

UNEMPLOYED!

An analysis on Venstre's unemployment discourse in Denmark

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1. Abstract

With the interest in gaining insight into how identity and social space is created through political communication, this thesis has the purpose of investigating how the Danish political party Venstre's unemployment discourse constructs the identity of the unemployed citizens of Denmark.

With the recent resurgence in the focus on unemployment within the political sphere, both sides of the Danish political spectrum have taken to the unemployment discourse, with Venstre presenting unemployment as a pronounced key political issue and a main theme in their campaigning efforts for the 2015 election. Two communicative events which pertain to Venstre's "working must pay off" campaign, are hence analyzed - Lars Løkke Rasmussen's speech at the 2013 party conference as well as Venstre's official campaign poster used in the 2015 election.

Based on a social constructionist approach, the theoretical frame and methodological tools used are based on Norman Fairclough's as well as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's work on discourse theory. Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis provides the framework for analyzing the chosen communicative events and their context whilst Laclau and Mouffe's Discourse Theory provides concepts such as antagonism and identity which are used in the analysis as well as in the discussion. Lastly the concept of delegitimization by Chiara Volpato is used to process the reached results of the analysis and bring greater understanding to the constructed identity of the unemployed and their relation to society,

The analysis ultimately indicates the presence of three discourses; the "us versus them", "unemployment as detrimental and unfair to society", and "unemployment by choice" discourses which together construct the identity of the unemployed as both detrimental and unfair, whilst simultaneously constructing the relation of the unemployed to society as antagonistic, as the unemployed are marginalized and portrayed as the inferior entity.

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2. Motivation

Having had the privilege of working within HR during most of my studies, I have grown a notable interest in combining this area with communications. On several occasions, I have come across and personally experienced the occurrence of both employers, prominent actors in the public sphere, and even my own colleagues having reservations about individuals who have been through or are currently facing unemployment. Through personal experiences with these occurrences which have presented themselves to me quite often, I've grown the impression that there is a generally negative attitude towards unemployed individuals. Many seem to perceive these individuals as part of a very homogenous group of uninspired people with a lazy attitude and an ingrained unwillingness to work.

Coincidentally, in 2013 and until today I've witnessed the efforts of the Danish political party Venstre to use unemployment politics as a key political focus of their electoral campaign for the 2015 election, which I find extremely interesting. Working with this occurrence in my thesis not only allows me to work on my understanding on how the unemployed are portrayed and how it affects their identity and relation to society, but has also given me the opportunity to incorporate the field of HR into my work on communication. This has thus led to the interest in examining how political communication can construct identity, and in this case obtain a deeper understanding of how the identity of the unemployed is communicatively created by Venstre, which is the area of focus which will be dealt with in this thesis.

Concurrently, this has also led to a challenge for me, as my work on this thesis has required for me to produce an analysis which is as objective as possible, with the ultimate goal of understanding and discussing Venstre's unemployment discourse. This requires me to avoid delving into whether or not I agree with Venstre's discourse, and to be aware of my own attitude and experiences so as to avoid my own bias as much as possible, which has at times proven to be challenging but also very interesting.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to supervisor James Menzies, for supporting this process with great flexibility and helpful guidance.

3. Introduction

There has in the last decade been a resurgence in the focus on unemployment and its effects on the Danish economy and society from both sides of the political spectrum. Although both sides of the political spectrum agree on the notion that unemployment is a condition that should be avoided as much as possible, they do disagree on several aspects of unemployment, such as with whom the responsibility lies, how it should be fought, and what role the individual unemployed has in this situation.

Representing the center-right side of the political spectrum as major party is the conservative party Venstre, which has stood front in the representation of the center-right's opinion on unemployment and the unemployed with the "working must pay off"¹ slogan (Venstre, 2017a; Venstre, 2017b) since 2013. This slogan, which had its first entrance in the political stage in 2001 as unemployment gained increasing focus with rising unemployment numbers in Denmark, has now been pulled out of the drawers anew. First uttered on the Danish political stage by Anders Fogh Rasmussen (Schwalbe, 2014), then Prime Minister and chairman of the Danish conservative political party Venstre, this slogan has since then had its official comeback in 2013, as then chairman of Venstre, Lars Løkke Rasmussen adopted these very same words at Venstre's 2013 party conference. This slogan has since stood front in Venstre's labor market policy as well as having been present in many of Venstre's communicative outlets since 2013, including its central role in Venstre's electoral campaign of 2015, (Routhe, 2015). The Danish population has thus, since LLR's speech at the 2013 party conference, heard and read this slogan in speeches, official statements, press comments, campaign posters and commercials, as well as in Venstre's webpage and different social media pages.

The slogan in itself represents a string of statements and arguments by Venstre which all contribute to the unemployment discourse to which Venstre has made many contributions since 2013. Whilst Venstre's unemployment discourse has retained strong focus on the consequences of unemployment on the Danish economy and welfare, it has also lead to a

¹ Originally "*det skal kunne betale sig at arbejde*" (Venstre, 2017a; Venstre, 2017b)

string of statements regarding the unemployed which has sparked an interest in understanding how the identity of the unemployed citizens of Denmark is constructed through Venstre's communication in the "working must pay off" campaign.

Hence, this thesis will look into and seek to answer the following research question as stated below.

3.1. Research question

How are the unemployed citizens of Denmark and their relation to the Danish society portrayed through Venstre's unemployment discourse related to the "Working must pay off" campaign?

The above research question is sought answered through the use of theory on discourse analysis based on the work of Fairclough as well as Laclau and Mouffe, and supplemented with theory on delegitimization which has been found relevant in terms of understanding the effects of the unemployment discourse on the unemployed citizens of Denmark.

It is important to note that this thesis has no political nor ideological agenda, but simply seeks to objectively analyze and discuss how the identity of the unemployed citizens of Denmark is constructed through discourse. It is not the intention to evaluate how the unemployed should be portrayed, or how the unemployed or politicians should act. The purpose of this thesis is solely to seek answers as to how the unemployed citizens of Denmark and their relation to society are portrayed in Venstre's unemployment discourse through communicative events related to the "working must pay off" campaign. Through the use of preexisting knowledge of authors and theorists whom have contributed to the field of discourse analysis and unemployment politics, this thesis will try to reach new knowledge on the unemployment discourse by combining this preexisting knowledge with a thorough analysis and discussion of some of Venstre's most contemporary contributions to this discourse.

3.2. Delimitations

I have chosen to limit this thesis on certain aspects. This thesis will first and foremost be delimited to solely treating Venstre's unemployment discourse in relation to the "working must pay off" campaign, although it admittedly only provides a small snippet of the overall unemployment discourse which has taken place in the Danish political stage. Different communicative events such as criticisms, comments, debates and counter-campaigns from relevant and influential entities have taken place since 2013 which adds to the overall unemployment discourse in Denmark. Although these communicative events are very relevant elements to include in order to get a more complete picture of the unemployment discourse in Denmark, it has been deemed relevant to delimit the scope of this thesis to ensure that the work is sufficiently thorough, allowing for a more in-depth qualitative analysis and discussion.

Another area of delimitation is within the use of theory. Although discursive psychology could have been used as a theoretical tool to gain an understanding of discourse and its use on a more individual level (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 7), it would defeat the purpose of the research question, which is to understand the effects of Venstre's unemployment discourse on the identity of the unemployed citizens in Denmark as a whole, rather than understand its effects on the individual use of communication on a daily basis. Instead, this thesis will draw mainly on the work of Fairclough as well as Laclau and Mouffe to reach a better understanding of the wider results of the "working must pay off" campaign.

As mentioned in the introduction, the "working must pay off" slogan and unemployment as a key political issue aren't new phenomena, but have occurred previously in Danish political history. This does of course have potential contextual effects on the unemployment discourse since Venstre's newest campaign had its beginning. Yet, the contextual effects have been deemed minimal to the point of having less relevance to the more recent resurgence of the unemployment discourse in Danish politics, and so it will not be diverged on in this thesis.

4. Theory

The purpose of this thesis will be to answer the research question above, by analyzing the relevant discourses and their political context to gain insight in Venstre's unemployment discourse, which will ultimately be the base for the discussion of its possible effects on the identity of the unemployed and their relation to society. For this purpose, the thesis will be based on the theory and methodology of Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth "CDA"), as well as Laclau and Mouffe's Discourse Theory (henceforth "DT") which includes concepts on hegemony, politics and identity. Throughout the thesis, other concepts based on other theorists, such as Chiara Volpato's concept of delegitimization, will also be used.

Although many theorists have contributed to the field of discourse analysis, the theories used have specifically been chosen as they effectively enable the answering of the research question. This thesis will mainly make use of Fairclough's CDA, as it provides a comprehensive and explicit method for analyzing communicative events and their context by combining the analysis of the communicative event on a textual level, with an analysis of the discursive and social practice which function as a context to the communicative event.

Another reason for combining the mentioned theories is that whilst Fairclough's CDA does provide some theoretical insight into the term of discursive power, CDA can be considered quite vague when it comes to understanding identity (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 35). This is where DT is able to complement CDA, as DT provides a more politically-oriented interest, using the concepts of identity and antagonism as crucial concepts that contribute to understanding how groups and individuals are attributed certain identities through discourse (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 152). To gain a wider understanding of the effects of discourse on society, this thesis will also make use of Laclau and Mouffe's DT. Yet, in terms of producing an actual discourse analysis, Fairclough's CDA provides an explicit and more comprehensive method where DT seems to lack this (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 24).

What these theories have in common are their roots within social constructionism, their structuralist and poststructuralist viewpoints on language, as well as their Marxist-inspired

understanding of the individual (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 3). They do, however, have different viewpoints on certain assumptions and concepts, which will be examined later in this chapter.

Following a hermeneutic approach, this thesis will thus be based on social constructionism, and make use of both Fairclough's CDA, which will function as both an analytical framework, as well as use the different concepts and tools from both Fairclough's CDA as well as Laclau & Mouffe's DT.

Although a combination of theories is usually a risky territory to enter, this choice has been made to ensure an analysis that not only covers the scope of analyzing the communicative events, and their social contexts, but also delves more deeply into the discourses which are created and upheld and the effect they have on identity. Jørgensen & Phillips (2002: 4) argue that elements of different theories can be combined to fulfill the scope of the analysis, as long as the philosophical, theoretical and methodological differences and similarities are taken into account, which is arguably the case here.

The chosen approaches are similar in some aspects, but do diverge on certain assumptions, which will be dealt with below. It is important to notice that the chapter on theory will not be completely exhaustive, as both Fairclough's as well as Laclau and Mouffe's theories are very extensive, but will aim to include what is deemed necessary for the thesis to be theoretically well-grounded, as well as include what is deemed relevant in order to fulfill the scope of the thesis.

4.1. Social constructionism

As mentioned above, the chosen theories both share and diverge on certain assumptions (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 6). The chosen approaches are similar in terms of them both having a point of departure in social constructionism, as well as their views on language, drawing on structuralism and poststructuralism, and their view of the individual based on Marxism (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 3).

Their common roots in social constructionism, more specifically “macro social constructionism”, means the acknowledgement of language as a constructive element, but also as an element which is affected and constructed by social structures and relations, as well as institutionalized practices (Burr, 2003: 22). This form of social constructionism has its distinguishing feature in its focus on power (Burr, 2003: 25). Fairclough’s CDA as well as Laclau and Mouffe’s DT build on this basic premise of power as well as sharing other central aspects that constitute macro social constructionism (henceforth “social constructionism”):

First is the relativistic and critical position on knowledge and the capacity to reach objective truth, which is a consequence of the process we go through when trying to reach it. As our reality can only be reached through our own categorization and created meanings, the ‘truth’ will simply be a reflection of these. In other words, our knowledge and reality are created by our language and social processes, and it is through these that we create our reality and on which we build knowledge. Social constructionism thus remains critical towards produced knowledge and representations of the world (including communicative events), arguing that they are not objective reflections of the reality, but a result of our own flawed knowledge as it is affected by our ways of categorizing the world – our discourses. This also applies for this thesis, as this premise essentially admits that this work in itself is a product of my limited and flawed knowledge of the truth.

Likewise, it is through language that representations of objects and identities are created. Depending on what meaning a discourse gives an entity, it creates certain expectations and prompts different actions. Discourse is thus seen as a contributing element in the constitution and change of the social space, as it helps produce, maintain and change social relations, identities, social structures and patterns (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 17).

This results in another assumption: that our knowledge and social processes, as well as discourse and discourse analysis are historically and culturally contingent. We as humans are in essence “*historical and cultural beings*” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 5), which makes our knowledge about the world temporally situated and contextually affected. This means that our knowledge is not static but changes over time, and is affected by the historical and cultural context we find ourselves in at the given time (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 5). This

consequently implies that social relations and social systems, identities, and subject meanings are neither static nor universally true, but are a product of discursive and social construction and are constantly in flux.

This also has implications for this thesis, given that the thesis itself is also simply a product of its historical and cultural context, and thus cannot be seen as universally and permanently true, but simply as a product of its time. Thus, to understand an object, in this case, the communicative events analyzed in this thesis, it is necessary to analyze both the communicative event in itself, as well as the historical and cultural contexts, including other discourses that surround the communicative event, as these are the elements that create the systems of knowledge which affect the communicative event.

This assumption also has social consequences as different knowledge and understanding of social processes and structures leads to different social cues and actions. This also goes for discourse, as it results in both discourse being affected by this, as well as the reception of a discourse always having different results, depending on the context and audience. As previously mentioned, language and discourse go hand in hand, as language is a constructing element of the social world, including identity, relations and actions, and a change in language, or discourse, thus leads to change within the social realm, which, in turn, leads to change in discourse (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 17). Likewise, this thesis is also contingent in time and context, and thus, it should be acknowledged that its conclusions are a result hereof. This also creates certain premises for the individual carrying out a study, as the analysis and discussion should be made with conscious consideration of how the historical and social context of the author may affect the result, but also how the interpretation of the communicative event can never be considered completely objective, or representative of the objective truth. Likewise, how the author of the analysis may respond to and understand a discourse may be very different than that of other individuals, depending on their context.

Discourse is thus to be seen as both a constituting entity, but also an entity that is constituted and affected by its context (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 1). The social space - our world in terms of social relations and structures - is constructed and affected by social interaction and discourse, whilst it, at the same time, also affects social interaction and

discourse in a constant “circular process” – or ‘dialectic’ relation. In other words, there is an assumption that knowledge, discourse and social process are mutually constituting and constituted in a constantly revolving process. With this follows the element of human “intervention” – human individuals are seen as producers of discourse, and through this, also the producers of social and cultural change. When committing an act of communication, humans produce new discourse by drawing on elements from other discourses, and thus function as agents of discursive and cultural change (Fairclough, 1989: 172). Conversely, individuals are also considered limited by the discourses which act as frameworks, so that the opportunities for action and discourse are restricted. This in itself creates certain premises as to how acts of communication are to be analyzed, but also as to how an analysis of this is to be carried out, and what can be expected of the analysis itself in terms of objective truth.

