CBS COPENHAGEN BUSINESS SCHOOL
HANDELSHØJSKOLEN

The Eternally Rescued

The Jews and the Boundaries of Danish Civility

Zuckerman, Maja Gildin; Feldt, Jakob Egholm

Document Version
Accepted author manuscript

Published in:
American Journal of Cultural Sociology

DOI:
10.1057/s41290-023-00186-5

Publication date:
2023

License
Unspecified

Citation for published version (APA):
Zuckerman, M. G., & Feldt, J. E. (2023). The Eternally Rescued: The Jews and the Boundaries of Danish Civility. *American Journal of Cultural Sociology*, *11*(2), 293-315. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41290-023-00186-5

Link to publication in CBS Research Portal

General rights
Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy
If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us (research.lib@cbs.dk) providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Download date: 14. May. 2026

The Eternally Rescued: the Jews and the boundaries of Danish civility

By: Maja Gildin Zuckerman[1] and Jakob Egholm Feldt[2]

Abstract

In this paper, we argue that proximity to primordial(ized) Danish civil values has generally saved the Jews in Denmark from violent antisemitism. Combining Alexander's (2006) account of an assimilatory mode of civil incorporation with his concept of "societalization" (2018; 2019), we discuss how "re-societalizing" antisemitism led to strong enactment of *anti*-antisemitism *and* increased Jewish sub-group anxiety in the civil sphere. Anti-antisemitism in Denmark has historically been integrated into cultural codes and historical narratives in the civil sphere. We analyze how the 2015 terror attack in Copenhagen and a public debate about male circumcision caused a wave of reassurance of one of the core values in the Danish civil sphere, namely Jewish safety. Speeches from consecutive prime ministers and an ensuing "action plan against antisemitism" presented by the government in early 2022 demonstrate how contemporary antisemitism become integrated into a historical narrative of mutually ensured Danish civility between the majority and the Jewish minority. We conclude that despite its precarious character and the social anxiety provoked by societalization of antisemitism over the last seven years, civil solidarity within an assimilation mode of incorporation has proven to be surprisingly empowering and attractive for the Jewish minority in the Danish case.

keywords: Antisemitism, societalization, civil sphere theory, incorporation, Denmark, minority-majority relations.

Introduction

A month after the terror attacks on the offices of Charlie Hebdo and the Jewish supermarket Hyper Cacher in Paris on January 7-9, 2015 (Judaken 2018; Arkin 2018; Katz 2018), a terror attack hit Copenhagen. On February 14, 22-year-old Danish-Palestinian Omar El-Hussein opened fire at the attendees of a free speech event in the neighborhood of Østerbro, killing one of the guests, before fleeing the scene. Later that night, he attacked the Central Synagogue of Copenhagen during a bat mitzvah. He shot and killed the volunteer community guard, Dan Uzan, before being chased and eventually killed by the police (Dalsgaard et al. 2019; Kublitz 2021). Danish politicians and

[1] Copenhagen Business School, mgi.mpp@cbs.dk

[2] Roskilde University, feldt@ruc.dk

media have continuously characterized the events as Islamist and antisemitic terrorism, relating them to other Islamist terror attacks that took place across Europe in recent years. While there have been debates about whether the events should be interpreted as "criminal acts" rather than terrorism, the events of February 2015 reinforced, at least in public rhetoric, Denmark's stance as a staunch defender of "Western values" against (global) un-freedom and uncivility (Sinclair 2015; Jøndrup 2016; Thyssen 2015). El-Hussein attacked two powerful symbols: a free speech event, which featured an artist who had drawn a satirical cartoon of the Muslim Prophet Muhammad in connection with the Cartoon Crisis of 2005-6, and the Copenhagen Synagogue. In attacking these symbols, the Danish terrorist followed in the footsteps of other Islamist terrorists who had explicitly linked Jewish places to prominent Western semiotic codes.

***

It is now 9 am on January 25, 2022. The Danish government is launching its official action plan against antisemitism at the Jewish House in Copenhagen, an annex of the central synagogue of Copenhagen (Regeringens Handlingsplan mod Antisemitism, 2022; Det Jødiske Samfund, 2022). Standing in front of a few rows of journalists are the Minister of Justice, Nick Hækkerup, the Minister of Culture and Church, Ane Halsboe-Jørgensen, and the chairman of the Danish Jewish Community, Henri Goldstein.[3] The event is broadcasted on live tv and social media. The Minister of Justice opens the floor by welcoming everyone to the Jewish community's banquet hall, which he recounts is a place of celebration of such events as "Jewish new year and confirmation" (all translations from Danish are our own). And exactly the celebration of confirmation, Hækkerup states, reminds us of more horrific times, namely the night of February 14, 2015, when terror hit the

[3] Henri Goldstein is the chairman of *Dansk Jødisk Samfund*, which is the conservative-orthodox congregation and the official representative body of Jews in Denmark since the Danish emancipation in 1814 and 1849.

synagogue during a confirmation celebration in the banquet hall and the volunteer guard, Dan Uzan, was murdered while protecting the gates. For Hækkerup, the event emphasizes the fact that antisemitism is not a thing of the past, but a contemporary threat against "our free and open society"—a threat which the action plan against antisemitism aims to combat.

After Hækkerup passes the microphone to the chairman of the Jewish community, Goldstein expresses gratitude to the government for both devising the action plan and launching it at the Jewish House. Goldstein stresses that the Jewish community's view is that any form of discrimination should be fought, and the Jewish community wants to be a part of that fight. Goldstein elaborates that hatred against Jews is the oldest form of discrimination and that the community thus has a unique experience with these forms of hate crimes. It would be willing to share its hard-won knowledge and perspectives to help others.

Finally, the Minister of Culture and Church adds her views on why Denmark needs an action plan against antisemitism. Halsboe-Jørgensen opens her short speech by noting that "with culture, we can do a lot. We can particularly create bonds between people, and we can create understanding for each other's life." With these words, Halsboe-Jørgensen mentions the acclaimed Danish tv-series *Matador* (Monopoly). The series, which ran on Danish national tv from 1978-82, follows the development of a fictive provincial town through the various social, cultural, and political undercurrents and events taking place in Denmark from 1929-1947. Halsboe-Jørgensen recalls episode 18, titled *Hr. Stein* (Mr. Stein), which centers on the events of October 1943, when Nazi soldiers attempted to round up Danish-Jewish citizens. Stein is the name of the Jewish accountant in the town's bank (and the only Jew in town). As Halsboe-Jørgensen recounts the tv show, Mr. Stein takes refuge at the residence of the bank director. When Mr. Stein arrives there, the bank director is not home, but his wife, Maude, is. The culture minister frames Maude's actions toward Stein in the following way:

> A woman that we know as someone who usually retreats to her bedroom when things get a bit tough. But when Mr. Stein stands at her doorstep and needs help, she does not hesitate. Determinedly, this extravagant lady gets behind the wheel of the pig trader's [the town's pig trader is a central character of the series] car and drives the accountant to a safe place. ... Almost 97% of all Danish Jews were saved before the Germans found them. Many ordinary Danes helped, just like Maude; this includes the church and its priests. This is an important part of the Danish self-understanding and history that we need to remember, but if we must combat antisemitism ...we need an understanding of our shared history also today, which demands a shared awareness. We all must be aware of the history and its shared legacy that we carry.

In the context of presenting the government's action plan against antisemitism, the culture minister ties its meaning and legitimacy to the Danish rescue of Danish Jews during WW2, emphasizing the supposedly shared history and legacy between Danes and Jews upon which this plan is built.

The action plan against antisemitism has officially been underway since 2019 (Klitgaard 2019). After the 2015 terror attacks in Copenhagen, several government officials pledged to intensify the fight against terror and antisemitism in Denmark (Kublitz 2021). Leading politicians have been lining up to decry the events and the rise of antisemitism in Denmark and Europe more broadly. In the public conversation that followed in the immediate aftermath, national newspaper headlines read: "The intolerable cannot be tolerated" (Møller, 2015), "Enemies of the open societies" (Beinov, 2015), "Stop the hateful" (Davidsen-Nielsen, 2015), "The Denmark we didn't know" (Hergel 2015), and "The dreadful face of terror" (Krab-Johansen, 2015). As the press conference above also indicated, the link between antisemitic terror and anti-antisemitism is deeply embedded in cultural codes that relate not only to the Jews' position in Danish society but also, as we shall show, to fundamental definitions of Danish core values.

