the other hand, this also could be translated into a cultural institutional level. If we look at the different cultural collaborations between Denmark and the Middle East, one can easily notice that it has been based on value differences. This can be depicted from the politically oriented agenda of funds especially with the concept of empowerment of marginalised groups such as youth and women. This gives the impression of an empowered Dane versus a backward Middle Eastern. Whereas, this tendency always drives cultural worker from the Middle East to see their cultural production with a Danish perspective, the more effective and socially affective way to do it is to let them see their cultural development from their own social perspective.

On the political level, whether at the municipal or the state level, this should be translated through abandoning a shallow understanding of multiculturalism, which sees all non European as Muslims and which tries to partially recognise them only through developing their religious institutions. The proliferation of Mosques in Copenhagen in the past couple of years testify to this tendency. Whereas we will not argue against building mosques, yet we believe that not only these mosques should be internally funded, but also that there should be efforts to create cultural institutions promoting Arabic cultural and artistic production without being confined within the walls of religion and direct politics. The proliferation of art and culture that connect to the Arab cultural memory for instance will help to promote entertainment within Danes of Arab origins and by doing

so, we will be 1) creating a communicative agonistic relations between the city and the individuals of Arab origins and 2) creating the space for communication and entertainment between different Danish citizens.

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