4.2. Discourse Theory

As previously mentioned, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s Discourse Theory has also contributed to discourse analysis, with focus on the concepts of power struggle, limitations, identity and how these are constructed and affected by discourse. DT takes the form of a macro-oriented theory with the aim of shedding light on social phenomena and power, rather than creating analytical tools. Burr (2003: 22-23) notes that DT not only carries the social constructionist assumptions, but also focuses on looking critically at discourse and the contexts that surround discourse. It is however important to note that whilst DT agrees on the assumption that discourse is a main constituent of identity and social practice, it does not consider discourse and social practice to be in a dialectic relationship as does CDA, but instead only considers discourse to be a constituting element of social practice (Boréus & Bergström, 2017: 222)

Moreover, Laclau and Mouffe put focus on discourse as having a purpose, which is to achieve hegemony by dominating the discursive field and eliminating differences in meaning, thus structuring meaning and social space as the sender sees appropriate. Discourse analysis is therefore seen as a deconstruction of these attempts, and a tool for revealing the hegemonic discourse and exposing the structures and meanings that are taken

for granted and show how these structures have social consequences, which are ultimately a result of discourse (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 47-48).

Laclau and Mouffe's DT sees identity as relationally organized. In their words, identity of any subject *"is something because it is contrasted with something that it is not."* (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 43). They remain critical towards traditional structuralism's view of the individual as an autonomous subject and reject the idea that collective identities such as classes and groups are determined and created by economic factors. Instead, they are seen as determined just as other subjects – through discourse (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 40-41). This also entails that subject identities are never permanently fixed, but in constant flux, constructed and changing through discourse. This has consequences for subjects, both static and living individuals. In Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory the concept of "subject position" is used to describe how subjects are to be seen as positions in discourses. Any denomination of an individual or group of individuals contributes to their identity and their expected, possible, and undesirable actions and statements. In other words, discourses are what define positions for people to attain as subjects and their expected courses of action (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002: 40). Subject identity is hence considered nonexistent until it is articulated - addressed and verbalized in discourse. Here, it is also important to consider DT's pluralistic view on identities by considering subjects to be: *"fragmented and constituted in several different subject positions"* (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 46). Subjects are simply not to be considered as having only one identity, one desirable trait and one course of expected action, but instead they have multiple identities depending on which discourse they are present in, to which specific expectations are also created and decided through the discourse. As an individual, I may be unemployed and have one set of expected actions to fulfill in the context of the job market, but I may also be a parent, a patient, a guest, a voter and have many other identities and courses of action which pertain to a specific social and discursive domain.

4.2.1. Power, antagonism and hegemony

Limitations and expectations also affect discourse in itself, as it is considered a social practice. Thus, discourse is also subject to social rules and norms dictating who can say what,

when, where and what can be expressed within that given context. It is important to note that Laclau and Mouffe seem to believe in a higher degree of contingency, as opposed to CDA which sees contingency as more restricted. DT considers meaning to be in a constant flux which cannot be permanently fixated (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 20). Of course most social constructionists, including Laclau and Mouffe do retain that the social field is quite rule-bound and regulative. Even though knowledge and identities are contingent in theory, they are in reality rather inflexible depending on context (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 6).

The possibility for change in meaning is however still present and leaves some room for change in society thus prompting a power struggle as different discourses fight to change this meaning. This notion of subject identities and meanings being changeable and constituted through discourse leads to the concept of 'antagonism'. In simple terms, antagonism can be described as the failed differences that appear in what is a system of differences. Discourse thus becomes an attempt to fix the failure, and creating meaning by mending the differences (Boréus & Bergström, 2017: 215). Antagonism is dissolved through hegemony, as one discourse 'wins' through dominating the discursive field, appearing as the objective reality and pushing away alternative meanings, positions, and identities. Hegemony in itself defies the concept of contingency, as it represents a fixation of meaning. However, any fixation will always be momentary and subject to challenge by new emerging discourses and meanings.

4.2.2. Method

As previously mentioned, one main difference between Fairclough's CDA and Laclau and Mouffe's DT is the distinction between discursive and non-discursive practice. DT considers all social practices (e.g. institutions, hierarchical structures etc.) as well as objects, like, say the clothing and styling of the politicians holding the speech, to be discursive. Laclau and Mouffe simply see no dialectical interaction between discourse and other levels of practices, and discourse is seen as wholly constitutive of our world (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 19). Analyzing discourse based on Laclau and Mouffe's DT can thus be quite challenging compared to Fairclough's CDA, as they provide no clear methodological guidelines that can be used to analyze the relationship between the different practices. Fairclough's CDA instead

distinguishes between discursive and non-discursive dimensions and acknowledges the dialectic relationship between these, resulting in a more complex methodology, which does however provide actual methodological guidelines (Fairclough, 1992: 64). Methodologically, Laclau and Mouffe do not present a set of schematized courses of action, but instead provide different tools that can be selected and combined as is seen fit for the scope of the analysis (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 152). These tools are built on the basis of specific concepts like “discourse, “articulation” and “hegemony” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 35 & 49). The different tools, and their associated concepts, which have been found relevant for the scope of this analysis will now be presented.

4.2.2.1. Signs and meanings

Inspired by Saussure, Laclau and Mouffe’s DT uses the metaphor of our world of knowledge and meaning as being like a fishing-net of signs, where the discourses are a tool for defining meaning within the net. The “knots” of the net represent the “key signifiers”, which gain their meaning in their difference from other signs and in their relation to each other. Key signifiers help in the organization of meaning, but differentiate themselves in their scope: “nodal points” organize discourses, whilst “master signifiers” organize identity, and “myths” organize social space. The scope of using these concepts in analysis is to understand how discourse, identity and social space are constructed and maintained through discourse (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 50). The goal of a discourse (in order to achieve hegemony) is thus to designate meaning to these key signifiers (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 26), as the signs in themselves are “void” and have no meaning by themselves, but retain their meaning from surrounding signs, and by being articulated and differentiated from other signs. Signs can achieve and contribute to meaning for other signs by being grouped together, thus giving meaning to the key signifiers which they are linked to, forming a “chain of equivalence”. To identify the meaning of these signs, one must thus understand their connection with other signs. It is important to point back to the concept of contingency; Laclau and Mouffe acknowledge that structures do exist, as the fishing net acts as a metaphor for the structure of signs and meaning. Yet, as previously mentioned, they define

that structure, just like meaning, can never be permanently fixed, but are always temporary and constantly changing.

4.2.2.2. Identity

As previously mentioned, identity, according to Laclau and Mouffe, is not a static thing, but a moldable construction. An individual is also made up of different identities which are pertinent to the context in which the individual finds himself/herself. This decentralized view of identity carries over to group identity, as an individual can partake in multiple groups, without them necessarily contradicting one another, e.g. pertaining to the group of males, the group of fathers, and the group of right-wing supporters (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 44). Group formation is supposed to be understood as “*a reduction of possibilities*” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 44), where discourse acts as the process which fights to assign people to a group, putting forward certain possibilities of identification whilst others are left out through chains of equivalence. An example would be articulating the identities of the unemployed versus the employed, leaving out other identities, either different or simply more nuanced, such as ‘part-time employed’, or ‘chronically ill’ which would offer a different identity to those who are otherwise simply part of the group of employed or unemployed. Group formation may obscure the differences that exist within certain groups, or divide individuals based on certain premises, when certain individuals may either have more in common between those from the “other” groups, or may not perceive the given group label as relevant to them as individuals and/or as a group (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 44). Laclau and Mouffe attribute this occurrence to politics, claiming it to be a result of the simplification that can occur within the political space. Laclau and Mouffe coined this concept the ‘logic of equivalence’ and emphasize the polarity that this occurrence can ultimately lead to – where two single, very simplified identity groups are polarized. Conversely, an act of minimizing simplification, which results in a more nuanced division of identity can also occur, an incidence that Laclau and Mouffe have coined the ‘logic of difference’ (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 44-45; Laclau & Mouffe, 2001: 130). As different discourses “battle” to construct, maintain or change identities, thus either reinforcing the polarization, or a more nuanced division of identities, these discourses also engage in a struggle towards cementing these.

This gives the two concepts an important role in the concept of hegemony, as they emphasize the struggle which discourses engage in in order to achieve dominance. This struggle, or “antagonism”, towards achieving hegemony, is a central concept in DT and a struggle that according to Laclau and Mouffe, pervades the social, and, thus, also the political space (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 46-47). From a theoretical point of view, the antagonistic struggle arises from the previously mentioned concept of meanings as being never fully finalized and stable, but always fought over. Temporarily fixated meanings, or “moments” stipulated by a discourse can thus be contested by other discourses, turning these moments into “elements” by contesting them and making them available to change (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 47). From a political point of view, it is observed that antagonism takes place as discourses naturally fight to achieve hegemony, thus moving towards a polarization of meaning, identities and social rules.

Hence, hegemony is the concept of the state discourses strive to achieve, as it represents the stabilization of power, as other possible meanings are excluded and other discourses are undermined, whilst one discourse achieves singular domination in the fixation of meaning, thus terminating the antagonism (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 48). In terms of political logic, hegemony enforces consensus, not through the use of coercive power, but through persuasion. To understand the social consequences of discourse, it is therefore necessary to look at hegemony as it represents the possibilities that are excluded and the meanings that are rejected (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001: 131)

4.2.3. Criticism

To create the best premises for the thesis, this chapter includes relevant points of criticism which have been taken into account throughout the process of writing this thesis. To avoid redundancy, certain points of criticism that may apply for both DT and CDA will be explained only once.

One point of criticism is not turned towards DT specifically, but towards the combination of DT with CDA. As mentioned above, the lack in methodology of DT has led to the decision of combining CDA and DT in a unified analytical process, borrowing from the methodology of

both theories. According to Jørgensen and Phillips (2002: 4), the nature of social constructionism and the quite similar assumptions of the chosen theories arguably justifies doing so. Mixing and combining is even encouraged (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 4), as it allows the creation of an analytical process that fits the scope of the study. Although this gives certain freedom, it does compromise the validity of the analysis, as the methodological process is thus construed to fit the purpose of the study, and may not represent an objective analysis. The very assumption of social constructionism is that human knowledge is flawed and subjective, and the mix of theories can thus not be considered completely objective. This thesis has been written with this in mind, and does not claim absolute validity, but strives to reach validity as much as possible through transparency. This is sought achieved through explicitly mentioning which elements of the different theories have been used and how, explicating why the analyzed communicative events in this thesis have been chosen, as well as acknowledging and explicating my own possible bias as has been done in the chapter on motivation, so as to allow the reader to evaluate the process and its validity (Kvale, 1997: 235-237).

Looking specifically at DT, one main point of criticism is the lack of looking beyond the discourse in itself. Although DT does look at social practices, it is only to the extent of seeing social practices as a discursive element. DT considers discourse to constitute the social space, but does not see discourse as constituted by the social space. This is where Fairclough differs, as he makes a clear distinction between textual, discursive and social practices, understanding them as different entities which function in a dialectic relation – being constituted and affected by, as well as constituting and affecting each other at the same time. Laclau and Mouffe's DT fails to look beyond the language-centered approach; everything can be regarded as a communicative event, and the social space can only be seen and analyzed from a textual point of view. In terms of understanding communicative events and discourse, DT does however provide relevant tools that can be used to analyze communicative events, and, from that, come to conclusions on what effects discourses have on social practice.

4.3. Critical Discourse Theory

Norman Fairclough bases his work on the aspect of communicative events in the form of both spoken and written texts and visual cues, and the analysis of how discourse both shapes and is shaped by society, with a focus on critically exploring and mapping power relations within society and, through this, be able to find opportunities for social change (Jørgensen & Phillips, 1999: 11). Fairclough argues that, by studying language, it is possible to both describe and interpret representations as well as to explain the development of social relationships and the structures that affect individuals, like power relations (Fairclough, 1992: 26). Central points of focus in CDA are thus the concepts of 'injustice' and 'taken for granted' structures, rules and boundaries that discourse creates.

Like Laclau and Mouffe's DT, CDA sees discourses as a tool for constructing common truths and through which we compete about what is true and false. Similarly, the natural occurrence of what is considered right and wrong in terms of social actions are also a result of this premise – certain acts evolve to be considered acceptable and even natural, whilst others are deemed incorrect and unethical as a result of discourse. Rules, acts and social patterns are simply taken for granted, and truth and ethics may become obscured through discourse. This results in different discourses pointing towards different acts, or courses of action, as possible and appropriate (Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002: 9). True to the social constructionist ideology, this issue is what Fairclough takes a stance against and seeks to rectify through CDA – as the analysis is carried out, rules, structures and patterns that may be overlooked or ignored are brought to light, and through that, they may be changed.

Similar to DT, Fairclough's CDA conceptualizes discourse as constitutive of the social space. Where Fairclough diverges is the notion that discourse is only one of multiple elements that constitute social practice – which creates the basis for his three-dimensional model that is the CDA – consisting of textual, discursive and social practice. In CDA, theory and method are intertwined, and provide both a theoretical model as well as specific methodological guidelines for how to approach a research domain as well as give specific techniques for analysis (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 4).

Fairclough's CDA acknowledges the active role of discourse in the construction of the social world. Yet, unlike Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory does not distinguish between discursive and non-discursive practices (see below), Fairclough claims the communicative event to be just one of the many aspects of discourse. In terms of ideology, this shows clear cohesion between Fairclough's CDA and Marxism, and Fairclough is less poststructuralist compared to Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 7).

Furthermore, Fairclough agrees on the notion that communicative events do not neutrally reflect society, identities and social relations, but actively create and affect these (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 1). Likewise, individuals are seen as both dependent on, and constructors of language. This in itself creates certain premises as to how a communicative event in the form of a speech, text, commercial, or any act of communication is to be analyzed, but also creates certain premises as to how an analysis of this is to be carried out, and what can be expected of the analysis itself in terms of objective truth (see above).

Where Laclau and Mouffe, as previously mentioned, see discourse and social space as changeable and contingent, Fairclough remains partially critical towards this concept. Although Fairclough's CDA focuses on social change (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 64), he also argues for disparity in power and inequality between subjects as some groups or subjects are less able to change opinions and identity through discourse. Especially ethnicity, gender and social class are considered crucial determinates to the constraint that certain subjects and groups are met with (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 54-55). Contingency is thus a concept that is also part of Fairclough's theory, yet the idea of complete contingency is rejected.

Rules about what acts are considered relevant and appropriate, or irrelevant and inappropriate also apply to discourses, as each given discourse-domain has specific discourses that are deemed relevant and possible within a domain. Fairclough uses the term "order of discourse" to explain this phenomenon (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 27 & 56). In this case, the domain of unemployment politics (hereafter "unemployment discourse"), represents an order of discourse and sets certain boundaries on how and what is relevant and appropriate to communicate.

4.3.1. Method

Fairclough's CDA provides a complete frame of methodology for analyzing discourse, with focus on both linguistic and societal analysis. The analytical model is to be seen as an analytical frame for doing empirical analysis and can be used for any type of communicative event. Discourses are defined as any communicative event in the form of text, oral utterance or visual cue, discursive practice such as the production, distribution and consumption of a communicative event, and social practice as the overall social context of which the communicative event is a part of. Carrying out an analysis with this method should result in an interpretation of discourse and its effects on identity and social space as well as an analysis of societal effects on discourse. Fairclough describes this as reading between the lines through the use of context. As seen on the Fairclough's model on "*Dimensions of Discourse and Discourse Analysis*" (appendix 1), the dimensions of discourse analysis are intertwined, as the process analysis and societal analysis are based on both the textual, discursive and social practice, whilst the discursive practice is the "link" between textual and social practice (Fairclough, 1992: 72).