Building on sociologist Jeffrey Alexander's concept of "societalization" (2019), we explore how the societal contract defining and coding antisemitism has recently been renewed and reinforced as a matter of concern for all Danes. The terror attacks in 2015, along with intense public debate about male circumcision that led to a proposal to ban this practice, show a multidirectional opening in which anti-antisemitic codes and narratives were reinforced and repaired—not

necessarily to the effect of safety, but rather to a state of increased minority anxiety. We show how the struggle against antisemitism is cast in an assimilatory incorporation mode, which is tightly interwoven with the specific path of modern Danish-Jewish history.

The study contributes to the CST framework by connecting societalization with modes of incorporation specifically related to in/exclusion of minorities. We show how processes of societalization must be understood as instantiated within specific contexts and historical trajectories. In the Danish context, a renewed societalization of antisemitism (re)activates the assimilatory narrative that demonstratively embraces the Jewish minority but also, paradoxically, exposes Jewish cultural difference. The renewed focus on "the struggle against antisemitism" and the ongoing narrative of "protecting the Jews" makes salient the codes of the assimilation mode in which Jews have been and are accepted in the Danish society, and thus lay bare its restrictive mode of incorporation and the exclusionary boundaries that any inclusion simultaneously consist of.

Societalization and incorporation into the civil sphere

Alexander (2019) describes societalization as a process through which particular problems become more general problems, or crudely put, the process through which “my problem” becomes “everyone’s problem.” Institutionally, for example, Alexander points to how something happening in Catholic churches can come to matter for the wider public, potentially leading to real social change. In this way, societalization is close to C. Wright Mills’s (1959, 3-11) concept of “sociological imagination:” societalization is a process which realizes the relations between groups and the whole in affirmative, critical, and transformative ways.[4] Alexander (2019, 3) writes: “I call

[4] Alexander discusses differences between his own theory and Mills’ perspective several times in the “The Civil Sphere” (see e.g. 2006, 113-114).

this broader endangerment, and the responses it engenders, "societalization." Societalization occurs when the discourses and material resources of the civil sphere are brought into play."

Societalization is both a critical and reconstructive process. It exposes and challenges problems while reminding the "we"—the civil discourse—about "our" memory of justice; this reminder calls us to enact, perform, and reconstruct the civil sphere. In this way, societalization is a realization of society itself—in-between and above institutional, economical, and cultural fragmentation—as something that exists culturally and semiotically and that is mediated by events, performances, memories, and narratives. Society can be put to work to solve problems. This occurs when a social problem is turned into a problem for all of society through a process of societalization. In Alexander's own words (2019, 117), societalization revives society's memory of justice simultaneously as an unsteady state of conflicting and contradicting narratives and as a potential reconstruction of a repaired "we."

Alexander draws on cases of pedophilia in the church, the financial crisis, and the #metoo movement as empirical examples of social problems that have become problems for the wider civil sphere through a process of societalization. These conflicts could have remained within their sub-spheres, yet they erupted into the broader civil sphere as scandals, as real social problems for society at large—in other words, as problems for the values that the broader civil sphere believed itself to represent. Societalization processes expose conflicts without guaranteeing their improvement or repair, but with the potential for improving society. This potentiality can crash and be ridiculed at any time by the endless examples of injustice, greed, corruption, racism, misogyny, etc., but from a societalization perspective, it is not the grievous events and structures themselves that generate a social crisis; it is "cultural logic and media representation" (2019, 112). Accordingly, peripheral conflicts do not move to the core of the civil sphere because of objective

factors with certain causal effects, but because of how the conflicts are represented, debated, and reconstructed in public.

In our reading, societalization is intimately tied to what Alexander calls "modes of incorporation," which he outlines in his magisterial book "The Civil Sphere" (2006). If societalization revives society's memory of justice, then the historical relations and semiotic codes among the specific groups of the society are decidedly relevant when attempting to understand the dynamics of specific societalization processes. In our case, we contend that Denmark is a homogenizing society that historically and presently only legitimizes assimilatory incorporation perspectives. In Alexander's outline, assimilation "rests upon a contradiction between civil solidarity and primordial exclusion, which expresses itself in the homologous split between public and private spheres" (2006, 430). Assimilation thus involves a bargain: primordially excluded groups (out groups) gain the possibility of extended acceptance and inclusion in society, as long as the private lives of such groups are kept out of the public eye. In other words, the private lives of non-core groups must be discreet and silent, and their primordial values must not make claims to civility.

As a consequence, societalization processes in such assimilatory societies as Denmark will reiterate the memories of justice exclusively from a core group perspective. These processes arguably create even more assimilation than before by exposing "uncivilities" of sub- or outgroups, *while* confirming the civil sphere and its tightly woven community sentiment. Narratives that contradict or conflict with the dominant narrative can easily be construed as "ungrateful" towards the supposedly inclusive core group—for the promise of incorporation remains only if the bargain remains unchallenged. As we show in the Danish case, both core and subgroup, the Christian majority and the Jewish minority, collaborate in their support for upholding the assimilatory mode of incorporation. Recent examples of the Jewish support of this mode can be seen, for instance, in

the public performance of the Action Plan against Antisemitism, as outline above, and the annual memorials and anniversaries of the rescue of Danish Jews during World War II.[5]

In our view, these positions are consistent with the Jewish community's public policy since WWII. The policy reflects a view on assimilation as a deep civil recognition of Jews-as-Danes and a broad acceptance among Jews and non-Jews that minority religion and particular cultural practices belong to the private sphere (Wagner 2001; see also Olwig and Paerregaard 2011). There is little, if any, sustained push towards more advanced and complex incorporation modes, such as what Alexander calls hyphen and multiculturalism (2006, 425-456).

In the Nordic countries, the state has since the 1930s been an important agent of civil transformation with ambitious programs for developing civil solidarity through education, national and local media, social security, and voluntary organizing (Kaspersen and Sevelsted 2021). These states' primary means have been an extensive cultural and administrative takeover by the state of education, social services, and religion combined with a high degree of economic redistribution (see also Lund 2020). The civil ethos promoted in the Nordic civil spheres by the Social Democratic civilizing mission centers on individuality, equality, and secularity but within a solidary national community of Danes, Swedes, etc. (Engstad and Larsson 2020). This means that the issues that processes of societalization endanger and respond to are tied to the contextual meaning of concepts and the exemplary enactment of values within this particular historical mission. Within this mission, ethnic and religious minorities are not seen as positive contributors in their own right but primarily

[5] See e.g. Zuckerman 2019. In recent years, though, younger Jewish voices have questioned the assimilatory narrative and its bargain. In 2018, a young Danish-Jewish journalist Sanne Cigale Benmouyal produced a TV-documentary in 3 episodes titled "Jøde!" (Jew!) where she questioned the stakes of the public/private bargain by trying to wedge open the reasons for why it is so important to be discreet with one's Jewishness; see https://www.dr.dk/drtv/serie/joede_57797 (see also Zuckerman 2019). Another explicit challenge to this mode can be seen in Danish-Jewish journalist, chief editor, and then news anchor, Martin Krasnik's book "Fucking Jøde!" (2014), which primarily contended the public discrimination he experienced as a Jew and journalist, who, among other things, covered Israel.

appear as negative examples of how parochialism and backwardness still exist.[6] The civil sphere, then, sympathizes with the ones who break free from the "backwards" group bonds, be it from a Muslim community, Jehova's Witnesses, or the Jewish couple who decides not to have their son circumcised (Pedersen 2017).

As Lund, Voyer, and Alexander (2020) show, the Nordic civil spheres have, at least since the 1980s, been challenged by immigration and new political discourses that center around immigration issues. In relation to inclusion of minorities, Denmark has generally been considered the more restrictive country, whereas Sweden's more open approach has become the model case of how multiculturalism supposedly threatens society's social bonds (for a discussion of how multiculturalism has become polluted, see Alexander 2013). Nevertheless, these differences should not be overstated. All the Nordic countries have strong cultural and political movements which consider immigration and multiculturalism as threats to civil solidarity, based on an understanding that multiculturalism threatens the national cohesiveness. A relatively similar pattern is seen across the Nordic welfare states (Lund, Voyer, and Alexander 2020). The liberties reached and the universalizing solidarity promoted by the Nordic Social Democratic "pro-civil states" are per historical experience tied to assimilation, equality, secularity, and social rights. Cultural differences such as hijabs, gender separation, strong patriarchy, circumcision, are by many considered stains on the progress "we" made so far (Padovan-Özdemir 2016; Pedersen 2017). These cultural semantics in the Nordic civil spheres form societalizations, endangerments, and responses within a highly stable assimilatory framing mode.