For the sake of making a logical and cohesive explanation of the three dimensions and how they relate to each other, they have been explained in the order of micro- to macro analysis, with textual dimension first, then discursive practice and finally social practice. This is also given that the textual dimension is part of the discursive practice which is then part of social practice which contextually encompasses the two first dimensions. When carrying out the analysis, it is however crucial that the context is known and understood in order to carry out a comprehensive textual and discursive analysis. The actual analysis will thus commence with analyzing the social practice, before analyzing the discursive practice and then lastly analyzing the actual communicative event on a textual level.

In terms of choosing the communicative events to analyze, only a few key materials will be used and analyzed in depth. CDA contains many of the methodological tools appropriate for qualitative research, making this most adequate for working on few key communicative events and with a focus on in-depth analysis. The nature of the qualitative analysis does however inherently lead to only one or very few communicative events being analyzed,

which does limit the possibility of cross-referencing instances to discover possible tendencies. It does however allow for a deeper understanding of individuals instances.

4.3.1.1. Textual practice

As previously mentioned, also communicative events both shape and are shaped by social practice. In practice, this means that the communicative event is where social practices become visible, and can be found through textual analysis, although it cannot be done alone, but only through a combination of all three analytical dimensions. The textual dimension thus involves analyzing the concrete utterances and visual cues of a communicative event to find specific formal features with the intention of uncovering the properties of the different elements which can then be combined with the contextual elements. As previously mentioned, it is important to take into account the fact that communicative events are a product of the senders' intentions, knowledge, as well as societal and historical context. Other elements that may also affect the final communicative event include: order of discourse, the emotional status of the sender (in the cases where the communicative even is not previously prepared for the specific occasion), as well as the political or interpersonal status of the speaker. Moreover, it should be considered that the interpretation of the communicative event will always reflect the social relation and discursive practice of the person interpreting it, thus resulting in different interpretations (Fairclough, 1992: 74). Although these elements can be considered contextual in nature, these elements are more easily recognized after the social and discursive practice has been analyzed. These elements will thus be analyzed as part of the textual analysis and discussion.

For the textual analysis, Fairclough provides a set of concepts and categories that can all be used for this purpose. These elements have the purpose of singling out textual features of the communicative event that can be used for the further analysis of social practice. Here, it is important to notice that not all must be used, and that there should be a conscious selection of the elements that are considered appropriate for the specific analysis, its purpose and context (Fairclough, 1992: 73; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 88). To meet the goal of understanding how the unemployed are portrayed and the potential effects of that, this thesis will include the following categories and underlying concepts described below. The

explications in this chapter are minimal, and will be further explained as they are used in the analysis.

Vocabulary

The first concepts are related to the choice of words, including “word meaning”, which is used to analyze how certain words are given a specific meaning in certain contexts (Fairclough, 1992: 185), and “wording” which focuses on the choice of words – on how certain words are used instead of others to describe something - an act, a subject, or a situation. Looking at wording sheds light on which words are used instead of others, whether new words are invented in this communicative act, and whether specific words are used in connection with specific objects, individuals, and acts, whether the sender makes extreme use of certain words or unusual words (“overwording”) or makes references to other events or discourses (“intertextuality”), or whether the sender is rewording another event or term to give it new meaning (Fairclough, 1992: 77; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 95).

Grammar

An analysis of “grammar” deals with how words are combined into sentences, and may reveal underlying meaning which reflects the values and biases of the sender. Grammar overarches a wide group of concepts such as agency, modality, nominalizations, active and passive voice, transitivity, as well as coordination and subordination of complex sentences.

“Transitivity” explains how events are discursively connected with subjects and objects to determine if and how certain relational patterns and worldviews are construed. This includes the analysis of active and passive voice, which shows where the focus is placed within the discourse, and how reality is construed by the sender (Fairclough, 1992: 77, 75 & 176-177).

“Modality”, shows the relational values in a communicative event, as it shows the sender’s attitude towards a given object, subject or the world in general. Modality is expressed in various ways, partly through the use of modal verbs, nouns, adjective and verbs to express, say, willingness, certainty, necessity, possibility, obligation and ability (Cambridge Dictionary, 2017). Modality can also be expressed through sentence modalities such as declaratives and

imperative, as well as through relational modality by using personal pronouns to express belonging or identity such as “we” and “us” or “you” and “I” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 83-84).

Rhetoric and persuasion

To better understand how the communicative events are used to persuade the audience of its veracity, thus bettering the chances of achieving hegemony, the classic appeal forms, Ethos, Logos and Pathos, as well as the use of speech acts, will be looked at (Gabrielsen & Christiansen, 2010: 105-106). In connection with logos, the analysis will also look at how argumentation is used to achieve favor in the formation of the identity of the unemployed (Boréus & Bergström, 2017: 53-54). Force of utterance is used to explain the type of speech act used in the communicative event, e.g. threats, promises, requests, again revealing how a communicative event is formed to persuade the receivers to accept it (Fairclough, 1992: 75).

The identities of the entities referred to in communicative events, in this case the unemployed as well as other entities, are seen as created and affected by discourse; hence the concept of “delegitimization” can be deemed relevant as it provides an explanation as to how rhetoric, including argumentation and modality, can be used for this purpose. Building on Daniel Bar-Tal’s theoretical work on delegitimization, Volpato explains the process of delegitimization as a “*categorization of groups into extreme social categories which are ultimately excluded from society*” (Volpato et al., 2010: 172-273) and identifies specific delegitimizing strategies, which will in this thesis be used to better understand the results of the textual analysis.

4.3.1.2. Discursive practice

When analyzing the discursive practice, the textual aspects of the communicative event in itself is still the focus of the analysis, but the objective here is to find the relationship between the communicative event and its social practice by analyzing the different aspects of its production, distribution and consumption, and analyzing how aspects of social practice are manifested in the communicative event. The discourse dimension is thus less text-oriented, but still requires analyzing elements that are pertaining to the communicative

event – such as whether it is an actual written text, a speech given in public, or a televised speech. The elements of production, distribution and consumption differ from event to event and have a critical effect on the resulting perception of the communicative event, and thus its effect on social structures – the social practice (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 61).

Relating to the concept of contingency, it is here important to point out that Fairclough's opinion on contingency is limited due to societal structure, and thus not all individuals are considered equal in terms of gaining access to discourse, both in terms of its production, distribution, and consumption. This adds an important view on how the production, distribution and consumption are to be analyzed and how discursive struggle, and ultimately hegemony, is to be understood. Different discourses may partake in the battle towards hegemonic power, yet they cannot be analyzed on their own without considering social practice, and the role of social structures and the status and capabilities of the individuals and groups that partake in the discursive battle.

4.3.1.3. Social practice

The third element, social practice, involves seeing the communicative event as part of a larger context, interpreting and explaining larger historical, cultural and social discourses in their contexts. In practice, this involves an analysis of the non-discursive aspects, which allows the communicative event to be seen in a larger context, and see how the context affects and shapes the communicative event (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 61-62).

For the purpose of contributing to answering the research question, as well as touching upon the context that is relevant to the communicative events that will be analyzed, this thesis will focus on Venstre's labor and unemployment politics. Building on the idea that all discourses draw on other discourses, that meanings are only feasible when put in relation to other meanings, and that discourses and their context exist in a dialectic relationship with each other, we can conclude that each discourse has a vast context and a wide array of elements that affect it. This presents a challenge, as it would entail analyzing massive amounts of sociocultural and historical data along with many discourses and meanings that may have varying degrees of relevance to the analyzed communicative event(s), in order to

ensure complete validity. To ensure the maximum possible level of validity this thesis will encompass as much as is possible within the given restraints on time and writing space, but be limited to contain only the elements that are deemed most relevant for the scope of this thesis.

4.3.2. Criticism

Social constructionism sees language (both written, spoken and visual) to have multiple modes of representation and language can therefore result in different meanings depending on the context in which it is situated. The different status and temporal situation of the individual recipient, or the temporal and sociocultural context of the given communicative event affects the meaning created by the event, and so, the same event may result in different meanings to the individual or group of individuals experiencing it (Fairclough 2003: 8; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 35). The reliability of studies using discourse analysis is thus typically hard to deem as being high. Especially bias is an element to consider when looking at the reliability, given that the researcher may consciously or even unconsciously misinterpret data in order to reach the results that he or she hoped to find. This does present an issue considering that an analysis can never take all the individual recipients and their contexts into account when carrying out an analysis, but must of necessity limit the analysis to the individual context of the communicative event. To secure the highest possible level of reliability, it is thus imperative that choices and analyses are made with a conscious thought of this flaw, and that these flaws are explicitly accounted for to show knowledge and awareness of this issue. Likewise, to prevent unreliability, the study should remain critical of the sources used and the choices made (Fairclough, 1989: 167). Jørgensen & Phillips see “order of discourse” (see above), as a way to delimit the choice, by limiting focus to a single order of discourse. Conveniently, by looking at one single domain, it is also possible to better understand if and where a particular discourse is dominant, on what point the different discourses engage in struggle, and which assumptions are shared between the discourses (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 142).

Likewise, although Fairclough provides guidelines for the analysis for the different dimensions mentioned, there are no fixed guidelines to separate the social and discursive

analysis. According to Fairclough, there is a dialectic relation between the social and discursive practice, meaning that these two dimensions, and the analysis of these two, are at the same time affected by each other as well as reliant on each other for the creation of meaning. However, he fails to give a satisfactory specification as to how these two dimensions are in a dialectic relation. As a result, for the actual analysis, there is no clear division between these two, and the analysis risks becoming blurred, often pertaining to both, without clearly pertaining to either one. Furthermore, it can be difficult to discern how inclusive the social analysis should be (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 101). This raises questions such as: How far back should the analysis go historically? What contextual dimensions are relevant and necessary? How deeply should these contexts be analyzed? Fairclough suggests leaving questions like these for the one carrying out the analysis, which could result in the choice being biased by the knowledge, agenda and preexisting opinions of that individual (see above).

4.5. Part conclusion

The mentioned theorists and theories have been chosen with the purpose of answering the given research questions. Although the theorists do diverge on some aspects, they mainly agree on the central premises mentioned, and each provides elements which should aid in the process of analyzing discourse and help fulfill the scope of this thesis. Given that the theories both serve the same main purpose of analyzing discourse, each having its own advantages, they will be used collectively, with CDA functioning as the main frame for discourse analysis, and DT providing additionally relevant tools and concepts. The thesis will follow a hermeneutic approach, relying on social constructionism as the main theory of knowledge and the given theories and premises by Fairclough and Laclau and Mouffe.

5. Social practice

5.1. Venstre on unemployment politics

In Denmark, the party Venstre² is one of the two major political parties of Denmark and represents the conservative wing. In the 21st century Venstre has been elected for three consecutive periods in 2001, 2005 and 2007, with Anders Fogh Rasmussen elected as prime minister, as well as recently in 2015 with Lars Løkke Rasmussen elected as prime minister, and has in these periods made many legislative changes in Danish labor market policies which all point towards a specific view on the individual and responsibility. Remaining true to the position on the conservative wing, Venstre has maintained a mainly conservative liberal ideology across the spectrum of political issues, including the labor market and unemployment although also heavily driven by the Scandinavian Welfare Model which dictates a comprehensive welfare state (Rostbøl et al., 2013: 3).

2001 marked the first year of a series of changes within the Danish labor policy and unemployment politics, under the lead of Venstre, with Anders Fogh Rasmussen as Prime Minister. The changes were partially cosmetic, as “arbejdsmarkedspolitik”, which translates to “labor market policy” changed to “beskæftigelsespolitik” which translates to “employment policy”. This in itself marks a change, as this modification in terminology signaled a shift in focus from the labor market as a whole, to the employment in itself. This signaled less focus on the companies in the Danish labor market, the potential to create more jobs and eliminate the barriers that hindered entering the labor market, and more on the manpower which the individual citizen holds, and seeing them as an asset that needed to be pushed into the labor market (Jørgensen 2008, 10). With this also came changes which signaled a shift from a demand-focused policy with the goal of creating new jobs to heighten demand and pull citizens into jobs, into a supply-focused policy, where the goal was to activate the resources available and “pushing” them into the labour market by ensuring they were at the disposal of the companies in need (Torfing 2003: 235; Jørgensen 2010: 21, Larsen & Andersen 2009: 15). As a result, equality policies, welfare policies and income

² Full name: Venstre, Liberal Party of Denmark.

distribution policies were put on the backburner, as employment policies was heavily relied on as the area which was necessary to work on to ensure a viable economy and a thriving society.

In 2002, the government, composed of Venstre and Det Konservative Folkeparti, created the political agreement “Flere I arbejde” with agreement from Socialdemokraterne, Dansk Folkeparti, Det Radikale Venstre and Kristeligt Folkeparti. The main goals of this agreement were, amongst others, to shift focus from the labor market to the unemployed, through encouraging job-hunting and dedicated activation processes aimed at reintroducing the unemployed to the labor market (Beskæftigelsesministeriet, 2017a).

Official statements from the government on unemployment included: “*making it more attractive to undergo education and get a job*” with the reasoning being that it is both in the interest of the individual and society as a whole (Beskæftigelsesministeriet, 2002: 4). The tools available to reintroduce the unemployed to the labor market were reduced to only three, which all had the goal of making the reintroduction process as swift as possible: upskilling, trainee positions, and employment with wage subsidy. The timeframes were also tightened to attempt a faster track through the processes and into a job (Beskæftigelsesministeriet, 2002b). This ensured a more swift and simplified process, but also a less individualized process as some unemployed faced issues which the three reintroduction process may not be fit for dealing with.

“Ny chance til alle” in 2005 meant a focus on the duty of individuals to provide for one another, as married couples were imposed a mutual obligation to support one another. Married couples of which both received social benefits without working for a minimum of hours each year, would lose the benefits for one of them, thus cutting their collective income in half. For couples with one worker and one receiving social benefit, the benefits would also be reduced depending on the income of the working part, or even cut completely, should the working part earn above a certain amount deemed necessary to provide for both (Beskæftigelsesministeriet, 2005; Møller et al. 2008, 20). Rules and sanctions were imposed to ensure that the unemployed fulfilled their duty to be available to the labor market: unemployed were to actively search a minimum number of jobs per week

and keep the public employment agency notified, as well as accept jobs that were offered through by the agency, or face cuts or complete removal of their social benefits. The notion of the state having the duty to secure each individual, is thus replaced with the notion of the individual having the duty to be available for the market and the individual having to be motivated through the prospect of losing benefits if he or she does not actively looks towards getting a job.

With “Velfærdsreformen” in 2006, came an even more enhanced focus on individual responsibility, as the government reinforced the idea of working being a duty and a right that every individual must have. This included changes to the job activation plan, which was altered to ensure “the fastest way back to work” (Gundelach, 2011: 59).

The agreement “restoration of Danish economy” of 2010 followed the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis. The original possible timespan for receiving social benefits, four years, was with the political initiative reduced to two (Beskæftigelsesministeriet, 2017b). Focus on individual responsibility was further targeted and financial incentives became the preferred means to push unemployed into the labor market.

With Venstre’s party conference of 2013 officially marking a focus on unemployment and labor market policies, with the catchphrase “Working must pay off”, amongst others, and their reelection for government in 2015, has led to the 2015 “Jobreform”. The most striking change was the introduction of the 225-hour rule, which demanded that the individual unemployed should work at least 225 hours within 12 months, or have the social benefits reduced, to encourage the search and accept of temporary jobs (Beskæftigelsesministeriet, 2017c). Thus the demand for availability of the unemployed to the labor market was heightened, fulfilling the idea that “working must pay off” by making it less profitable to remain unemployed. Interdependency and mutual support obligations between couples living together was also enforced, as unemployed couples faced having social benefits completely removed for one of the individuals if they were both unemployed and failed to adhere to the 225-hour rule. This 225-hour rule was imposed on all unemployed receiving social benefits, with the exception of unemployed suffering a handicap. This almost complete “one size fits all” rule means that all unemployed are put under the same rule,

without distinction, which points towards a very homogenized process for the unemployed, disregarding the individual situations.

Danish citizens have thus seen notable reductions and restrictions in social benefits as well as more strict rules regulations, pointing towards a move away from the Danish flexicurity model to a more neoliberal understanding and a bigger focus on a supply-oriented understanding of the labor market, as well as on the individual responsibility of the unemployed to help themselves, whilst putting less focus on the responsibility of companies and society as a whole (Møller et.al 2008, 25). The Danish flexicurity model operates on the assumption of creating a flexible and secure labour market and high social security through a high level of social benefits in order for citizens to accept jobs with less stability. The mentioned political initiatives however seem to contradict this, and shift responsibility (Petersen: 2014, s. 98-100). Now the employment reform has taken the shape of the European workfirst-policy, which prioritizes finding a job, any job, and through that reentering the labor market as quickly as possible regardless of the lack of fit and needed competencies as well as the needs of the individual unemployed. As opposed to focusing on correct match of skillset and competencies to the job, the unemployed is pushed to accept any job offered so as to avoid sanctions.

Venstre's different political initiatives would thus suggest an understanding of unemployment as being a question of choice and lack of discipline on an individual level, rather than being affected by economic fluctuations causing drops in demand for workers.

5.2. Venstre's campaign for the 2015 election

The "working must pay off" campaign for the 2015 election arguably had its start in 2013, as the catchphrase and the unemployment discourse took centerstage in Venstre's 2013 party conference. This catchphrase has been used before, also under the lead of Anders Fogh Rasmussen, but arguably hasn't been given center stage until 2013, officially presenting Venstre's campaign for the 2015 election as well as their stance on unemployment. Since its use in the 2013 party conference, the catchphrase has been reused on multiple occasions and platforms, including in official statements by Venstre politicians, public debates, press

meetings, news, rallies, official campaign materials like flyers, posters etc. showing the importance of this catchphrase in the agenda of Venstre for the 2015 election and onwards.

5.3. Lars Løkke Rasmussen

Central for this campaign and also the abovementioned reforms of 2010 and 2015, is LLR, whom first assumed office in 2009 after the withdrawal of AFR, and was later elected prime minister in 2015. LLR has been a member of Venstre since being elected deputy chairman of Venstre in 1998, and has since also served as Minister of Finance from 2007-2009, before becoming prime minister. His position has arguably placed him as a central advocate of the “working must pay off” campaign, arguably making his contribution to Venstre’s unemployment discourse very relevant for this thesis.

5.4. Part conclusion

Venstre has over the last decade shown a consistent effort in changing the practices surrounding unemployed and social benefits through different reforms. Major changes consist of removing the government and society from the equation of responsibility, and projecting the individuals as responsible for their situation, and responsible for rectifying their situation, should they end in unemployment as well as having a duty to their next of kin. For the individual, this means a change in role as focus is now on duty and responsibility rather than rights and claims.

The strategy of “pulling” the unemployed into the labor market by focusing on facilitating the entrance hereto and focusing on creating more jobs, is abandoned for the sake of a “pushing” strategy, which aims at forcing the unemployed into the labor market through the abovementioned reforms, which contain what Venstre labels as “financial incentives”. These take the form of restricting social benefits and generally diminishing the economy of unemployed so as to drive them into work, suggesting and understanding of the individuals as being motivated to work solely for the financial benefits.

The “working must pay off” campaign also marks these efforts, as the goals of these reforms are verbalized through the statements of Venstre’s political members.

6. Choice of empirical data

The empirical data, which constitutes the main material for the foundation of this analysis, consists of communicative events established by Venstre which contribute to Venstre's unemployment discourse. The goal of understanding how Venstre's unemployment discourse portrays the identity of the unemployed as well as their relation to society in connection with the "Working must pay off" campaign, has furthermore prompted the search for communicative events which are part of this campaign period, whilst also contributing to the unemployment discourse.

To make the analysis as relevant as possible for the purpose of this thesis, the communicative events chosen for analysis both belong in the 2013-2015 period, where the catchphrase "working must pay off" took center stage in Venstre's unemployment discourse, as well as it being used as key issue for Venstre's election campaign. This has led to a speech and a campaign poster which took place in the given period and are produced by LLR and Venstre respectively, making these the senders of these communicative events. It could be argued that analyzing different types of communicative events affects the validity of the analysis, as two different types of communicative events could be deemed incomparable on certain aspects. However, it is important to note that the communicative events analyzed in this thesis are not analyzed with the intention of directly comparing them as opposites, as it would have been if this thesis was to compare, say, communicative events between left- and right-wing parties. Instead, the goal is to analyze communicative events which are all from Venstre and pertain to the unemployment discourse as well as being part of the "working must pay off" campaign, so as to better evaluate the whole spectrum of communication between Venstre and the public. In this case, it could be argued that analyzing different communicative events may even improve the validity in this case, as it allows for a more complete picture of the external communication between the Venstre as the sender, and the Danish general public as the receiver. In other words, analyzing different types of communicative events should aid in understanding and picking up on possible tendencies, consistencies and inconsistencies in Venstre's unemployment discourse across the board.

To ensure the relevance of the analysis, the communicative events have also been chosen through specific criteria such as: the moment in time in which the communicative events have taken place, the role and position of the sender or speaker, and the reached audience. How the individual communicative event fulfills these criteria will be reviewed below as part of the analysis of the discursive practice.

7. Discursive practice

7.1. The 2013 party conference speech by Lars Løkke Rasmussen

The first communicative event (appendix 2) chosen represents one of the first public mentions in recent times, of what later became the “working must pay off” campaign that ran from 2013 until the election of 2015. This communicative event took the shape of a speech held on the 5th of October 2013 at Venstre’s yearly party conference, which consisted of different speeches by different politicians of Venstre, along with different spokespeople selected for the event. The yearly party conferences represent a tradition in Denmark as the different parties assemble amongst themselves to officially present their political key issues, regulations, annual financial statements etc. These yearly party conferences are also convenient starting points for the campaigns that the parties choose to run with for different local and national elections. This use of the yearly party conference to bring attention to key issues and campaign efforts seems to be the case for this chosen speech, as it revolves around Venstre’s unemployment campaign, which is now known under the slogan “working must pay off”.

Danish party conferences are typically broadcasted live on television on DR1 or DR2 as was the case of Venstre’s 2013 party conference which was broadcasted live on DR2. DR2 represents one of Denmark’s main national public service-channels, traditionally covering most relevant electoral events. This arguably leads to better chances of reaching out to many Danish citizens, as opposed to smaller, more obscure channels. Yet, broadcasting the speech on this channel does not secure complete attention from the Danish citizens, given that many may still not find this event relevant or interesting. Most importantly, this event was covered and aired as a sole event, representing Venstre, which may have turned away potential viewers who do not wish to watch it. Broadcasting the event on DR2 does however create great potential for wide reach. DR2 along with the other DR channels, also broadcast these events online and leave the broadcast available for viewing up till 30 days, giving potential viewers who might have missed it, an opportunity to watch it at a later point. All in all, the TV and web channel allows for a large potential viewing, although not securing as

many views as the broadcasting was purely leftist oriented, leaving the probability of a more leftist audience, than a mixed audience.

It is important to note that although the media usually has considerable power over mass communication, acting as the gatekeeper between senders and receivers (Høybye et al, 2007: 10) – here between LLR and the general Danish public. However, in this case the element of the media is arguably less relevant as the circumstances for this speech are quite favorable. The speeches given by the chairmen of the main parties are typically aired on prime time on DR2, and are left uncut and unaltered, as is also the case with this communicative event, which could be considered a very favorable condition for the speech. Of course it is always important to take into account the fact that the media may always draw on the communicative event once it has taken place, and distort it later on by transmitting only parts of it, as well as commenting or debating it on later transmissions.

What takes place at the communicative event could however be argued as being very interesting. Being a communicative event which is prepared ahead of time³, the speech is also better secured against rash and ill-considered statements, as opposed to debates or interviews where a second part could bring up issues or questions that the sender is not prepared for. With the communicative event taking place in a closed space with supporters and political members of Venstre making up the physical audience, also adds visual support as can be seen in the pauses due to audience applause made throughout the speech (appendix 2). Lastly, the communicative event is also broadcasted on TV, making it a one-way type of communication and thus less prone to disturbances (except for any disturbances that may happen in the studio). These elements allow for a very controlled environment, in which a prepared communicative event takes place, with no disturbances or alterations by the media as it takes place.

One element that does affect the communicative event is arguably the agenda and goal of LLR and Venstre. Although the speech has the main goals of presenting key issues, it is also an opportunity to campaign for the election, thus pushing the speech to be a persuasive as

³ This speech could also have been prepared by a ghostwriter or by LLR himself in collaboration with communications advisors or spin-doctors, which also presents an advantage given their experience and knowledge in political communication.

possible to garner votes for the 2015 election, and thus refrain as much as possible from offending or turning away possible voters through the speech.

This speech was held by Lars Løkke Rasmussen at Venstre's yearly party conference. LLR served his first period as Prime Minister between 2009 and 2011, as previous Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen left the post for a position as Secretary General of NATO. Prior to this position, LLR served as minister of finance under Anders Fogh Rasmussen, and later served as chairman after his position as Prime Minister between 2009 and 2011 until being elected Prime Minister in 2015.

LLR has thus had the position of chairman of Venstre between 2011 and 2015, and has functioned as the face of the campaign running up to the 2015 election, giving him a central position and a voice in the campaign and the unemployment discourse, amongst other discourses.

7.2. Venstre's campaign poster for the 2015 election

The second communicative event chosen, represents a central aspect in the "working must pay off" campaign. This specific poster (henceforth "campaign poster"), saw its introduction to the public in March 2015, short before the election, arguably to be understood as part of Venstre's campaign for the 2015 election.

The campaign poster reached the public as a physical poster which was distributed countrywide, placed on dedicated commercial spaces on train-stations, bus-stops and busses etc. (Venstre, 2017c). With public train-stations and bus-stops being a widely used space by Danish citizens, as well as busses, stations and bus-stops also being very visible to Danish citizens whom use their own means of transportation, such as cars and bikes, on the streets, these places represent a very viable way of gaining as many views as possible, and even have a tradition of being used for political electoral campaigns in Denmark. This gives the poster great visibility and the potential of being seen by many Danish citizens as well as by a very wide range of citizens.

The Campaign Poster has furthermore been distributed in physical newspapers, as banners on newspaper webpages etc. with the added effect of reaching out to people whilst they are in the search of news online.

Unlike the before mentioned speech, the campaign poster doesn't have an explicitly specified person appointed as a speaker. The campaign poster bears neither name, nor face and doesn't have a physical voice. The poster does however contain Venstre's logo, arguably pointing towards Venstre being the sender and representative of the statements presented in the campaign poster.

All in all, the campaign poster was distributed on very wide-reaching channels; written statements which were largely accessible to the public, and arguably hard to miss, as every Danish citizen who ventured out on the public sphere (either through public or private transportation) or read a physical or online newspaper, would have a chance of encountering it. It could therefore be argued that the strategy of the campaign poster was to mass-communicate, to reach very wide and be very present in the public sphere.

Given that the campaign poster published very close to the election period, it could also be argued that its release period was decided to ensure that it reached as many Danish citizens as possible, in a period of political interest and curiosity to garner more attention to the campaign.

Compared to the speech, the campaign poster is arguably even less prone to obstruction by the media, apart from possibly experiencing challenges with purchasing and obtaining commercial spaces and/or being discussed in the media. The campaign poster is also, like the speech, a prepared one-way communicative event distributed to the before mentioned physical and online channels, and it could thus also be considered less prone to obtrusions. With this communicative event being a campaign poster, its main goal would arguably be to garner support and ultimately votes for the 2015 election, which could be considered an element which greatly affects the statements presented on the poster. Another goal could also be to present an issue which Venstre plans on acting on after the election, so as to prepare the general public to future political initiatives, although the first goal seems to be the biggest and most urgent considering its timing.

All in all, Venstre's "working must pay off" as campaign material, key issue and area of political focus in the unemployment discourse has arguably reached very wide and made use of different channels and types of communication, from written to oral and in visual, ensuring the largest amount possible of Danish citizens were to observe it without necessarily seeking it actively by themselves, but were met with it both in public as well as through TV and online news media.

What these communicative events have in common is their relatively wide reach, their root in the slogan "working must pay off" and their sender. Although the campaign poster doesn't have a single defined sender, Venstre as a party is composed of different individuals, hereunder LLR, chairman of Venstre at the time. These communicative events are thus arguably part of what could be deemed an intertextual chain of communicative events that all take apart in Venstre's unemployment discourse, and share the slogan "working must pay off", making them very relevant for the purpose of the thesis.

8. Textual practice

8.1. The 2013 party conference speech by Lars Løkke Rasmussen

The textual aspects of this speech will now be analyzed with the intention of understanding how the speech in itself presents the unemployed as well as other elements deemed relevant, based on the previously discussed theory.

The communicative event in itself is actually pieced together with a speech by LLR and a prelude, which is both shown at the event and aired on television in connection with the speech. The audience is even showed to applaud in between the prelude and the actual speech, and LLR makes an explicit reference to the prelude, as he starts his speech: *“See we have just met six Danes.”*⁴ (appendix 2, line 1), showing cohesiveness between the prelude and the speech. These mentioned individuals are presented in the prelude as employed citizens, as each individual is presented in the prelude by name and profession. However looking at the vocabulary used for the unemployed in the speech, it seems that LLR makes no actual explicit descriptions of these individuals. On one single occasion, LLR does however make his opinion on the act of working explicit, as he states: *“We work for each other. For the sake of society. For the community. That is positive.”*⁵ (appendix 2, lines 5-6). No hedging is used, neither in this particular sentence nor very much in the rest of the speech. In fact, LLR seems to present most of his statements as facts, including lines 5-6 (appendix 2), rather than his own opinion, which is clear from the pronoun and verb *“that is”*⁶, which lacks a statement of belief or opinion, say *“I think”*.