As discussed by Egholm (2020; 2022), and supported by our historical analysis below, the specific translations in the Danish civil sphere between citizenship, rights, and core values have, in

---

[6] As shown by Sevelsted (2019), Christian missions to the needy were important for the shaping of values which gradually translated into the early universalizing welfare state in 1920s and 1930s.

some cases, emphasized inclusion in the civilizational/civilizing discourse as a precursor to political rights. The Jews can be considered such a case where the assimilating inclusion is at the same time a process of recognition of the civil worthiness as Danes who happen to be Jews. Lund and Voyer (2020) argue that in the Nordic civil spheres “groupness” is considered alien to the liberating civil discourse which values individuality and equality within the broad national collective. In this historical trajectory, virtually all groupness is special, problematic, or benignly tolerated. In Nordic civil discourse, Muslim immigrants’ groupness is often activated in this light while Jewish groupness rarely is. Our study shows that the societalizations of antisemitism in Denmark dramatically activate Jewish groupness but does so as a positive component in the progressive, historical, narrative about the genesis of Danish civil values.

In the study, we analyze public performances of civil values, media representations, and historical sources. With this approach, we follow civil sphere theory’s ambition to capture both synchronic and diachronic dynamics of how cultural semantics form and are formed by “empirical fact-signs;” and to capture how culturally “thick” such social meaning-making processes are (Alexander 2011, 92; Tognato 2019, 65-66). Specifically, we study selected examples of public performances of anti-antisemitism in Denmark noting how civil value binaries were enacted and reconstructed within a historical narrative. Moreover, we scrutinize articles and debates in the Danish media guided by the keywords “antisemitism,” “antisemitic terrorism,” and “circumcision” between 2015-2022, and we link our findings to key historical sources related to the integration of the Jews in Denmark. The examples we present in the study highlight how the cultural codes organize both horizontal in/exclusion and reconstructions of a narrative connecting the past of the solidary “we” with the future.

Societalization of antisemitism in Denmark: historical trajectories

To understand the Jewish experience in the Danish civil sphere, we offer a diachronic historical contextualization of how the questions of Jewish difference and Jewish civility have been addressed. There was never a sizable Jewish community in Denmark, and since the first Jews arrived in the country in the 17th century, the Jewish community has never amounted to more than a few thousand people.[7] Nevertheless, one of Alexander's (2006) central points is that Jewishness, as well as gender, class, and race, are the categories around which civil sphere negotiations revolve; this point holds true for Denmark. Despite their limited numbers, Jews have been an exemplary case of civil sphere negotiations and conflicts over core values, the role of religions in public space, and, most importantly, the ways in which minorities should enact themselves in public (Zuckerman 2016; Wagner 2001). In the Danish historical context, Jews have become the model of what a minority is and exemplary of how to understand and enact minority-majority dialectics and relations. We will return to this later. This history is deeply significant for understanding the semiotic codes within societal reactions not only to antisemitism and terrorism, but also to conflict over cultural difference and cultural strangeness.

In many ways, conflicts over the cultural and social role of the Jews in the Danish civil sphere were extensions of debates during the German Enlightenment about the possibilities and conditions of Jewish civility (Feldt 2014; Lausten 2015, 127-130). At the turn of the 19th century, several German texts, which argued either that the Jews were a corruptive influence or that their freedom would be beneficial to society, were translated into Danish and became influential in the first round of the societalization of antisemitism. The Enlightenment created an emerging civil sphere in Denmark, where journals, papers, pamphlets, and publics meetings mushroomed and fueled strong public critique of religion, aristocracy, and social ethics. In this context, an abundance

[7] The numbers are difficult to assess, but today less than three thousand people are members of the Jewish Community (Dansk Jødisk Samfund). Common estimations are that there are around 6-10.000 Jews in Denmark; see Laura, n.d.

of satirical representations of moral corruption, sexuality, and prostitution emerged, as well as conspiracy theories targeting Jews—primarily their economically and socially corruptive influence on society (Horstbøll, Langen, and Stjernfelt 2020). Between 1813-1820, public polemics and eventually violent riots erupted against Jews and Jewish property in Copenhagen and several provincial towns, which came to be known as "The Jew Feud" (Blüdnikow 2019). In 1814, King Frederik 6th issued the so-called "Letter of Freedom." The letter was an edict through which the King issued freedom of commerce to the Jews along with the acceptance and legality of Jewish religious practices. The King and the leading Christian clergy considered the edict to be an enlightened response to widespread anti-Jewish sentiment in the public sphere (Lausten 2005, 12-15).

In Danish historiography, the Letter of Freedom of 1814 marks the beginning of the process of Jewish inclusion into the Danish civil sphere. The royal edict also stipulated the conditions of civic freedom to do commerce and to practice religion on the same conditions as other Danes. These new freedoms demanded extended state control over specific practices within the Jewish community. Bishops, university professors, and other officials were also implicated in this state control as they were considered experts on Judaism (Lausten 2005, 12; 2015, 127-172). A Jewish "confirmation" was instated: "We [the King] have authorized an instruction book for the youth of the Mosaic faith […] for them to promise that they will not act against the principles of this book" (Danmarkshistorien.dk). Since 1814, Danish Jews had to register all intra-institutional documents in Danish or German for two reasons: first, so that the Copenhagen Magistrate and the wider public sphere could see that nothing "corruptive" was going on, but second, so that the Jews could performatively deliver commitment to the Danish civil virtues. In our view, the Letter of Freedom is significant because it launches this history of transaction between majority and minority relations in the Danish civil sphere; it marks out a strong assimilatory path that demands almost complete

transparency (as both openness and control) of minority institutions *and* the performative minority commitment to the primordial(ized) values of the majority.

The process towards the first Danish democratic constitution of 1849 continued the path set out by the Letter of Freedom. The central questions were whether the Jews represented only themselves in a particularist, subversive way, or if their possible self-representation could be thought of as representing a class or a region (Feldt, 2014). Did the Jews' particularity carry the values of the common, civil values, in the same way as a farmer was both a farmer and a Dane? Historical sources from the constitution preparation committees document the prominence of the question of the Jews (Feldt, 2023). The Danish theologian, poet, and historian, N.F.S. Grundtvig was a member of the constitutional committee and argued that: "[we should] not look to the faith or the kind of worship a person confesses to, but rather to whether he is really one of the people or whether he is not" (Abrahamsen and Zaher, 2023). Other legislators at the time argued to exclude the Jews from central civil offices based on their religious difference (a question of conscience) while, importantly, securing their freedom of religion by specific law (Feldt, 2023).

The argument that eventually won the debates—and secured Jewish equality and freedom in the constitution—was strongly influenced by the semiotic codes of national belonging in line with Grundtvig's view articulated above. The legislators thus agreed that the Danishness of the Jews could come before their Jewishness. Simultaneously, a Lutheran "people's church" was founded that represented a common Christian history, culture, and sentiment to which the Jews were attached as a recognized sub-group, labeled as "Danes of the Mosaic belief" (Rasmussen, 2009; Christoffersen and Gregersen, forthcoming). A common metaphor at the time, which was of Herderian inspiration, illustrated the Jews as a flourishing branch grafted to the (Christian) Danish tree. As evident from cultural debates about the virtues of Danishness in the civil sphere after the constitution, this path of assimilation included widespread acceptance and support from the Jewish

community and their leading reformist figures (Lausten, 2007). Gradually, Jewish persons were accepted in the civil institutions, though not without occasional controversies.