Overwording is also a rare occurrence in this speech, as are specifically negatively loaded words used in connection with the unemployed, the employed or any other entity which aren't at any point described with adjectives of significant meaning. The single use of a positive statement in lines 5-6 (appendix 2) does however establish a position towards working, quite early in the communicative event. It is important to note that this statement

⁴ Originally: *“Se vi har lige mødt seks danskere”* (appendix 2, line 1)

⁵ Originally: *“ Vi arbejder for hinanden. For samfundets skyld. For fælledsskabets. Det er positivt.”* (appendix 2, lines 5-6)

⁶ Originally: *“det er”* (appendix 2, lines 5-6)

takes place in the prerecorded campaign video which is shown before the actual speech. This explicit choice may have been to support the goal of making the video as short and precise as possible.

In the speech itself there aren't given any explicit opinions and the communicative strategies also seem covert. One example of an implicit strategy is choice of word, as LLR makes use of the term "passive support"⁷ and "passive transfers"⁸ multiple times throughout his speech (appendix 2, lines 20, 66, 95-96). Both terms are synonyms to, and function in the place of "social benefits"⁹, yet they can be interpreted very differently. Both alternative terms feature the adjective "passive", doting the term an impression of inactivity or passivity, whilst the noun of both terms "support" and "transfers" denote the same impression, that welfare benefits are something that maintain and are transferred to the unemployed, and instills the idea of the unemployed not being self-sufficient, but are in a situation of being "taken care of" rather than simply helped, which "social benefits", seems to do to a better extent.

The term "social benefits" is typically used in the unemployment discourse by different politicians from both sides of the political spectrum in Denmark, and also by LLR himself (appendix 2, lines 158 & 175). "Passive support" and "passive transfers" are also used, but quite rarely, as is also the case in this speech. This choice of wording could thus be interpreted to make a bigger impression than "social benefits" which would be a more innocuous choice that may not bring as much attention to it. The term "social benefits" in itself is typically used to represent the unemployed, functioning as a synonym, as is also the case in this speech, as LLR uses this term interchangeably with the term "unemployed", and as being "passively maintained". In Denmark, a citizen must be unemployed to classify for social benefits, thus also making this term viable for representing the unemployed. This choice of term could thus arguably be deemed as a choice that brings forth a negative meaning to the act of receiving welfare benefits, and thus on those who receive it: the unemployed. Based solely on this, it does seem that LLR contributes certain characteristics

⁷ Originally: "*passiv forsørgelse*" (appendix 2, lines 20 & 95)

⁸ Originally: "*passive overførsler*" (appendix 2, lines 66 & 96)

⁹ Originally: "*køntanthjælp*" (appendix 2, lines

to the unemployed whilst the employed are left unscathed, and can be seen as the first sign of defining two distinct groups through the unemployment discourse revolves around.

Another sign of this is the use of personal pronouns throughout the speech. One example is in lines 3-10 (appendix 2), where the personal pronouns “us”¹⁰ and “we”¹¹ are used multiple times, in connection with those who work, but also with the Danish citizens. *“Why do we go to work? What is it that drives us, day after day? We work first and foremost for our own sake, and for the sake of our families.”*¹² (appendix 2, lines 3-4). The two interrogatives and the declarative uses of “we”, “us” and “our” in connection with the verb “to work”, which entails that the inclusive “we” is used to describe “us who work”, and also that LLR includes himself in this group, as the pronoun “they”, “them” and “theirs” could easily have been used instead. Yet, in the next declarative sentence (appendix 2, lines 4-5), the pronoun “us” seems to be used in connection with the noun “Danes”¹³, denoting that “we” also encompasses “the Danes” which also includes LLR. Although it doesn't exactly claim that the unemployed are not part of the Danish community, it does create affiliations between those who work and Denmark, whilst the unemployed are communicatively placed outside of the group. In lines 50-62 (appendix 2) however, there seems to be a switch between the use of “we” and “them”. In line 50, the pronoun “we” is still attached to the workers. Yet, in lines 51-62, the pronouns “them”, “they” and “their”¹⁴ (appendix 2) are used in connection with those who work, whilst “we” is interchangeably used to denote all of us with “all of us”¹⁵ (appendix 2, line 52-53), and to denote the political members of Venstre with: “we in Venstre”¹⁶ (appendix 2, lines 59-60). In this case, it could be because of the fact that using “we” for all three groups would be linguistically confusing, and could create more doubt than what it would be worth in the attempt of showing affiliation. LLR does however ensure the affiliation is intact as he finishes the paragraph with *“In Venstre, we praise each*

¹⁰ Originally: “os” (appendix 2, lines 3, 5-6, 9 & 185-187)

¹¹ Originally: “vi” (appendix 2, lines 3-10)

¹² Originally: *“Hvorfor går vi på arbejde? Hvad er det der driver os, dag efter dag? Vi arbejder først og fremmest for vores egen skyld, og vores familiers skyld.”* (appendix 2, lines 3-4)

¹³ Originally: “danskere” (appendix 2, 5, 16, 19 & 21)

¹⁴ Originally: “dem”, “de” and “deres” (appendix 2, lines 51-62)

¹⁵ Originally: “vi alle sammen” (appendix 2, line 52-53)

¹⁶ Originally: “vi i Venstre” (appendix 2, lines 59-60)

*individual Dane whom tends to their job. We take sides with them. We are their party.*¹⁷

(appendix 2, lines 61-62) thus grouping together the workers and Venstre. The unemployed are however, throughout the speech, consequently addressed with the pronouns “they” and “them” and never with “we”, “us” or the like. Although it is never stated explicitly that the unemployed are not part of the Danish community or the all-inclusive “we”, they are never mentioned as part of the “we” as are other constituents, and are thus not explicitly left out, but aren’t included either, whilst those who work are in fact included in the group of the Danish society. By using the pronouns “them” and “they” instead of using individual pronouns like “he” or “she” or even “the individual unemployed”, the unemployed are however linguistically grouped together with each other through the use of “they”. Furthermore, the declaratives in the previously mentioned lines 61-62 (appendix 2), also clearly affiliates Venstre with the workers – again, not explicitly taking a stance against the unemployed, but not including them either.

LLR further explicitly sides with the workers in lines 61-62. Here, the “we” is constituted by Venstre, and the “them” comprises specifically the Danish workers. Again the unemployed are left unspoken of, and unaccounted for in terms of having a political party on their side. This arguably distances the unemployed further from the Venstre party, and the employed, as the party and the employed are linguistically constructed as allied, whilst the unemployed aren’t spoken of in this statement. Of course, considering the goal of obtaining support from the receivers, it could be deemed sensible to ally the party with the employed, given that these make up the biggest part of society. Yet, it also distances the unemployed further from the rest of society as employed receivers who already agree with LLR’s point of view, could end up feeling enforced in the thought of unemployed as not being a part of the community, of “us”.

LLR also seems to make very consequent use of the modal verb “must”¹⁸ in connection with the pronoun “we”. Examples include lines 9-10, 31-32, 71-74, 107-108, 162-164, 229-230, 279-282 and so on (appendix 2). In most of these examples, the “we” arguably includes

¹⁷ Originally: *“I Venstre hylder vi hver enkelt dansker, der passer sit job. Vi tager deres parti. Vi er deres parti!”* (appendix 2, lines 61-62)

¹⁸ Originally: *“skal”* (appendix 2, lines 9-10, 31-32, 71-74, 107-108, 162-164, 229-230, 279-282)

Venstre, whilst others include the workers and Venstre, whilst others include the Danish citizens along with Venstre. However, nowhere does the “we” explicitly include the unemployed, nor does LLR make a single use of the modal verb “must” in connection with unemployed, or using “them” for that particular group. LLR thus makes very good use of the modal verb “must” to encourage the receivers to act, but fails to include the unemployed, again, leaving them out of the picture and enforcing their passivity.

Another relevant use of declaratives is in conjunction with the employed as well as the unemployed. On several occasions, including lines 16-21 and 138 (appendix 2), LLR makes use of declaratives, with no hedging, to declare “unfairness”¹⁹, unfairness against the employed for not being able to earn enough to make it worth their while (appendix 2, lines 16-17 and 18-21), and unfairness against the unemployed for losing money if they don’t get a job that pays more than a specific amount of money (appendix 2, lines 17-19). In terms of appeal-forms, this could arguably be classified as a pathos-appeal, given the choice of the adjective “fair”. This choice of word speaks of injustice or unfairness that is put upon both employed and unemployed and should create a bigger statement than, say “this should not be like this” or the like.

This presents an interesting choice; not only does LLR declare unfairness against the employed, but also declares unfairness against the unemployed for potentially losing money by taking a job. This last declaration, although it does express sympathy for the unemployed, potentially earning LLR some sympathy by the receivers, also presents the opportunity for the unemployed to see negatively on getting a job, possibly losing them money, something that is here presented as being unfair. This is further exacerbated by other declarative sentences, including lines 138-140 (appendix 2): “*But let’s just be honest: That is just not fair.*”, and “*If there is no profit in taking a job, even at minimum wage, well then there are indeed some that won’t.*”²⁰ These statements seem to portray the act of working as something that should pay off, and the act of choosing not to work, if it doesn’t lead to

¹⁹ Originally: “*urimelighed*” (appendix 2, lines 16-21 & 138)

²⁰ Originally: “*Men lad os da være ærlige: Det er da ikke rimeligt.*”, and “*Er der ingen gevinst ved at tage et arbejde, også til mindstelønnen, jamen så er der da nogle, der vil lade være.*” (appendix 2, lines 138-140)

profit, seems normalized with the use of the conjunction *of course* and *indeed*²¹ and the complete lack of hedging. Not only that, but LLR also indirectly involves the receivers later on in the speech as he poses and interrogative: *“Do you think that this is fair?”*²² (Appendix 2, line 161). Although the strategy may simply be to instigate agreement, it does simultaneously enforce the idea of work being a choice and not a responsibility. Through this linguistic choice, it could be interpreted that LLR is in fact normalizing the idea of work being a choice, whether intentional or not.

Furthermore, LLR’s use of logos seems to enforce this choice, as he on several occasions uses numbers to prove the injustice. Lines 16-20 (appendix 2), show consistent use of numbers especially in conjunction with “fair” thus using logos to enforce the injustice. Logos is also used in an instance where the unemployed, those who receive financial benefits, are compared to those who work (appendix 2, lines 159-160).

Another instance of working being presented as a choice lies in the statement which is used throughout the speech: *“It must pay off to work”*²³ (appendix 2, lines 11, 21 & 139). This sentence is found not only in this speech, but also in the campaign poster as well as many other communicative events that take part of Venstre’s campaign efforts, ultimately functioning as a slogan for Venstre’s campaign. This sentence can, when pronounced in Danish, be interpreted in multiple ways. It can be considered a promise that in the future it must pay off to work, or it can be considered an opinion or an act of assessing what the outcome of working should be. Whether it is a promise for the future, or an assessment, this sentence arguably instills the criteria that working should result in a benefit, a benefit which considering the choice of words “pay off” should be considered financial. This sentence could arguably have been phrased without the financial incentive as an element, but instead with an element of responsibility, by adding an element of need or liability²⁴.

Another use of logos is evident in LLR’s appeal to reasoning. Throughout the speech, LLR seems to make use of arguments, although they seem to carry implicit premises. One

²¹ Originally: *“da”* (appendix 2, lines 138-140) which can translate to either “of course” and “indeed” depending on the context

²² Originally: *“Synes i det er rimeligt?”* (Appendix 2, line 161)

²³ Originally: *“Det skal kunne betale sig at arbejde”* (appendix 2, lines 11, 21 & 139)

²⁴ Examples could be “working is necessary” or “it is responsible to work”

example is to be found in lines 41-42 (appendix 2): *“They have the desire to take care of the collective Denmark. They each contribute to making Denmark a good and prosperous country: Because you know what? They work.”*²⁵ Although these three phrases don’t represent a classical three-part argument, or syllogism, it does imply that if you work, you want to protect the shared community, and if you work, you contribute to making Denmark a “good and affluent country”. This is presented in the conjunction “because” between the premise (the last statement: “they work”) and the conclusion (the first two statements: “They have the desire to take care of the collective Denmark. They each contribute to making Denmark a good and prosperous country”). Although not explicitly stating that those who don’t work do not wish to care for or contribute to the common good, LLR doesn’t provide any positive statement about the unemployed, nor does it include those who don’t work into the group who works – in fact, as previously stated, LLR seems to create a divide between these two groups. Lines 36-42 (appendix 2) together, seem to group what LLR himself acknowledges as being “six different Danes”²⁶, whom he goes on to describe as being different in terms of background, education, gender etc. (appendix 2, lines 36-39), as well as acknowledging that all Danes are different (appendix 2, line 40). LLR then proceeds to group these people together as those who work (appendix 2, line 42). Despite the very different possibilities of division, LLR thus seems to portray those who work as a united group.

Another type of argument used in this speech is the “if-then” argument, which doesn’t provide two premises, but simply uses an “if A, then B” logic. In lines 139-140 (appendix 2), constructs such an “if-then” argument, as he states that if there is no profit in working, then some will choose not to work: *“If there is no profit in taking a job, even at minimum wage, well then there are indeed some that won’t.”*²⁷. In this case, the premise is to be found in the first part of the statement: “If there is no profit in taking a job” whilst the conclusion is to be found in the last part “well then there are indeed some that won’t”. Most importantly, the

²⁵ Originally: *“De har ønsket om at passe på Danmark til fælles. De bidrager hver i sær til at gøre Danmark til et godt og velstående land: For ved i hvad? De arbejder”*. (appendix 2, lines 41-42)

²⁶ Originally: *“Seks forskellige danskere”* (appendix 2, line 36)

²⁷ Originally: *“Er der ingen gevinst ved at tage et arbejde, også til mindstelønnen, jamen så er der da nogle, der vil lade være”* (appendix 2, lines 139-140)

conclusion is presented as a matter of course, with the conjunction “well”²⁸. With this argument, LLR enforces the idea that not having a job is an active choice, obscuring the possibility of unemployment being a result of other circumstances.

Unemployment being a choice is further established in lines 130-132 (appendix 2), where LLR claims that some positions are filled by foreigners instead of Danish citizens, because the gain is too modest to be worth it. Although this may not necessarily represent reality, it is a claim put forth by LLR, which could both hurt the identity of the unemployed, as they are portrayed as being unemployed by their own choice, whilst also potentially hurting the motivation of the unemployed who may find LLR’s claim to be a legitimate reason for not wanting to take any job. This is further exacerbated by the subsequent word choice, as LLR speaks of entering the job market with the words “*to struggle into the job market*”²⁹ (appendix 2, lines 134) in connection with what is described as too small of a profit. LLR’s choice of the word *to struggle*, where other verbs like “enter”, “join” or the like, could easily have replaced it, does arguably represent the job market as something that is not easy to enter, thus potentially further diminishing the motivation for the unemployed to try finding a job.

Ethos arguably also plays a role in this speech, as LLR has made the choice of using a sort of testimonials as part of the communicative event. Even before the speech, in the prelude, single individuals who all declare their support for Venstre, LLR’s party, are presented, with their personal argument for why they support this party (appendix 2, lines 1-2, 11-15, 22-26, and 35). LLR then goes on to mention some of these names in his speech (appendix 2, lines 38-39), showing personal knowledge and acknowledgment of these people, who, through LLR’s own words, are then unified under the group of employed, who are later included in the *we*-group. LLR thus makes a more personal connection between the employed as individuals, and as a group, whom LLR, as previously mentioned, also joins through his speech.

²⁸ Originally: “*jamen*” (appendix 2, line 140)

²⁹ Originally: “*at kæmpe sig ind på arbejdsmarkedet*” (appendix 2, lines 134)

In the speech, LLR does briefly differentiate amongst the employed and unemployed, which could be interpreted as a sign of logic of difference. He acknowledges the difference between the employed in terms of both profession and income (appendix 2, lines 36-42), whilst the unemployed are differentiated between those who can work and those who can't (appendix 2, lines 99-102), those who are studying and those who are retired (appendix 2, lines 36-64) and so on. This does speak towards a logic of difference, as he acknowledges that those individuals whom are unemployed may have different reasons for being so, although LLR does seem to specifically target what he presents as individuals who are able to work but aren't currently working (appendix 2, line 65). In this instance LLR even repeats the words *"one out of five whom are of working age"*³⁰ (appendix 2, line 65), a type of epimone, as he repeats the same thing. Not uncommonly used in speeches, it can help create focus on the specific utterance, in this case the fact that one out of five able-bodied individuals aren't currently working. These able-bodied unemployed individuals are then repeatedly spoken of, presented as individuals who are passively sustained, who receive social benefits, and who are simply unemployed. When speaking of these individuals he seems to forego this differentiated representation, and instead revolves back to the use of wording like "the unemployed", "those on social benefits" and "those who are passively sustained" – thus enforcing a logic of equivalence with every use.

The antagonism created between the workers and the unemployed arguably sustains the logic of equivalence, as it throughout the speech linguistically positions these two groups against each other, comparing them and "deciding between them", typically favoring the employed. One example is to be found in lines 63-71 (appendix 2), where LLR speaks of the unemployed, and then proceeds to mention all the areas where the money could have been used instead of spending it on the unemployed, including research, education, investments into creating jobs, infrastructure etc. The money spent on the unemployed are thus linguistically presented as money that the rest of society has to do without – thus putting the unemployed against the rest of the entities that make up the community. All receivers of the communicative events would in theory relate to at least one of these elements that LLR mentions must loose for the benefits of the unemployed – tax reliefs, education, nursing

³⁰ Originally: *"en ud af fem i den arbejdsdygtige alder"* (appendix 2, line 65)

homes, hospitals, etc. making them more likely to personally relate to the situation and take the side of society, whilst distancing themselves from the unemployed. The unemployed would likely also relate to one or more of these and remain in a limbo between not having a job, but also having a personal interest in at least one of the mentioned elements. Even companies are included in the antagonism, as they are presented as an entity that may suffer less burdens if the unemployed weren't prioritized (appendix 2, line 68), thus including them in the community group, against the unemployed. LLR even goes as far as to proclaim the consequence of this to be a "poorer Denmark"³¹ (appendix 2, line 75-76) which underlines the detriment that unemployment brings.

Another example of antagonism is to be found in lines 159-161 (appendix 2), where receiving social benefits is compared directly with employed individuals who earn around or below 250,000 DKK a year, as well as with store workers. LLR specifically uses the comparative adjective "more"³² with the conjunction "than"³³, to directly compare the two, making them opposites and opponents in the situation. Although not all employed are shop workers, nor do they necessarily make less than 250,000 DKK a year, it does represent a comparison between workers and the unemployed. In this case logos, in the form of numerals, is also used to prove what LLR states to be unfair, as mentioned above. This utterance thus helps enforce the antagonism that is between specifically the workers and the unemployed.

In lines 16-21 (appendix 2) is another example of comparison, where the words "not fair"³⁴ are used conjointly with the actual comparison between the income of the two groups. Again, working is compared against being passively maintained, through the use of the comparative adjective "less"³⁵ and conjunction "than"³⁶ (appendix 2, lines 16-17) and the preposition "rather than"³⁷. Logos, in the form of numerals, as well as the specific word choice of "passive maintenance" instead of "public benefits" contribute to exacerbating the

³¹ Originally: "*fattigere Danmark*" (appendix 2, lines 75-76)

³² Originally "*mere*" (appendix 2, lines 159 & 161)

³³ Originally: "*end*" (appendix 2, lines 159 & 161)

³⁴ Originally: "*ikke rimeligt*" (appendix 2, lines 16-20)

³⁵ Originally: "*mindre*" (appendix 2, lines 16-17)

³⁶ Originally: "*end*" (appendix 2, lines 16-17)

³⁷ Originally: "*frem for*" (appendix 2, line 17)

antagonism between the workers and the unemployed. In this case the unemployed aren't directly spoken of, but are represented as "receiving public benefits" and "passive maintenance". The antagonism is further exacerbated by the use of the proper noun to identify the specific individuals like "Hanne" and "Ken" (appendix 2, lines 20 & 39) which the receivers have seen in the prelude, and which LLR has established and reestablishes as being part of the working group. With this choice, the group of workers aren't just unidentifiable individuals, but actual people, people which every working and unemployed receiver now know the name of, and can respectively feel equal and allied to, or distanced from as a worker and unemployed respectively. As a worker, one can now identify with other employed, to agree with them, and as an unemployed, one now has a face and a name to which one can feel distanced from, or even guilty for, as LLR uses the words "not fair", to establish it as an unfair situation.

LLR also chooses to use the proper noun in line 6 (appendix 2), as he shows agreement with "Per" (one of the employed citizens presented in the prelude), a way of showing personal agreement with what is presented as an employed individual. Per, the other mentioned employed and employed individuals in general are furthermore presented as responsible and as a part of the community, as can be seen in lines 3-5 (appendix 2): *"We work first and foremost for our own sake, and for the sake of our families. But there is also something special about us Danes. We feel a connection. We work for each other. For the sake of society. For the community."*³⁸ The inclusion of society and community also brings in a more altruistic depiction of the employed, as they aren't only portrayed as working for themselves or their own kin, but also as working for a bigger group although they couldn't possibly have a personal connection to each individual in that group. Although what LLR presents is a claim which does not necessarily represent the reality of why Danish citizens choose to work, it does linguistically present the employed as altruistic and responsible people who are working for a greater good – for the community and society, of which they are a part of. Although this doesn't necessarily portray the unemployed negatively, the antagonism and distinct positioning of the two groups arguably sets the base for an "us" versus "them"

³⁸ Originally: *"Vi arbejder først og fremmest for vores egen skyld, og vores familiers skyld. Men der er også noget ganske særligt ved os danskere. Vi føler en sammenhæng. Vi arbejder for hinanden. For samfundets skyld. For fælledsskabets."* (appendix 2, lines 3-5)

discourse, which this sentence confirms by praising the employed. The word choice in line 6 (appendix 2): *“that is positive”*³⁹ explicitly paints a picture of the workers, their responsibility and their work for the greater community as positive, further cementing the workers as a positive entity of the community.

LLR furthermore chooses to name the position of the two groups – with the employed being part of “the community”⁴⁰ and the unemployed being part of what LLR terms *“uden-forskabet”* which can be translated to “outside-ity” (appendix 2, lines 94-95). “Outside-ity” seems to be a new word, to describe not being “in” or “part of” the community, but an “outsider” and what seems to mean the exact opposite of being part of the community. Thus LLR further separates and distances the workers from the unemployed – putting them at opposite sides of the spectrum. Apart from distinguishing belonging, this choice of word could arguably also be deemed as having a delegitimizing effect on the unemployed. LLR could have chosen a different wording in this situation, or completely avoided the use of this word, by phrasing it, say “Sweden have been very good at moving unemployed closer to the working force”. Although LLR does excuse his wording, claiming that the word choice has been made by the Swedish Minister of Finances (appendix 2, line 85), it is important to note that LLR does choose to use this wording himself in his speech, where he could have omitted this phrasing. Yet, he chose to use specific terms that emphasize a shunning from the other group, the community, of which the employed are a part of – an act that could be deemed as an attempt of delegitimizing the unemployed. LLR further denotes belonging to a group as he states: *“So we are not only paying an economic price, but indeed also a human price, by putting so many people outside of the working community”*⁴¹ (appendix 2, lines 81-82). Here, LLR could arguably have used the word labor market or the like, yet instead chooses the denomination “working community” to represent what the unemployed are not part of. The use of “community”, found in both examples thus denotes that the “we”-group includes the workers, whilst the unemployed are positioned outside of the community.

³⁹ Originally: *“det er positivt”* (appendix 2, line 6)

⁴⁰ Originally: *“fællesskabet”* (appendix 2, line 95)

⁴¹ Originally: *“Så vi betaler ikke kun en økonomisk pris, men så sandelig også en menneskelig pris, ved at sætte så mange mennesker uden for arbejdsfællesskabet.”* (appendix 2, lines 81-82)

8.1.1. Part conclusion

This speech represents a central communicative event in the discourse of unemployment, as it revolves around one of the main causes of Venstre's campaign on getting unemployed into employment. On a textual level the speech contains many explicit elements that together create specific identities and groupings, leading to antagonism and delegitimization. The deducted nodal points give a good picture of these groups – mainly the unemployed on one side, and “the rest” – the workers and the community at large on the other side. The analysis also reveals the identifying elements that make up the chain of equivalence, which gives meaning to the nodal points.

With this speech, LLR arguably creates a less favorable identity of the unemployed, potentially portraying them as passive, as well as distancing them from the community, thus hurting their motivation to find a way back into the workforce, and society as a result of it. The use of personal pronouns however creates a connection/affiliation between the workers and the community, including Venstre itself, joining them together as well as glorifying the workers through creating a chain of equivalence which includes responsibility as well as accrediting them for the welfare that the rest of society can enjoy.

Considering the probable main goal of the speech; to obtain as much support as possible, the strategy of affiliating himself and Venstre with the workers arguably makes sense. Considering the legislative goal of saving money on social benefits and maintaining the unemployed in general, to use the savings on other elements (jobs, tax relief etc.), it also arguably makes sense to openly affiliate himself with the part of society that he wants to aid – to better his chances of gaining their support. However it does bring forth these negative side effects of antagonism and delegitimization, which is enforced by the lack of hedging and the use of claims throughout the speech.

8.2. Venstre's campaign poster for the 2015 election

This communicative event could, compared to LLR's speech, be considered very short and concise. It contains comparatively little wording, probably to ensure complete readability as viewers quickly pass by. This poster does however present some interesting communicative

elements that arguably represent another of Venstre's input in the unemployment discourse. The centrality of this poster in Venstre's unemployment-campaign also contributes to the relevance of this specific poster.

It is important to note that whether the numerals used in this poster are correct will not be diverged on in this thesis, as that is not part of the goal. This analysis will strictly look at the campaign poster in terms of discourse analysis. For the sake of the analysis, the numeral used will be analyzed from an "impact" point of view, but will not be looked at from a true-false point of view.

The text in this poster shows no explicit opinions, nor explicit descriptions of the mentioned entities. It is however possible to find implicit communicative traits in the campaign poster. The most apparent trait is in the use of logos and numerals, both in what could be interpreted as the headline (appendix 3, line 1), as well as in the body text (appendix 3, lines 2-11). At first glance, the numeral that comprises the headline (appendix 3, line 1) appears to stand alone, instigating a search for answers to what it represents, which is then found in the body text below. On itself, the headline doesn't create meaning, but simply presents what could be interpreted as a random number. Considering that a sentence must usually contain a subject and a verb to be classified as a sentence, as well as considering the fact that this sentence doesn't create meaning on its own, it could be argued that its purpose is not to create meaning in itself, but to encourage to keep reading and searching for answers. The following sentence, the first in the body text, could be considered the complement to the headline – the element that gives it meaning. This first sentence takes the form of a representative, as it claims *"This is what a married couple with three children can receive now in yearly totals between social benefits, child benefits, housing benefits and subsidies, according to the Ministry of Employment."* (appendix 3, lines 2-6)⁴². With reading this sentence, the numeral suddenly creates an impact as its meaning is revealed. As is explicated below in the body text, this numeral represents the amount that a couple with three children can receive a year in social benefits. The choice of using the example of a married couple with three children presents an interesting choice in itself as it provides the

⁴² Originally: "Det kan et ægtepar på kontanthjælp nu årligt få i samlet værdi af kontanthjælp, børnecheck, boligsikring og tilskud ifølge Beskæftigelsesministeriet." (appendix 3, lines 2-6)

basis for the bigger numeral used in the headline, than had it been based on, say the social benefits received by a single person or even a couple without or with only one child. Instead, this example is used, which leads to a six digit number, and arguably a bigger impact than a smaller number would have, if compared to the income of many of the receivers reading the poster. What is relevant to note is that Danish citizens reading this text may also compare this number with their own income. Citizens with a smaller yearly income than the given number may thus experience the 454.215 DKK as a substantial income, compared to their own. With the size and visual impact of the numeral considered, it should have a big impact on a substantial group of working citizens once they incorporate the knowledge of what the numeral stands for.

Furthermore, this sentence also shows the use of ethos, as the Ministry of Employment is referred to as the source for the given information (appendix 3, line 6). This strategy could arguably have been chosen to create credibility around the numeral, wanting to prove its veracity.

Lastly, the choice of mentioning the different types of benefits separately (appendix 3, lines 3-5), instead of collecting them into one, as has been done in the speech held by LLR at the 2013 party conference, where only the denomination “social benefits” is used. Whether being an intentional strategy or not, the mentioning of multiple benefits does function as a way to make it seem like an abundance of benefits that the entities in question receive, as well as offers the chance to make the numeral seem larger again than it would, had only the basic social benefits been included in the equation.

The second and third sentences in the body text (appendix 3, lines 7-9), which both take the form of assessing statements, as they assess the above described claim to be “unfair” and even “unhealthy”: *“That is not fair to those who work hard every day. That is not healthy for a society”*⁴³. The choice of the adjectives *unfair* and *unhealthy* as a description denotes a use of pathos, as it could be considered loaded words which carry meaning of injustice and corruption of health. Pathos could arguably also be found in the choice of the word “work

⁴³ Originally: *“Det er ikke rimeligt for dem der knokler hver dag. Det er ikke sundt for et samfund”* (appendix 3, lines 7-9)

hard”⁴⁴. Here, less loaded words could have been used instead, for example the simple word “work”. The use of the word “unhealthy” is also an interesting example of word choice, as this depicts a different issue than “unfair”. Whilst unfair presents an ethical issue, the adjective unhealthy denotes an issue of biological nature, as if being a health hazard to society.

The sentence also shows a lack of hedging, which could have been added through phrasing it, say: “we believe it’s unfair” thus presenting it as a personal opinion or evaluation rather than a fact. These elements combined, could be considered to create quite a forceful claim as it through the choice of words and lack of hedging, could be considered more convincing.