Antisemitism persisted under the guise of slurs, caricatures, petty discrimination, and purportedly intellectual debates about the historical origins of both universal and Danish civil values (Lausten 2007; Thing 2008: 401-492). Jewishness was criticized for its cosmopolitanism, its parochialism, and its plasticity as a cultural-historical character, but actual attacks on Jewish civil rights were extremely rare. No antisemitic movement of any significance took hold in Denmark, despite periods of public scares about Jewish immigration in connection with migration from Eastern Europe to America between 1882-1914 (Bak 2004). Even in the 1930s, antisemitism was deemed to be uncivilized by all the central carriers of civil virtues—from the church to the media, popular culture, and legislative institutions (Bak 2021).[8] To a significant degree, the carriers of civility and the Jewish community cooperatively emphasized the Danishness of the Jews, viewing the Jews' Jewishness as something private and secondary, something quiet and almost invisible.

The process of assimilating the Jews continued and expanded with the early stages of the welfare state in the 1930s. During this time, Jewish care services, such as poor relief and care for the elderly, were taken over by the state (Bak 2012). By the advent of World War II, there were no offices that registered Jews as Jews, only to some extent the Jewish community itself, so civil assimilation could thus be seen as formally complete. In historian Sofie Lene Bak's (2012) view, the true sign of this extended cultural and formal assimilation in Denmark proved itself twice: first with the virtually complete rescue of all Danish Jews through widespread civil action in October 1943, and then again with the return of the Jewish refugees in 1945-6. Bak notes that the return was

[8] There was widespread harassment of Jews during the Nazi occupation (1940-45). Moreover, the period saw the founding of several (and violent) Danish national socialist parties, but in the perspective of the leading carriers of civil virtues such parties and harassment were deemed "uncivilized," see Bak 2021.

as significant as the rescue, since the process affirmed that the same legal mechanisms were in place for the Danish Jews as for other Danish war victims, so that Danish Jews' property was returned to them following the war (Bak 2012, 181-222). Thus, Danish Jews were only temporarily dispossessed and deterritorialized by the war—a unique situation in a wider European context (Lidegaard 2017). The return cemented the Jews' status as, first and foremost, Danish citizens and members of the Danish people, while the status of antisemites was solidified as foreign and uncivilized.

After the war, the assimilation incorporation regime has only been reinforced by the gradually expanding development of a memorial culture and semiotic codes that weave Danish and Jewish civility tightly together under the implicit condition that the Jews do not stand out. This interwovenness was manifested already in the immediate return of Danish Jews after the war, when then Chief Rabbi, Max Friediger, declared at the reopening of the central synagogue in Copenhagen that he blessed the Danish King, the Bishop, and all the priests in the Danish national church for "being there for us is those dark, difficult days" (Lausten 2007, 393). The rescue of October '43 became one of the core narratives of Danish civility, while casting the Jews as the trusted minority, performatively enacting these virtues and ritually praising them as "Danish." The Jewish community itself became an important carrier of civil sphere virtues, an important *lieu de memoire,* of the foreignness of antisemitism.

Renewing and reenacting the contract

As shown so far, there were several waves of societalization of antisemitism in the Danish civil sphere since the early nineteenth century. As Adams and Alexander (forthcoming) theorize, these earlier waves reveal a cultural semiotic repertoire through which we can understand contemporary cultural framings of both present and past. Thus, when antisemitic terror hit Copenhagen in

February 2015, the immediate and dominant public reaction was twofold: terror itself was deemed unacceptable and uncivil and, due to the obviously antisemitic nature of the second attack, the national condemnation of the terror was doubled down. Political parties from the left and right came out to clearly articulate that to violently target Danish Jews was to attack consecrated Western and Danish values. In this section, we explore how the terror attack initiated a process of renewed and reinforced societalization of the problem of antisemitism, consequently recoding some of the existing cultural codes to fit and accommodate new political presents and futures. We outline the ways in which three Danish prime ministers from 2015-2020 spoke out publicly and expressed their views on the relations and interdependence between Danishness and Jewishness.

On February 16, 2015, in the immediate aftermath of the attacks, a large public commemoration rally was organized in Copenhagen, where, among others, Prime Minister Helle Thorning Schmidt spoke (Thorning-Schmidt 2015). The speech built on several themes from the cultural scripts that already existed about the prevailing Danish understandings of antisemitism, as seen above, but it also developed new frames to understand and experience these disturbing events. Altering earlier historical expressions, these new articulations centered on the meanings of community and, moreover, the relations and expressions of identification between Danishness and Jewishness—sometimes within this united community, sometimes as two co-existing communities—especially in relation to the threat and reality of terror on Danish soil.

Thorning-Schmidt anchored her speech in the notion that two ordinary Danish citizens (borgere) had been murdered while doing ordinary civic activities. The attacks should thus be seen as targeting “a free and safe every day in a democratic country.” The prime minister’s response to this attempt to destabilize the Danish civil order was that the Danes should recall and reassert their inherent collective moral Danish selves:

> When others try to scare us and divide us, our answer is always a strong community [fællesskab]. We are determined to safeguard our values. We insist on protecting our

> freedom. We take care of each other. ... We know that there are forces in the world that think that the darkness is stronger than light. ... It is a threat that we will defend ourselves against with the special strength that grows out of our community. And it is a threat that we overcome together.

The civil/uncivil binary introduced here builds on the inherent sense of Danish community, which includes values such as freedom and care; the light of the Danish community is contrasted with the darkness opposing and threatening it. The cultural codes thus suggest that the terror attacks signal an attack on inherent Danish civility, yet they also—potentially—accentuate it if Danes assert the Danish moral collectivity within them.

Embedded within this community structure were the antisemitic aspects of the attacks. Thorning directly addressed the Danish Jews in her speech when she said, "To all Danish Jews: You are not alone. An attack on the Jews of Denmark is an attack on Denmark. On all of us." Here, Thorning-Schmidt moves past her initial characterization of the Danish ordinarity of the victims, as well as her framing of the inherent Danish moral self realized by all citizens. With the statement "you are not alone," she singles out the sub-group of Danish Jews and their suffering—not by marginalizing or dismissing their pain, but rather by marking it as a particular part of the blow to the general Danish community. A paradox thus emerges: the prime minister has just described an overarching Danish inclusivity, and yet she feels a need to affirm to the Danish Jews that they qualify as members of this community qua the Danes' identification with them in their suffering. "You—the Jews—are not alone" creates both sameness and difference in a single stroke.

Thorning-Schmidt thus framed both the terror attacks themselves and the related issue of antisemitism using two key semiotic categories: community and identification. However, it should be noted that the sub-theme of antisemitism also played a central role in the understanding of the overall community framework. The answer to overcoming external destabilization of the social order laid, according to the prime minister, in the reassertion of the Danish moral selves—and those

moral selves were never as powerful, vibrant, or visible as when protecting the Danish Jews. This theme was picked up, reiterated, and expanded upon by the prime ministers that followed Thorning-Schmidt.

The subsequent prime minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen spoke at the Jewish community's annual Rosh Hashana celebration in the fall of 2015, six months after the attacks (Rasmussen 2015). Rasmussen elaborated on the semiotic codes that prescribed what the Danish and the Danish-Jewish community feelings were and should be structured around. He opened his speech in the synagogue by stating that "moderation and pragmatism characterize our shared history. Which means that Danish Jews have put and are still putting a solid mark on Denmark." He continued:

> Our shared history is fundamentally happy. Because it builds on respect. On room for difference. On freedom to live according to one's own tradition. And because it is shared ... we will continue down this happy path in the future, hand in hand.

Rasmussen also highlighted the community feeling and inherent morality of the Danes that Thorning-Schmidt had stressed as the solution to the terror that had hit Denmark. However, he viewed the community, primarily, as a matter of shared history of the enactment of key Danish civil values, such as respect, moderation, pragmatism, and freedom of religion. With his mention of these fundamental civil values, Rasmussen was asserting that the Jews have proven to be as civil as the Danes, which had created not only a happy past but also carved out the opportunity for a "happy path in the future, hand in hand."

Rasmussen saw this community feeling evinced in the aftermath of the terror attacks:

> [F]or all of us it was moving to see the spontaneous and overwhelming sympathy from the entire Danish society and from many, many Danes. There was a dense carpet of flowers with thousands of bouquets outside the synagogue. This tragic terror attack put renewed focus on your security.

In Rasmussen's speech, the centrality of community and its enactment of key Danish civil values is emphasized in two ways: first, by the sympathetic reaction of the Danes towards the Danish-Jewish

community, and second, by the renewed focus of the Danish government on Jewish security. If latent in the first part of the speech, in the second part we hear a clear outline of normative and hierarchical positions within these community structures. The terror had elicited the in-group's feelings of sympathy and protection toward the sub-group. It also revealed, in the eyes of the prime minister, the moral character of the Danes. Thus, we see again societalization of antisemitism as constantly tied to the morality and civility of the Danish nation itself—of the Danes as rescuers and the Jews as victims.

This point can be seen most prominently when Rasmussen returned to the synagogue on October 11, 2018, at the 75-year commemoration of the rescue of the Danish Jews during World War II (Rasmussen 2018). Addressing the few rescuers from 1943 in the audience, Rasmussen said, "You took a personal responsibility to help your fellow human beings. You wrote Danish history. You wrote world history. We are all grateful to you." He emphasized that this should not be seen as a story of individual acts, but of the national character: "This is the very core of October 43. The rescue was not a deed of a single person—but of a whole people." Finally, the PM detailed what he saw as the unquestionable moral achievements of this significant chapter in Danish history:

> October 1943 is a story of loss and rescue. Genocide and humanity. Darkness and light. And it is a story about personal responsibility. And the commitment we all have as human beings to do what is right. One of the most important events in Danish history—probably the part of our history that is most known to the world—is not about the deeds of generals. Or about decisions made by politicians. But about ordinary human beings who in their daily life made choices that had a huge impact.

In this binary representation of good/evil, civility/un-civility, the Danish people chose rescue, humanity, and light when they acted to protect the Danish Jews. The speech reinforces the role casting of the Jews as victims and the Danes as rescuers, as well as the binds that define the relations between Jewishness and Danishness. Just as Danish Jews become a token of Danish civil character, this history binds the Jews to a totemistic role: "Our Jews" are the symbol of "our virtue;" no one can touch them without hurting "us." The cultural representation is inherently tied up with a

historically binding script. It provides a set of cultural codes that associates Danishness and the Danish people with moral superiority and civilization, through the righteous—and thus civil—victimhood of the Danish Jews.

Through these speeches, we clearly hear the echoes of earlier waves of societalizations of antisemitism. Antisemitism as a societal problem is not just firmly established; it has been embraced as a central feature of the moral self-image of Danish post-war national identity. However, the terror attacks ignited a renewed need to re-articulate and reinforce the binaries surrounding antisemitism and the fight against it. Key to this renewed societalization, in our view, is the concern for Danish community boundaries (defining who are included and excluded), the moral character of this community, and how it promotes inclusion of the Jews as minority through bonds of identification and solidarity-cum-sympathy. However, there is almost entirely no concern for other minorities, especially the out-group to which the perpetrator belonged, namely Danish-Muslims, in this reinforced sphere of inclusion (see e.g. Kubliz 2021).

The assimilation mode through which Jews were accepted into the Danish state—and the other Nordic states—is still the dominant mode through which both the majority society and the Jews themselves understand their inter-sphere relationship. It is within this culturally structured context that the societalization of antisemitism must be seen and understood: the Danish state and key stakeholders' solidarity and identification with the Danish Jews are structured around semiotic codes that embrace Jews as Danish qua their victimhood and the subordination of their Jewishness to the Danish peoplehood. They are accepted and praised as Mr. Steins who help the Mauds out of bed and into the moral limelight. However, this "model minority" incorporation mode comes with several limitations, which are well illustrated by the debate around circumcision.

Circumcision, the latent uncivility of the Jews

In the same period during which we saw a renewed political and civic interest in combating antisemitism for the sake of Danish civility, a heated public debate about the legitimacy of Jewish circumcision also took place. A new organization called Intact Denmark, established in 2013 and inspired by a similar American movement, launched a successful campaign against "genital mutilation of healthy children" to, in principle, target all medically unnecessary genital surgery on children (see www.intactdenmark.dk). The campaign was supported by physicians, several children's care organizations, a handful of Muslim and Jewish men, and public intellectuals who positioned themselves against "irrational" religious practices (www.intactdenmark.dk). The cultural and political debate that ensued on all Danish media platforms focused almost exclusively on the Jews, and not on the much larger Muslim minorities in Denmark (Jørgensen 2020). The Jewish community, represented by its chair and spokespersons, actively engaged in the debate, tried to explain the meaning of the ritual for Jews but also the societal meaning of a ban. By and large, this communicative mission failed. Jewish male circumcision became ostracized from the civil sphere as a barbaric, reactionary, irrational, harmful, fundamentally foreign practice with no place in modern society. In 2021, polls indicated that more than 73 percent of the Danes wanted to ban circumcision up until the age of 18 (Henriksen et al 2021). Still, on May 17, 2021, a proposal for the banning of male circumcision was defeated in parliament (18-årsmindstealder for omskæring af raske børn, B7, 2020). Why?

On September 8, 2020, PM Mette Frederiksen gave a speech to the Social Democratic parliamentary group in which she declared that the Social Democrats would vote against a ban. Two days later she published an op-ed in the conservative-leaning paper *Berlingske* repeating the main points from the speech and explaining her change in opinion:

> Sometimes the debate about circumcision pops up in Denmark. I understand the reasons. The right to decide over your own body is for everyone. But at the same time male circumcision cannot be a single-case discussion, detached from our European history. We Europeans have lots to be proud of. [..] But Europe's history is also brutal, gruesome, and

> inhumane. [..] Particularly one crime must never ever be forgotten. It has its roots many centuries back in time but it takes its modern shape at the end of the 1800s when antisemitism starts showing its ugly face in ever more connections. [..] In so-called science, in political and religious conversations. And in outright riots, violence, and persecution (Frederiksen, 2020).

Frederiksen's remarkable evocation of the cultural-historical bonds between majority Danes and Jews allows her to justify her decision to oppose the ban. This made it a moral question for the legislators that loomed larger than the ban itself. It became a question of not repeating historical injustice and of being on the right side of history now and then, and thus a question of validating the civility that Danes hitherto had shown towards the Jews. She elaborated and undergirded these arguments:

> Six million Jews were killed in the Second World War. To me, it is the darkest chapter of Europe's history. Even though it has been 75 years since the end of the war, I personally feel a huge responsibility for preventing that it will ever happen again. […] Most Danish Jews were saved. It was a moment of honor for Denmark, and I have had the privilege of meeting survivors. In the years after the war, my party [Social Democrats] promised that there will never again be persecution of Jews in Denmark. I repeat that promise. So, should Denmark be the first country in the world to ban a central part of the culture and the rituals which belong to Jewish life? [..] I don't believe so. It must be possible to lead a Jewish life in Denmark. As it has been possible for centuries. [..] And therefore, this is a strong appeal not to ban circumcision of boys in Denmark.

In a nutshell, Frederiksen invoked the exemplary history of the Jews and the exemplary history of Danes as rescuers of Jews to argue against banning circumcision—and to explain her own change of heart. She disciplined her party and used her authority as head of government to overrule the proposal backed by a majority of the parliament. This can be seen as an effort to reenact historical paths and uphold a certain societalization of antisemitism that resonates with the core of Danish civil semiotic codes. While admitting the universal civil value of the bodily integrity of the child and also alluding to the Danish civil disdain for practices of religious "backwardness," as described above, she declared that she was committed to the historical promises of protecting Jews. It was not that she appraised the Jews as Jews within a multiculturalist or pluralist incorporation ethics, but

that she invoked the historical path shared by Danes and Jews, which comprised the codes of Danish civility.

In doing so, Frederiksen acted against the majority opinion. Danish media gushed with debate: comedy shows, political satire, social media, historical features, and documentaries discussed antisemitism and circumcision to an extent that far exceeded that of other breaches of civil trust. In these debates, two dissonant cords were struck: one of reinforcement and memory of the unbreakable bond between majority Danes and the Jews, and one of scandalizing a core Jewish cultural and religious practice, which created anxiety in the Jewish community about the extent of their legitimacy as Jews in the civil sphere. Under the broader headline of antisemitism as a problem for society, the cultural and social bond with the Jews was evidently reinforced and undermined at the same time. The widespread public interest in the Jews as victims and as minority indicates a significant re-societalization of antisemitism in Denmark—but one that has different temporal directions and conflicting universalizations woven into it. At the same time as the common history and the joint *lieu de memoire* of October ’43 was re-canonized, the history of difference was also laid bare. Brit milah (the Jewish ritual of circumcision) could certainly not be publicly coded as equivalent to baptism in the same way as bar/bat mitzvah was continuously coded as “Jewish confirmation.”