The way lines 1-6 and 7-9 (appendix 3) are constructed also presents an interesting juxtaposition between those who receive social benefits (which in the previous analysis of LLR’s speech is determined to represent the unemployed, as being unemployed is a prerequisite for receiving social benefits), those who work, and society. As with LLR’s speech, there seems to be an antagonistic placement of the unemployed on one side, here presented in lines 1-6, whilst the other entities are grouped together in two very similar sentences, and placed together one right after the other (line 7-9) where unfairness is equally claimed to “hit” both “those who work” and “society”. This arguably places these entities in opposite camps, with society and the workers together, and the unemployed as the sole opposite. This, combined with the use of what could be considered negatively laden wording, arguably presents the amount of money that can be received through social benefits as being something negative, unjust and as corrupting and harmful to society, thus portraying the act of receiving social benefits as the opposite of good and those who receive it as being non-beneficial to society. In other words, these two sentences arguably help pose the previous statements as “problems”, thus creating antagonism.

The penultimate sentence: “*working must pay off*”⁴⁵ (appendix 3, line 10) represents the slogan used by Venstre as a central meaning of their campaign. As previously established, this sentence is constructed in a way which represents working as a choice, but most

⁴⁴ Originally: “*knokle*” (appendix 3, line 8)

⁴⁵ Originally: “*det skal kunne betale sig at arbejde*” (appendix 3, line 10)

importantly, by being used in the different communicative events, it also creates an act of intertextuality, chaining together the different events to each other as well as to the campaign and its meanings and goals. The use of the slogan in the different communicative events now shows a tendency, and the use of it in this campaign poster arguably helps tie it to the campaign and create quick recognition of its affiliation and meaning. It is also important to note that some of the chosen terms, such as “fair”, “social benefits”, “society”, and “working”, also resemble those used in LLR’s speech. Although these single terms don’t have the same impact as a repeated slogan, given that they are more generic than a slogan, they do arguably contribute to the intertextuality as they present a repetition of what can be deemed as being central terms that help give meaning to the nodal points in Venstre’s employment discourse.

The last sentence presented in this campaign could arguably be interpreted as being the conclusion or resolving statement to the above statements which the poster arguably portrays as issues. With stating: *“In the future, more [people] shall work for the welfare”*⁴⁶ (appendix 3, line 11) the solution seemingly lies in “working”, which will contribute to the “welfare”. Considering the previous statements, this stands in contrast to the before mentioned unemployed, in this case specifically married couples with children, whom receive social benefits, which enforces the presentation of this being an “issue” thus sustaining the antagonism. The use of the word “welfare” also presents an interesting choice, as it can be used to describe both collective as well as individual welfare. The word is also used by itself, whereas it could be categorized through the use of “financial”, “social”, or other prefix to denote a type of welfare. Instead it is left very wide and can thus cover a variety of types of welfare, both individual and collective, thus widening the chances of the receivers finding the sentence as relevant to them. This sentence furthermore constructs welfare as something that must be worked for, thus implying that being out of work, or in other words being unemployed, does not contribute to the welfare.

Furthermore, the adding of the words “for the welfare” could have been completely omitted, leaving the sentence “in the future, more [people] shall work”. Adding the element

⁴⁶ Originally: *“For fremtiden skal flere arbejde for velfærden”*

of welfare in this sentence arguably presents working as an act that contributes to welfare, which, combined with the previous sentences, implicitly presents the unemployed as not contributing to the welfare – they are presented as the opposite of welfare.

The sentence in itself could arguably be seen as a promise or vow, a representative in the form of a description of a desired future scenario, or a directive in the form of a command. These possible alternative interpretations of this sentence are made possible through the use of the Danish modal auxiliary verb “skal”, which has in the given quote above been translated to “shall”. Yet, the Danish “skal” does cover over a variety of possible verbs, including “shall”, “must”, “will”, etc. which depending on the construction of the sentence and the context can either be deciphered, or is left open to interpretation, as is in this case. The word “skal” can be interpreted either way; as a vow for what Venstre are working for, as a presentation of what Venstre wants to happen in the future, or a command designed to encourage the receivers to strive for work. This could be interpreted as a move that allows all possible interpretations to be made by the receivers, thus enhancing its effect. No matter which of these three versions the sentence is interpreted to mean by the individual receiver, it arguably leads to the same outcome in terms of providing a solution to the presented issue: working means contributing to welfare, and is the way Venstre finds best to go. An alternative phrasing could for example be “ought to” in place of “shall”, or even “Venstre believes that...” as an opening to the statement. In terms of expressive modality, this lack of hedging arguably shows the attitude of the sender, in this case Venstre, to be very steadfast in their statements, constructing them as true facts, rather than personal beliefs.

In terms of delegitimization, different elements could be argued to add to this act. As in LLR’s speech, two different groups are linguistically presented, and there seems to be an antagonism created between these – placing them as opposites. The problematization of receiving social benefits which is presented as corrupting to society and unfair to those who work, arguably stigmatizes the unemployed, whilst the grouping of society, those who work and welfare together, arguably distances the unemployed/those receiving social benefits from the rest.

This last sentence also presents what could arguably be considered an enforcing element in the problematization and solution that takes place in the poster. The enforcement lies in the choice of the words “in the future”⁴⁷. The noun “future” specifically, stands in contrast to the noun “now”⁴⁸ present in the first sentence in the body text. The use of contrasting time stamps together with the problem and solution arguably helps gap the two sentences, making them stand out even more as opposite: the first sentence is presented as a present issue, and the last sentence is presented as a future solution.

8.2.1. Part conclusion

It can be concluded that this campaign poster is a very short and concise communicative event, which does however create an antagonistic representation of the two groups, the workers, along with society, and those who receive social benefits, the unemployed. Although this communicative event is very short in contrast to LLR’s speech, its wider and more long-term exposure does arguably create a bigger impact, as it in its simplistic form states very clearly the current status and future goal of Venstre, whilst being shown to many receivers over and over again.

The unemployed are arguably portrayed as a problem, as a negative entity in society, whilst working, and thus also the employed, are presented as a positive entity and as a solution to this issue. Despite the lack of pronouns, an “us” versus “them” construction is arguably created, and presents an antagonistic positioning of the two groups where the unemployed are isolated on one side whilst the workers and society are grouped together into one on the opposite side.

⁴⁷ Originally “*i fremtiden*” (appendix 3, line 11)

⁴⁸ Originally “*nu*” (appendix 3, line 3)

9. Discussion

The analysis on Venstre's unemployment discourse based on the chosen theory stated above, has resulted in interesting finds which will now be discussed. The purpose is not only to reiterate and discuss the found results to better understand the analyzed utterances, but also to make the connection between the analysis and the wider social structures, to ultimately understand the analyzed utterances in their context, as well as discussing the effect on the identity of the unemployed citizens of Denmark and their relation to society. It is however important to note that the analysis and resulting discussion shouldn't be claimed as completely exhaustive in terms of understanding Venstre's unemployment discourse, nor should it be considered a definite answer, given the notion that nothing is definite but constituted by time and context (see chapter on theory), but is under constant change whilst the analysis only provides a small excerpt of a bigger context in time. As mentioned above, DT and CDA doesn't allow for gaging how vast the effects of discourse actually are on the receivers. It does however allow for analyzing the communicative events, as has been done, and through that understand the hegemonic battle which the senders, in this case Venstre and LLR partake in in the effort of constructing and shaping identities and social space and temporarily fix the construction until the discourse is challenged anew through new communicative events.

As previously mentioned, the communicative events in this thesis have been chosen as they are part of Venstre's unemployment discourse, thus making them relevant for the scope of the thesis. In this thesis, based on Fairclough's CDA, the unemployment discourse is considered the overall discourse domain under which discourses which could be considered subordinate are found. These discourses residing within the unemployment discourse have been found in the analyzed communicative events and will be discussed below to reach a better understanding of the unemployment discourse and the creation of the identity of the unemployed.

The identified discourses are:

- 1) Us versus them
- 2) Unemployment as detrimental and unfair to society
- 3) Unemployment by choice

9.1. Discourse 1: Us versus them

One of the most prominent discourses found is arguably the *us* versus *them* discourse. Although the grouping and distancing is never explicit, it does appear implicitly in both analyzed communicative events.

Both LLR's speech as well as the campaign poster seem to agree on the division, and both manage to discursively create two groups, one consisting of the unemployed, and another consisting of society, where the employed and other entities are included. The campaign poster does this more covertly, without the use of pronouns, whilst LLR makes heavy use of personal pronouns as well as specific wording like *outside-ity* in the speech.

LLR also makes use of other communicative strategies to place himself and Venstre within the group *society* along with those who work, thus siding with one group, and leaving the other group, the unemployed, to themselves. LLR on several occasions describes the groups of unemployed and employed very distinctly, thus widening the distance between them. A few examples include the before mentioned representation of the workers as responsible and valid contributors to society, whilst the unemployed are portrayed as passive and as being in a position that is unfair to the many workers who are making less than the unemployed on social benefit and society in general. Although LLR does distinguish briefly between the able bodied unemployed and those whom LLR excuses, such as the elderly and students, the denominator *unemployed* is used in general throughout the speech, denoting their status and using it as the categorizing factor which groups them together, but distinguishes them from *us*. The analyzed communicative events thus manage through different methods to construct two very distinguished groups – *us*, the in-group, and the unemployed, the out-group.

Volpato denotes that distinct differences between groups can facilitate delegitimization. In this case one group of unemployed is delegitimized through the discursive expulsion from the collective group of society, or the in-group. The delegitimization is described as a process in which groups are categorized into “*negative social categories*” through “*recurring mechanisms of derogation*” which ultimately leads to an exclusion from society (Volpato et al., 2010: 272-273). The discursive division between the unemployed and society is thus arguably a case of delegitimization, but not the only element which contributes to this as the analyzed communicative events also show other communicative strategies and discourses which enforce the delegitimization.

Considering the probable intention of gathering support amongst the receivers, as mentioned in the analysis on discursive practice, the *us* versus *them* discourse could be considered an advantageous strategy to gather support amongst the receivers. Considering that the majority of the receivers should statistically be working (Statistikbanken, 2017), their inclusion in society could be expected to be well-received amongst the employed. Whether the discursive exclusion of the unemployed is well received is however difficult to determine, and could be considered an individual matter, affected by the context and experiences of the individual employed. The *us* versus *them* discourse could thus be considered advantageous to Venstre in the short run, as it could help gather support from the majority of Danish citizens whom may give Venstre their next vote. The consequence for the unemployed could however be considered disadvantageous to Venstre, considering the risk of alienating this group from society, and thus their pathway into society. Considering the benefit of getting the unemployed into the labor market and thus changing their function from being a financial expense to being a contributing entity, it could be argued that the marginalization and alienation of the unemployed from society a disadvantageous strategy in the long run.

9.2. Discourse 2: Unemployment as detrimental and unfair to society

There have been found constructions of unemployment as being unfair to society and its different constituents in both analyzed communicative events.

In LLR's speech, there is a repeated use of the adjective *unfair* to denote the injustice that unemployment brings over both employed and unemployed alike. LLR also makes repeated use of logos in numbers to enforce the injustice, and uses the example of the many Danes like Hanne and Ken to whom working entails a financial loss, as well as the example of the store worker and the unemployed to compare their respective financial incomes. In this example the unemployed is portrayed to receive more than the store worker which is described as unfair, thus creating antagonism between the employed and unemployed. It could be argued that the amount of social benefits received when unemployed is ultimately decided by the government, but considering the lack of mentioning the government in this statement, as well as the use of *less than* and *rather than* to directly compare the financial income of the unemployed to the employed, the government is arguably left covert whilst the unemployed is left in the spotlight as the negative entity.

It is however also important to note that this unfairness is also brought up in conjunction with LLR's statements on the financial system and the previous government, thus portraying the financial system as the faulty element and putting the government in an antagonistic position against the citizens, employed and unemployed alike. This is found in the statements: "*It was a mistake that the government tore down the upper limits of the social benefits*"⁴⁹ (appendix 2, 161-162) and "*Whether we are in government or in the opposition, we take on our responsibility.*"⁵⁰ (appendix 2, lines 203-204). This is however quite brief, as LLR heavily focuses on the consequences that unemployment has to everyone without linking it to the government.

In the campaign poster, there also seems to be created an antagonism between employed and unemployed, as the unemployed are first portrayed to be receiving a very specific amount of money, whilst the employed are portrayed to be working hard which is described as unfair. The campaign poster even goes further and includes society as an entity to which unemployment brings a negative effect to, although in this case the unfairness is substituted for the adjective *unhealthy*. Although the detriment is not explicitly linked to unemployment, the created juxtaposition between the two entities and the construction of

⁴⁹ Originally: "*Det var en fejl, at regeringen rev kontanthjælpsloftet ned.*" (appendix 2, line 161-162)

⁵⁰ Originally: "*Om vi er i regering eller opposition, så tager vi ansvaret på os.*" (appendix 2, lines 203-204)

the situation as containing a problem and solution in the form of unemployment and working, suggests that the unemployed are indeed considered a detrimental entity.

Apart from unfairness, the campaign poster also brings in the notion of health into the equation. This choice of word which brings in a tinge of biological threat to society, a construction which isn't of biological nature, arguably brings in a new understanding of unemployment – that is it not only unfair, but a health hazard and thus a detriment.

The campaign poster also includes *welfare* in the discourse, as it is stated that working contributes to welfare. Whilst it doesn't explicitly construct the unemployed as non-contributors, the implicit statement is that the unemployed are part of creating the welfare, which coupled with the use of *unhealthy* contributes to the idea of unemployment, and thus the unemployed, are a detrimental element.

The discourse of unemployment as detrimental to society is likewise found in LLR's speech. One aspect is LLR's positioning of the unemployed against many aspects of society such as research, education, hospitals, investments into creating jobs and so on, which must do without the money that are used on the unemployed. These elements of society are thus suffering the loss of money that could be spent on improving these areas, instead of on the unemployed which LLR claims makes Denmark a poorer place.

The unemployed are thus not only grouped together and discursively separated from society, but also constructed as a detrimental element, which is claimed to bring negative consequences to society and its different constituents. This arguably exacerbates the delegitimization, as the unemployed aren't only marginalized but discursively constructed as harmful whilst the employed as part of society are described favorably – thus arguably presented as a more desirable entity than the unemployed which in turn becomes the inferior group. Volpato names this category of delegitimization "*trait characterization*" (Volpato, 2010: 273) and can enforce both existing stereotyping of entity as well as bring about material for future stereotyping in the form of signifiers such as "detrimental" or "unhealthy" which future communicative events may use again within the unemployed discourse.