Jewish cultural practices are rarely questioned openly in the Danish civil sphere, and the debate about circumcision in recent years stands out.[9] With very few exceptions, Jewish cultural difference has been benignly tolerated within the historical narrative of Danish civility and its memories of justice. After WWII, mainly controversy over Israel has challenged Jewish civility (see

---

[9] The minor exceptions that have not stirred any significant public debates have been debates about animal ethics and kosher slaughter.

e.g., Krasnik 2014).[10] Jewish groupness remains tied to core narratives of the genesis of Danish civility, while Muslim groupness plays a very different role outside the origin story as a group with primordially different values. These different roles and positions of proximity/distance to the historical narrative situate Jewish circumcision as more controversial than the same Muslim practice since Muslim cultural practices are already on the negative side of the cultural binaries. Paradoxically, Muslim "outgroupness" diverted the socially sensitive discussion almost exclusively towards the Jews. In our analysis, the main reason for the stability of Jewish inclusion is the culturally and historically established embeddedness of Jews into Danish semiotic codes of civil values—and, equally so, the resulting "invisibility" of Jewish difference and strangeness. This invisibility is a matter of semiotic coding since Jewish cultural practices can, potentially, as we have seen, always be made strange and foreign in a homogenous and homogenizing society such as Denmark.

The Jewish community perceived and articulated the proposal of banning circumcision as an existential threat to Jewish life in Denmark (e.g., dr.dk, September 4, 2020; Kristelig Dagblad, August 28, 2020). PM Frederiksen also invoked this line of argument when she referred her opposition to a ban back to WWII and the rescue of Oct. '43. Both articulated and enacted the primordialism of anti-antisemitism in the Danish civil codes against a competing, and by the population, overwhelmingly supported civil good construed as child protection. The cooperation between the Jewish minority and the state did not unfold within a multicultural mode of incorporation which theoretically would recognize Jewish difference but within a mutually endorsed assimilation mode stressing a shared history and shared traumatic events.

[10] In Denmark, the radical left has problematized support for Israel as uncivil since the 1970s, as in most other European countries.

Discussion: does anti-antisemitism equals inclusion?

In the words of three succeeding Danish prime ministers, Jewish inclusion in the civil sphere is a core Danish value. Antisemitism is seen not just as a Jewish concern, but as a problem for the Danish society as a whole. The reappearance of antisemitism—in this case, re-actualized by the terror attack against the Copenhagen synagogue—is seen as damaging to both the Jews and the Danish community. According to the prime ministers, antisemitism targets Danish civility. A red thread interlaces the prime ministers' understanding of the basis of this civility, namely the Danish actions and reactions against the Nazi antisemitism and the historical rescue of the Danish Jews. This historical societalization of antisemitism is the badge of honor—a fundamental semiotic code—through which the terror attacks and the response to them have been recoded and reinforced both to give meaning to the contemporary situation, and to project a future path for Danish civility.

The concept of societalization helps us to see the ways in which antisemitism has—again—become a societal concern in Denmark and to understand antisemitism's mobilizing power to reiterate specific civil values that, in turn, reinforce certain historical narratives and semiotic codes. At the heart of this analysis lies, in our view, an interlinked set of tensions that also undergird the wider civil sphere theory framework—namely issues of processual teleologies of civil incorporation, different and evolutionary modes of incorporation, and temporalities related to specific histories and their defining events (see also Goldberg 2015). The tensions, then, are both empirical and theoretical—between ideal-types of incorporation and the historical contingencies that create the ground for codes and narratives, which are always on the move between reconstructed pasts and new futures.

Incorporation processes are not only horizontal but also vertical. Iconic, traumatizing events of the past and their reenactments as public memories of (in)justice also enact causations and expectations to where the collective "we" is going (Alexander 2012). The rescue of October '43, the

action plan against antisemitism, and the campaign against circumcision can be signified in both regressive and progressive terms (Alexander 2021), as defenses of primordial narratives or as invitations to take part in (the history of) a widening community of "us," or even as both defenses and invitations. With the Danish case and the categorial "Jewish question" more generally in mind, it is worth asking: do these rounds of re-societalization of antisemitism strengthen the civil incorporation of the Jews, and do they open possibilities for wider solidarity among other minorities?

It is beyond the scope of this paper to go into a detailed analysis of how the terror attack in 2015 and the action plan against antisemitism activate new positionings in the civil sphere for Muslim minorities. Yet, the dynamics of assimilation as laid out by the CST framework would suggest that the strongly inclusive narrative about Danish Jews will not necessarily create solidarity between Jewish and Muslim minorities. The opposite case can arguably be made that it stigmatizes Muslim minorities as groups who do not want to opt into the value discourse of the civil sphere. Muslim minorities, in opposition to the Jewish, are by many in Denmark perceived as wanting to change social and cultural values and practices in the public sphere.[11] Acceptance of hijabs, segregation of men and women, halal diets in public institutions, strong patriarchy, etc., are by many seen as intentionally destructive intrusions on the liberating potential and the feelings of justice in the Danish civil sphere. Jewish invisibility and general Jewish endorsement of the civil codes have by and large safeguarded Jews from accusations of breaches of civility, circumcision being the mark of difference which cannot be translated into symbolic similarity.

[11] The continuous support by around 75% of the voters to parties which explicitly demand extended cultural assimilation of immigrants (particularly Muslims) and hard restrictions on immigration supports this point.

The recent wave of societalization of antisemitism can be read against the ongoing process of assimilatory Danish Jewish incorporation and more generally against the potential progression towards more inclusive modes of incorporation. Zygmunt Bauman suggested that “the Jewish question” is “a window onto these anti-liberal possibilities—what ‘society will choose to say and do once it is allowed to choose’—rather than an end in itself” (Bauman in Cheyette 2020, 17). Moreover, he pointed to the concept of “allosemitism” as a way to illuminate the directional openness of the categorial question of “Jews” (Bauman 1998). The concept helps us to flesh out how seemingly affirming discourses about Jewishness and recognition of the problem of antisemitism in the civil sphere might not actually be inclusive and solidary. Jews in Denmark are not about to lose their place in the national narrative and in the civil codes, but they, nevertheless, experience risk and anxiety about the exposure of their foreignness and their existence as an organic appendix to the primordial story (Feldt 2021; Morris-Reich 2021). The openness and anxiety of civil incorporation remain for Danish Jewry, even as one of the most important carriers of civil virtue who reenacts and reinforces the codes of inclusion.

As Alexander outlines the process of assimilation from both in- and outgroup perspectives, it is a negotiated and performed bargain based on, first, the public perception of separating the person from her particular qualities, and second, the decisions of the in-group qua pragmatic entitlements about which cultural codes, narratives, and values are primordial and which are particularistic (Alexander 2006, 426-31). As Alexander writes: “the person of the Jew could be separated from Jewish qualities” but would still have to manifest civil qualities in a very certain way determined by core group (ibid., 464-5). In Alexander’s work on the incorporation of outgroups into the civil sphere, the mode of assimilation is clearly the least advanced and most questionable mode of incorporation (ibid.,431). Assimilation is strongly asymmetrical, it does not fundamentally recognize group difference as valuable, and its solidarity is based almost exclusively

on core group narratives. This account corresponds well with our empirical case, though it also shows how assimilation is attractive for its promise of deep integration into the unfragmented community of "us," as reflected by the Danish Jewish community.

As we have shown throughout this article—from the 2022 speech by the Culture Minister who represented the Danish Jews through the figure of Mr. Stein, to the historical waves of societalization, to the recent reactions to confront and repair the damages done by the 2015 terror attacks—Danish Jewish incorporation is an ongoing project of assimilating Danish Jews into the Danish-Christian core group's notions and values of primordial Danish civility. Jewish people are accepted and embraced in the public sphere as long as Jewish qualities remain private. In a complex way, the waves of societalization of antisemitism confirmed this: antisemitism was repeatedly deemed to be uncivil since it questioned Jewish incorporation. The Jews were and are to be seen as "fellow countrymen," which was also the banner under which Danish Jews were saved during World War II by other Danes (Lidegaard 2015). Their Jewish difference, which the Nazis perversely over-exposed, was from a Danish assimilatory perspective seen as private and indifferent to their Danish belonging.

However, alongside these repeated waves of societalization of antisemitism, we also see the public undermining of Jews as carriers of civility through the circumcision ban debate. Circumcision becomes the sign that clearly indicates that Danish Jews are in fact different from "real" (Christian) Danes—and that this difference in and of itself challenges the belief that the Jews are co-constituting the virtues of Danish national character. The association of circumcision with Judaism comes to mark the Danish Jews as culturally barbaric, inhumane, and uncivil. As PM Frederiksen's op-ed shows, she needs to walk a tightrope between the conceptions of circumcision as irrational and uncivil and of antisemitism as uncivil when vindicating her rejection of the ban on circumcision. These contradicting tensions seem to be resolved by the constitutive historical

narrative of Danish morality and civility vis-á-vis Jewish inclusion, affirmed through their rescue and victimhood.

The case of Danish-Jewish incorporation supports Alexander's assessment that "[i]n its ideal-typical form, assimilation is not only unsatisfactory in a normative sense but unstable in an empirical one" (Alexander 2006, 431). Yet, we do not see the same expected developments or even social drives to move from assimilation to hyphen to multicultural incorporation, which could, arguably, be expected in a civil society as strong as Denmark. The promise of assimilation still appears more attractive for the Jewish subgroup than more free-floating codes of identification. Despite the rather monumental stabilizing effort from the Social Democratic government at the Jewish House in 2022, the problem of antisemitism produces new instabilities between majority and minorities. The "war of spheres," the standoff/civil repair openness that Alexander describes (2019, 8), produced stability while also increased Danish-Jewish subgroup anxiety since societalization opened windows and thus exposed the fragilities and precariousness of the appendix. The Danish case demonstrates, on the one hand, an apparently clear expression of the re-societalization of antisemitism, and, on the other hand, a process *separated* from the Jewish subgroup's experiences of anxiety and inclusion—and thus partly a marginalization of the very societal problem at the core of the process.

With a more processual than structural emphasis, we find that the Danish historical narrative and its defining events have, over time and with repeated reenactments and reconstructions, made the Danish Jews an exemplary model. It has become a model that the Jews themselves, other minorities, and majority members use to define as well as challenge boundaries of in/exclusion. Antisemitism has become inseparable from "the Jews." It defines *via negativa* the civil qualities of Jews in Denmark. In our view, this situation is invariably tied to the assimilation mode of

incorporation predominant in Denmark, which requires the invisibility of cultural and religious particularities other than the Christian.

In conclusion

In this article, we argue that the strong proximity to primordial Danish values has generally saved the Jews from violent and systemic antisemitism in Denmark. As we show, civil solidarity was formed through assimilatory incorporation processes, which have been upheld and reinforced during both post-war times and the recent wave of societalization of antisemitism. Despite the fact that civil solidarity produces asymmetrical power relations that continuously render the sub-group members vulnerable and dependent on the core group's validation, these bonds within an assimilation mode of incorporation have proven to be surprisingly empowering and attractive, even for the subgroup, in the Danish case. The historical narrative and its semiotic codes around "the rescue" and deep anti-antisemitism is continuously reenacted as an eternal and primordial valorization of Danish civil sphere virtues. In this way, the "new" antisemitism becomes integrated into established and well-known codes and narratives as a renewed societalization process consolidating how and why antisemitism threatens society.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the peer reviewers and the editors for their constructive suggestions. Thomas Burø, Liv Egholm, Jeffrey Alexander, Tracy Adams, and Chad Goldberg gave invaluable feedback on earlier drafts of the paper, for which we are grateful.

About the authors

Maja Gildin Zuckerman is a teaching adjunct at the Department of Entrepreneurship, Ethics, and Leadership at Copenhagen Business School.
Jakob Egholm Feldt is a professor of history in the Department of Communication and Arts at Roskilde University: https://forskning.ruc.dk/en/persons/feldt

References

18-årsmindstealder for omskæring af raske børn 2020, B7. Available at: www.folketingstidende.dk/samling/20201/beslutningsforslag/B7/20201_B7_som_fremsat.pdf, accessed 20 April, 2022.

Abrahamsen, Frederikke, & Zaher, R. S. (2023) "Udvalg af kilder om De Fra Folkekirken Afvigende Trossamfund fra Beretning om Forhandlingerne på Rigsdagen, 1848-1849", In: Vinding, Niels Valdemar, Jakobsen, Brian Arly, og Schultz-Knudsen, Mikele, "Religion og Grundloven" København: DJØF Forlag. [Selection of sources from the negotiations leading up to the constitution of 1849].

Alexander, J. C. (2006) The Civil Sphere. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Alexander, J. C. (2011) Fact-signs and cultural sociology: How meaning-making liberates the social imagination. Thesis Eleven, 104(1), 87-93.

Alexander, J. C. (2012) Trauma: A Social Theory. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Alexander, J. C. (2013) Struggling over the mode of incorporation: backlash against multiculturalism in Europe. Ethnic and Racial Studies, 36(4), 531-556.

Alexander, J. C. (2018). The societalization of social problems: Church pedophilia, phone hacking, and the financial crisis. American Sociological Review, 83(6), 1049-1078.

Alexander, J. C. (2019) What Makes a Social Crisis?: The Societalization of Social Problems. Hobroken: John Wiley & Sons.

Alexander, J.C. (2021) Introduction. In: Populism in the Civil Sphere (eds. Alexander, Kivisto, Sciortino). Cambridge: Polity Press: 1-16.

Arkin, K. A. (2018) Talking about Antisemitism in France Before and After Charlie Hebdo and Hyper Cacher. Jewish History, 32(1): 77-97.

Bak, S. L. (2004) Dansk antisemitisme 1930-1945. Copenhagen: Aschehoug.

Bak, S. L. (2012) Da krigen var forbi: de danske jøders hjemkomst efter besættelsen. Copenhagen: Gyldendal.

Bak, S. L. (2021) Racismeparagraffen. 1939. Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag.

Bauman, Z. (1998) Allosemitism: Premodern, modern, postmodern. In: B. Cheyette and L. Marcus (eds) Modernity, culture and 'the Jew'. Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 143-156.

Beinov, J. (2015) Fjender af det åbne samfund. Berlingske, 16 February.

Blüdnikow, B. (2019) Jødefejden. Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag.

Cheyette, B. (2020) Zygmunt Bauman's window: From Jews to strangers and back again. Thesis Eleven, 156(1): 67-85.

Christoffersen, L., & Gregersen, N. H. (forthcoming) Shaping the Danish People's Church in the Context of Freedom of Religion: A.S. Ørsted (1778-1860) and N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783-1872). In: H. Vogt, & K. Å. Modéer (Eds.), Law and the Christian Tradition in Scandinavia: The Writings of Nordic Jurists. New York: Routledge.

Dalsgaard, L., Albæk, M. and Mikkelsen, N.R. (2019) Terroristen fra Nørrebro: jagten på Omar el-Hussein. Copenhagen: Politikens Forlag.

Danmarkshistorien.dk. (2012) Det jødiske frihedsbrev, 29. marts 1814, https://danmarkshistorien.dk/vis/materiale/det-joediske-frihedsbrev-af-29-marts-1814/, accessed 20 April 2022.

Davidsen-Nielsen, H. (2015) Stop de hadefulde. Politiken, 16 February.

Det Etiske Råd (2018) Det Etiske Råds udtalelse om rituel omskæring af drenge. Copenhagen. Report, doc. no. 645909.

Det Jødiske Samfund (2022) Handlingsplan mod antisemitisme 2022. 25 January. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yalDIl7wBT4&ab_channel=DetJ%C3%B8diskeSamfund (Accessed 21 April 2022).

Egholm, L. (2020) Complicated Translations. In: Lund, A., Voyer, A., Alexander, J. C. (Eds.) The Nordic Civil Sphere. Cambridge: Polity Press: 64-91.

Egholm, L. (2022). Interstitial Institutions. Cultural Sociology, 0(0). https://doi.org/10.1177/17499755221123765

Engstad, F. and Larsson, H. 2020 Nordic Civil Spheres and Pro-Civil States. In: Lund, A., Voyer, A., Alexander, J. C. (Eds.) The Nordic Civil Sphere. Cambridge: Polity Press: 39-63.