Venstre's many political initiatives mentioned in the macro analysis arguably support this construction of the unemployed as inferior and as an entity which must be motivated financially. This is seen in the repeated cutbacks in the social benefits, more strict regulations imposed on the unemployed, the simplification of reintroduction processes and the practice of sanctioning the unemployed could be interpreted as having negative consequences to the unemployed as they have resulted in a harsher process where the benefits are consistently taken away. Whether this was the intended goal of the political initiatives or not, it does stand in stark contrast to the welfare concept which LLR himself admits to being important and something he cares about (appendix 2, 86-87) whilst claiming that social benefits could be spent better. The before mentioned lines 66-71 (appendix 2) in particular, places the passive maintenance on the opposite of all aspects that touch society and its inhabitants, delegitimizing the need for social benefits, and thus implicitly positioning the rest of society as above, or more important than, the unemployed. LLR even states *"This binds way too much tax money to passive transfers. Money which could ideally have been used much better."*⁵¹ (appendix 2, lines 67). This specific statement denotes LLR's opinion on what he considers to be a better place to spend the money, thus signaling that welfare isn't something that the unemployed should take part in and benefit from, which is consistent with the previously mentioned political initiatives.

9.3. Discourse 3: Unemployment by choice

Unemployment as a choice is often seen implied in the analyzed communicative events, with the most striking example being the slogan *"working must pay off"* which is likewise found in the campaign poster as well as LLR's speech. The slogan implies the necessity of financial benefits, which is also confirmed in LLR's statements such as *"If there is no profit in taking a job, even at minimum wage, well then there are indeed some that won't"*⁵². This not only constructs the identity of Danish citizens as being financially driven entities, but given that LLR on several occasions in the speech claims that working isn't financially worth it compared to certain jobs at that given moment, the equation points towards the

⁵¹ Originally: *"Penge der ideelt set kunne være brugt meget bedre"* (appendix 2, lines 67)

⁵² Originally: *"Er der ingen gevinst ved at tage et arbejde, også til mindstelønnen, jamen så er der da nogle, der vil lade være"* (appendix 2, lines 139-140)

unemployed being in that situation given that there is not enough of a financial gain for most of them.

On other occasions LLR does claim more altruistic reasons for working: “*We work for each other. For the sake of society. For the community*”⁵³ (appendix 2, line 5) as well as more personal reasons: “*We work first and foremost for our own sake, and for the sake of our families*”⁵⁴ (appendix 2, lines 3-4). Although these reasons aren’t financial, they do still imply that the employed are working for a purpose, thus implying choice by moral, personal and financial motivation rather than obligation. Being employed is thus also constructed as being a choice. Apart from enforcing the claim of choice, it also arguably instills the idea of unemployed not having altruistic or personal motivation to work, and are thus not working.

Passivity amongst the unemployed is arguably also a part of the discourse, as it denotes a condition of idleness, which exacerbates the notion of choice. Passivity is partly instilled through the actual use of the adjective *passive* in connection with unemployed receiving financial benefits and partly through the use of verb *must* to encourage action, but without including the unemployed in the *we*-group, thus leaving them idle.

Although the construction of the unemployed as passive and as unemployed by choice isn’t described explicitly as a negative trait in the communicative events, it does arguably aggravate the position of the unemployed, as it insinuates that their status as unemployed is self-inflicted, and leaves the responsibility on the shoulders of the unemployed. The unemployment as choice discourse could thus arguably be understood as not only constructing the identity of the unemployed as passive entities, but also denotes behavior.

It could be considered relevant to discuss Venstre’s form of argumentation here. As has been found in the analysis, Venstre’s main proof of Danish unemployed citizens being unemployed by choice as well as being financially driven is found in the repeated use of logos, as well as specific claims such as “If there is no profit in taking a job, even at minimum wage, well then there are indeed some that won’t.”. As noted by rhetorician Christian Kock,

⁵³ Originally: “*Vi arbejder for hinanden. For samfundets skyld. For fælledsskabets.*” (appendix 2, line 5)

⁵⁴ Originally: “*Vi arbejder først og fremmest for vores egen skyld, og vores familiers skyld.*” (appendix 2, lines 3-4)

Venstre's unemployment discourse in connection with the "*working must pay off*" campaign fails to bring valid evidence and argumentation which connects unemployment to the lack of financial incentive (Routhe, 2015). This discourse is simply based on claims and demonstrates a lack of connection between the logos and the resulting unemployment, which allows for a dismissal of the made postulations. The actual resulting effect which Venstre's discourse has on the identity of the unemployed is however debatable. Social constructionism does claim identities to be discursively constructed, which theoretically means that until proven false, the identity of the unemployed which is constructed within Venstre's unemployment discourse could be considered true.

Although the previous government is briefly blamed for issues of unemployment, the unemployed are arguably positioned as the main bearer of blame for their own situation, which places them in a precarious position as Venstre's unemployment discourse is thus ultimately placing the unemployed in a position of being responsible for their own placement in the delegitimized group as well being detrimental to society by choice. According to Volpato (et al. 2010: 273) this type of delegitimization, which arguably lies in the category of *segregation* as it blames the unemployed for their own situation, could according to Volpato lead to the justification of discriminatory behavior aimed at isolating the group, which is arguably the case here.

9.4. A visualization of the identity of the unemployed and their relation to society

Based on the analysis of communicative events and the subordinate discourses, a visual picture of the construction of identity of the unemployed as well as their context can be constructed. The following key signifiers and chains of equivalents have been deducted from both analyzed communicative events and merged to form a complete visual representation of how the identity of the unemployed citizens of Denmark are portrayed as well as their relation to society through Venstre's unemployment discourse (appendix 5).

The heavy use of personal pronouns in LLR's speech as well as the before mentioned juxtaposition made in the campaign poster seem to point towards specific key signifiers: the

unemployed and society, and both communicative events seem to ultimately create an antagonistic relationship between these two groups. As previously mentioned, key signifiers can further be divided into categories such as myths and master signifiers, which seems to be the case for these key signifiers. The key signifier *unemployed* arguably acts as both an identifying category to describe those who are not working, as well as a discursively constructed group which is also discursively distanced from the other group. This key signifier thus functions as both a myth, as it is used to organize social space as well as a master signifier used to organize identity. The key signifier *society* is also constructed as a group to which other entities can be included into, or be excluded from in the case of the unemployed, yet doesn't seem to function as an identity which can be ascribed to the individual citizen. It does however function as a group to which the different identities mentioned by LLR can be ascribed to, such as those who work, those who are retired, students, Venstre, and LLR himself. The use of personal pronoun *we* further connects LLR and Venstre with the employed, as these identities are presented as acting together. One example is the use of *we* together with verb *work* signals an action which connects the mentioned entities. Therefore, *society* functions as a discursively constructed myth to which different identities are included into, whilst the included identities are then ascribed different attributes and meanings through the signifiers forming a chain of equivalence around the myth.

In the campaign poster, the juxtaposition arguably groups those who work with society against the unemployed, thus also constructing *society* as the group to which identities are either included in or excluded from. The unemployed aren't explicitly named in this communicative event, but are arguably presented through the description of receiving social benefits. The use of the term *social benefits* to denominate the unemployed functions as a privileged sign which is discursively linked to the unemployed. This appears in the visual representation along with the other explicit and implicit privileged signs which appear in connection with the mentioned nodal points in the analyzed communicative events. Through the construction of a visual representation, a clear difference between the unemployed and society is discovered. The unemployed are on several occasions linked with explicit signs that could be considered negative, such as *outside-ity*, *unfair* and *passivity*, whilst *society* and its

constituents are largely attributed positively laden signs such as *responsibility*, *welfare* and *contributing*.

The sign *choice* is also relevant to include and could be considered an implicit sign, as it is never explicitly stated in conjunction with the unemployed as a describing attribute of the group or individual in either communicative event, but is implicitly constructed as an element which is used to assign the responsibility of unemployment to the unemployed.

The campaign poster arguably constructs a very clear distinction and presentation of what could be interpreted as a “problem” and a “solution”. These are then discursively connected with different entities: the unemployed and the employed along with the rest of society. This arguably adds to the logic of equivalence as only two groups are presented, and the nuancing of these two is limited to being an issue and a solution, as well as either negative or positive, thus adding to the distancing which is created between the constructed groups. The resulting relation between the unemployed and society ultimately seems to be characterized by antagonism, which is denoted in the middle of the figure (appendix 5). Following the theory of DT the element of antagonism could arguably be defined as a signifier, although it isn’t really defining the identity of the unemployed nor society, but rather defines the relation between them. In the visualization, it is thus placed between society and the unemployed.

As previously noted, DT incorporates the notion of individuals having multiple identities which can coexist simultaneously. This arguably provides the opportunity for individuals to be placed into and pertain to different groups simultaneously, depending on the orders of discourse. Unfortunately, the chosen communicative events fail to draw on other orders of discourse which could allow for the unemployed individuals to pertain to the group of society through a different area of identification. And so we are presented with an extreme “*reduction of possibilities*” (Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002: 44), which could on one hand be considered positive as it simplifies the position of the individuals within society, whom could be left confused as to whether they are part of society or not if multiple orders of discourse were presented. The individual can from the communicative events deduct that he or she is either part of society because he or she is employed, or has a by LLR validated excuse for not

working, such as being retired or a student, or simply not part of society because he or she is unemployed. On the other hand, no other orders of discourse are drawn on in the communicative events which may allow for the unemployed to place him or herself within the group of society. One example could be a biological order of discourse, allowing the individual to identify as a part of society because of his or her status as a human being, or a geographical order of discourse, allowing the individual to identify as him or herself as part of the group of society because he or she is an individual living on Danish territory. The negative consequence arguably befalls the group of unemployed individuals, whom through the communicative events are left with no possible alternative identification to place themselves within the groups of society, and are thus discursively marginalized through the only presented option of identification. Venstre's discourse thus arguably presents a very unilateral picture of the unemployed which are then more easily marginalized through the lack of other possibilities for identification.

10. Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was sparked from a personal interest in acquiring a deeper understanding of how political communication can construct identity, more precisely the identity of the unemployed. The purpose of this thesis has thus ultimately been to answer: *How are the unemployed citizens of Denmark and their relation to the Danish society portrayed through Venstre's unemployment discourse related to the "Working must pay off" campaign?*

This has been sought done through a discursive analysis of central communicative events which are part of the "Working must pay off" campaign and contribute to Venstre's unemployment discourse. For this purpose, the theoretical works of Norman Fairclough as well as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe on discourse theory has been used to create a theoretical framework and a methodological tool based on the concept of social constructionism to analyze Venstre's unemployment discourse under the period of the "Working must pay off" campaign. To better understand the results of the analysis and translate it into resulting effects on identity, the works of Chiara Volpato has been used to process the results from the analysis.

To ensure relevancy of the analysis, the communicative events have been chosen on the basis of different criteria, including when the communicative events have taken place, the relevance of the sender, the reached audience, and of course the connection to the "working must pay off" campaign and its contribution to Venstre's unemployment discourse. This has resulted in the choice of two communicative events: Venstre's campaign poster for the 2015 election, and Lars Løkke Rasmussen's speech at the 2013 party conference.

The analysis carried out has included analytical elements and concepts based on both Fairclough's Critical Discourse Theory, such as the three-dimensional framework for analyzing text, as well as Laclau and Mouffe's Discourse Theory, such as antagonism, identity and signs. Although Discourse Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis enable the analysis and understanding of the effect of discourse on identity and social space, and are well-founded as both theory and method, certain flaws and points of criticism have been

acknowledged in this thesis. This includes the notion that the knowledge of the author is as human inherently flawed and that subjectivity can never truly be completely omitted. It has likewise been noted that analyzed texts and analyzed elements within the text are not exhaustive, and shouldn't be regarded as such. Answers given in this thesis aren't to be considered permanent universal truths either. Instead, the answers may function as a way of understanding Venstre's discourse analysis within the given context of the elements included in the thesis, and the answers can thus be considered valid within their context and provide a temporary insight into Venstre unemployment discourse.

The analysis and following processing of results in which different elements such as theoretical concepts, social practice and external opinions on Venstre's unemployment discourse, has revealed three discourses through which an understanding of the constructed identity of the unemployed and their relation to society can be attained. The "us versus them", "unemployment as detrimental and unfair to society", and "unemployment by choice" discourses have through discussion ultimately resulted in the following answers:

The identity of the unemployed citizens of Denmark is through Venstre's unemployment discourse portrayed as detrimental due to their unemployment which is portrayed as unfair to society, which then extends to the construction of their identity as inferior to society and its different constituents. The unemployed are thus ultimately delegitimized through their construction as inferior and detrimental to society. Meanwhile, the unemployed are discursively placed outside of society and further distanced whilst the relation between the two is rendered antagonistic through the notion of unfairness and the placement of blame on the unemployed through the construction of financial motivation as an intrinsic aspect of their identity, ultimately constructing their situation as self-inflicted. The construction of the identity of the unemployed as inferior and their positioning outside of society is also seen in the analysis of the social practice, which ultimately confirms that this construction is not only to be found in the textual practice, but is a pervasive concept which can be found within Venstre's unemployment discourse. The unemployed are thus also discursively isolated from society and ultimately marginalized by being given the role of the inferior out-group.

Venstre's unemployment discourse is through the theory ultimately understood as an part of a hegemonic battle to construct the identity of the unemployed as described above.

Although the end goal of Venstre may not be to construct the unemployed citizens of Denmark as described above, it is ultimately acknowledged that the resulting construction of the identity of the unemployed citizens of Denmark and their relation with society is ultimately as described, and is presented as such in the visual representation created.

11. Perspective

This thesis has sought to answer the given research question, which has resulted in the use of specific theories, concepts, as well as the analysis of specific discourses and communicative events. The process towards answering the research question has however resulted in encounters with other perspectives in the form of concepts, issues and ideas which could be relevant for future research and contribute with new knowledge. This thesis will thus also include a few of these perspectives which have been found most relevant.

A more complete picture of the unemployment discourse

As mentioned in the chapter on theory, hegemony is a state which can happen when multiple discourses struggle to define meaning. As the scope of this thesis is to understand how the identity of the unemployed is constructed solely in Venstre's unemployment discourse, it could be considered relevant to look at the unemployment discourse of other entities within the Danish society or the Danish political spectrum. The discourse of left-wing parties such as Socialdemokratiet and Enhedslisten could be relevant to look at, as these have produced many communicative events which seem to create antagonism, as they typically disagree on unemployment being self-inflicted.

Towards improving Venstre's political communication

As mentioned in the thesis, the end goal of Venstre's unemployment discourse may have been different than the found results. Although the thesis points towards delegitimization, marginalization and positioning of the unemployed as inferior to society may not specifically have been the main goal of Venstre. Considering that the chosen communicative events are part of Venstre's electoral campaign for the 2015 election, and that unemployment is seen as detrimental to society, it could be argued that Venstre's short term goal, at the time in which the communicative events took place, is to gain support and potential votes from Danish citizens, whilst the long-term goal could be considered diminishing unemployment in Denmark. The question thus lies in whether the resulting construction of the identity of the unemployed and their relation to society is actually benefitting these goals?

A different take on understanding the identity of the unemployed

To answer the above question, it could arguably be valid to carry out a different methodological and theoretical study in order to enable the gaging of the efficiency of the hegemonic battle on the perception on the unemployed amongst the receivers – in this case the Danish citizens whom may consume the communicative events which take part in the unemployment discourse. Here, the use of the theoretical framework of Discursive Psychology could prove relevant, as it takes into account the processing capacity of the individual receiver and the individuals concept of “self” to better understand how an individual may perceive information (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 98 & 108), or in this case, communicative events which take part in Venstre’s unemployment discourse.

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