Feldt, J. E. (2014) Forskellige i fællesskab: Moses Mendelssohn og frigørelsen. In: B. Bludnikow (ed) Jøderne som frie borgere: Anordningen af 29. marts 1814. København: Det Jødiske Samfund i Danmark, pp. 24-36.

Feldt, J. E. (2021) Futures of Jewish Exemplarity. Jewish Quarterly Review, 111(2): 311-313.

Feldt, J. E. (2023) Jødisk inklusion mellem folk og religion. In: Vinding, Niels Valdemar, Jakobsen, Brian Arly, og Schultz-Knudsen, Mikele, "Religion og Grundloven" København: DJØF Forlag

Frederiksen, M. (2020) Kommentar. Berlingske, 11 September: pp. 32-33.

Goldberg, C. A. (2015) The Jewish question and the civil sphere. In: Kivisto, P., & Sciortino, G. (eds.) Solidarity, Justice, and Incorporation: Thinking through the Civil Sphere. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 119-141.

Henriksen, M., Svendsen, A., Christensen, R. and Larsen, S. (2021) Kun hver tiende dansker er enig med Frederiksen og Ellemann i, at omskæring af drenge fortsat skal være tilladt. dr.dk, 20 April,

https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/politik/kun-hver-tiende-dansker-er-enig-med-frederiksen-og-ellemann-i-omskaering-af-drenge, accessed 21 April 2022.

Hergel, O. (2015) Det Danmark, vi ikke kendte. Politiken, 16 February.

Horstbøll, H., Langen, U., & Stjernfelt, F. (2020) Grov Konfækt: Tre vilde år med trykkefrihed 1770-73. Copenhagen: Gyldendal.

https://intactdenmark.dk/, accessed 20 April, 2022.

Jørndrup, H. (2016) News Framing in a Time of Terror. Nordicom Review 37(1): 85-99.

Jørgensen, J. L. (2022) Muslimer holder sig fra omskæringsdebat. Politiken, 11 September.

Judaken, J. (2018) Introduction: Judeophobia and Islamophobia in France Before and After Charlie Hebdo and Hyper Cacher. Jewish History, 32(1): 1-17.

Katz, E. B. (2018) Where Do the Hijab and the Kippah Belong? On Being Publicly Jewish or Muslim in Post-Hebdo France. Jewish History, 32(1): 99-114.

Kaspersen, LB. & Sevelsted, A. (2019) The 'long history' history of civil society in Denmark and Western Europe. IN: Kaspersen & Egholm (eds.) Civil Society: between Concepts and Empirical Grounds. Abingdon: Routledge.

Klitgaard, M. (2019) Torsdag trykkede minister og formand for Det Jødiske Samfund hånd: nu kommer Danmarks første nationale handleplan mod jødehad. Berlingske, 29 November.

Krab-Johansen, A. (2015) Terroen ubehagelige ansigt. Børsen, 16 February.

Krasnik, M. (2014) Fucking jøde!. Copenhagen: Art People.

Kublitz, A. (2021) Omar is dead: Aphasia and the escalating anti-radicalization business. History and Anthropology 32 (1): 64-77.

Laura, Heidi (n.d) De danske jøder, https://mosaiske.dk/joder-i-danmark/, accessed 20 April 2022.

Lausten, M. S. (2005) Frie jøder?: forholdet mellem kristne og jøder i Danmark fra Frihedsbrevet 1814 til Grundloven 1849. Frederisberg: Anis.

Lausten, M. S. (2007) Jødesympati og jødehad i folkekirken: forholdet mellem kristne og jøder i Danmark fra begyndelsen af det 20. århundrede til 1948 (Vol. 13). Frederiksberg: Anis.

Lausten, M. S. (2015) Jews and Christians in Denmark: From the Middle Ages to Recent Times, ca. 1100-1948. Leiden: Brill.

Lidegaard, B. (2015) Countrymen - How Denmark's Jews Escaped the Nazis. London: Atlantic Books.

Lidegaard, B. (2017) “Hvorfor overlevede de fleste i Danmark Holocaust.” Rambam. Tidsskrift for jødisk kultur og forskning 26: 55-62.

Lund, A., Voyer, A., Alexander, J. C. (2020) The Nordic Civil Sphere. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Lund, A. & Voyer, A. (2020) “They are immigrants who are kind of Swedish”. Universalism, primordialism, and modes of incorporation in the Swedish civil sphere. In Lund, Voyer, and Alexander (eds.) The Nordic Civil Sphere. Cambridge: Polity Press: 177-202.

Lund, S. (2020) Immigrant incorporation in Education. Highschool students’ negotiations of belonging. In Lund, Voyer, and Alexander (eds.) The Nordic Civil Sphere. Cambridge: Polity Press: 203-225.

Mills, C. W. (1959) The Sociological Imagination. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Morris-Reich, A. (2021) The Stranger as a Threshold Figure. Jewish Quarterly Review,111(2): 314-317.

Møller, P. S. (2015) Så kom terroren til Danmark: De intolerante skal ikke toleres. Kristelig Dagblad, 18 February: p. 8.

Olwig, K. F., and K. Paerregaard (2011) eds. The question of integration: immigration, exclusion and the Danish welfare state. Newcaste upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Padovan-Özdemir, M. (2016) The Making of Educationally Manageable Immigrant Schoolchildren in Denmark, 1970-2013: A Critical Prism for Studying the Fabrication of a Danish Welfare Nation State. PhD Dissertation, Det humanistiske Fakultet, Copenhagen University.

Pedersen, S. (2017) Poster Children of Integration and the Question of Being a ‘Good Danish Muslim’. Tidsskrift for Islamforskning 11(1): pp. 30-47.

Rasmussen, J. (2009) Religionstolerance og religionsfrihed. Forudsætninger og Grundloven i 1849. Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag.

Rasmussen, L.L. (2015) Kære Dan. Speech at the Jewish new year reception, Copenhagen, 10 November.

Rasmussen, L.L. (2018) Your Royal Highness. Speech in the Copenhagen Synagogue for the commemoration of 75 years since October 1943, Copenhagen, 11 October.

Regeringen (2022) Handlingsplan mod antisemitism. Governmental plan, 25 January, https://www.justitsministeriet.dk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Antisemitisme-handlingsplan.pdf, accessed April 20 2022.

Sevelsted, A. (2019) Degeneration, Protestantism, and Social Democracy: The Case of Alcoholism and ‘Illiberal’ Policies and Practices in Denmark 1900–43. Social science history 43.1: 87–111.

Sinclair, K. (2015) Terrorist or Loser? Reactions to the Terror Attacks in Copenhagen. Odense: Videncenter om det moderne Mellemøsten.

Thing, M. (2008) De russiske jøder i København 1882-1943. Copenhagen: Gyldendal.

Thorning Schmidt, H. (2015) I weekenden blev to uskyldige borgere dræbt. Speech to the public commemoration of the victims of the Copenhagen terror attacks, 2015. Østerbro, 16 February.

Thyssen, O. (2015) Var Omar El-Hussein blot morder, eller var han terrorist?. Politiken, 18 February.

Tognato, C. (2019) Radical Protest on a University Campus. In: Alexander, Stack, and Khosrokhavar (eds.) Breaching the Civil Order. Radical Protest and the Civil Sphere. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 42-69.

Villegas. C.M. (2020) Performing rituals of affliction: how a Governor's Press conferences provided mediatized sanctuary in Ohio. American Journal of Cultural Sociology 8: 352-383.

Wagner, T. (2001) Fællesskabets nationalisering og jødespørgsmålet i en liberal kultur: Jøderne i Danmark mellem inklusion og eksklusion. In: U. Østergaard and C. S. Banke (eds). Folk og Fællesskab: Træk af fællesskabstænkningen i mellemkrigstiden. Copenhagen: DIIS: 47-61.

Zuckerman, M. G. (2016) Broadening Home: The Emergence of Danish Zionism and its Topological Expansion of Danish Jewishness, 1897-1914. PhD dissertation, University of Southern Denmark, Odense Denmark.

Zuckerman, M. G. (2019) Antisemitismens væsen viser sig igen. Information, 19 January.